

# Strategies for Promoting Guilin's Tourism Translation from a Functionalist Approaches Perspective

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**Abstract:** Guilin, a city which abounds in unusual natural wonders as well as the age-old cultures, is attractive to large number of foreigners and has become the must of their China tour. But translation errors such as wrong spelling, Chinglish, grammatical mistakes, missing information, cross-cultural problems and non-uniformity in translation still exist in all kinds of Guilin's tourist materials such as slogans and signs, guide books, destination introductions and other publicity materials as well. Under the guidance of functionalist theory, it is proposed that the translator should well master different type of texts and flexibly apply different strategies, such as transliteration plus liberal translation, addition, deletion and analogy for the improvement of information reliability and accuracy of tourism translation.

**Keywords:** Functionalist approaches; Guilin; Tourism translation; Translation strategies

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Guilin is a globally known international tourism city in China, and is a 'must' for foreign tourists. Its rich tourism resources, unusual and particular natural wonders, typical flavors of the local food, and colorful customs of many different minorities, have deeply impressed many foreigners. As to international tourism, it is obvious that the greatest difficulty is to solve the problem of communication and the understanding of culture. There are great differences between cultures, & hence, it may be hard for foreign tourists to understand the historically-long history of China and interesting customs of every ethnic, which sometimes even frustrates many of them. In order to help the visitors to bridge the gap between cultures, Chinese-English (C-E) translation (or interpretation) for the tourism texts becomes more and more important and significant in Guilin. But what makes people disappointed is that the quality of today's tourism translation in Guilin is far from satisfactory according to the current investigations. The problems such as wrong spelling, Chinglish, grammatical mistakes, abuse of Chinese pinyin, missing information, incorrect cultural transforming and non-uniformity in translated names of scenic spots exist in all kinds of tourism translation, especially in the translation of tourist slogans and sights, guide books and destinations and other related tourist publicity materials. These translation problems, to a great extent, will on the one hand negatively influence tourists' understanding that may weaken the image of Guilin's beautiful natural scenery, and on the other hand block the development of Guilin's tourism.

## 1. An Overview of German Functionalism

Functionalist translation approach is a broad term including not only German functionalism, represented by Skopos Theory, but also those who "subscribe to functionalism and draw inspiration from Skopos theories without calling them anything like 'Skopos'" <sup>[1]</sup>, such as "Functional/ Dynamic equivalence theory" proposed by American scholar Eugene A Nida and the theory of P. Newmark's Text-Type classifications and its corresponding semantic and communicative translation since all these theories approach translation from a perspective of function.

According to the text type classification by Peter Newmark<sup>[2]</sup> and Reiss<sup>[3]</sup>, different types of text should have their own corresponding translating principles. In literature translation, the once popular criterion of the famous Chinese scholar YanFu, which

is “faithfulness, expressiveness and elegance”, has been widely accepted. When it comes to tourism translation, it is more complicated and, to some extent, similar to literature translation, the criterion with tourism translation also abides by the criterion of “faithfulness, expressiveness and elegance”, but by applying the functionalist approach in which the Skopos Theory and text type classification and the dynamic equivalence are included in guiding the tourist translation, the functions of the target text are of the first importance. Thus, the strict faithfulness, expressiveness and elegance should give way to the function of the target text first, and then the translation strategies should be flexible and mixed and mingle with the other kinds of translation since the text type classification highlights the claim of different translating strategies corresponding to different type of texts. Lastly, the highest criterion is to achieve the “skopo” of the target text in the target context when considering the dynamic functional equivalence. This is in accordance with the rules of Skopos Theory.

As to the coherence rule of Skopos Theory, here, it is close to YanFu’s “expressiveness” at its aim of making the text coherent and logical order to make the target reader understand it more easily. However, to make the target text readable and understandable both at inner and inter-textual level is not that easy. It involves many factors including cultural and aesthetic senses. So when translating one text to another culture, the translator should think about the receptor’s possibility in accepting the translation both from cultural and aesthetic aspects and the translating text should be reader-oriented.

In a word, the criterion for tourist translation is not fixed. It is the intermixture of Skopos rule, coherence rules and Yanfu’s faithfulness, expressiveness and elegance principles. However, the most important rule is that the translation should have all the ease of the original composition to the translator and make the target text function in the same way as the original text does.

## **2. Strategies Applied to Tourism Translation in Guilin**

Nida holds that there are no fixed strategies for translation and it cannot be taught, but can be learned by the translator himself. With an eye to the existing deficiency in Guilin’s present tourism translation, there are some possible strategies from a functionalist perspective to be introduced.

### **2.1 Transliteration plus Liberal Translation**

Transliteration applied in tourism translation often happens when translating the name of scenic spot or a place. In China, transliteration can do very well in showing our own culture by using Pinyin. Such as Longji Terraces, Longsheng Hot Spring, Lijiang River and Daxu Ancient Town. What’s more, as we know that the name of a scenic spot should be short, transliteration can help to make the name brief. However, through the characteristics of being brief and short, a name of a scenic spot would be appealing and easily remembered. But only transliteration can show the charm of the scenic spot, so, in order to tell the tourists the true sense of scenic spot and enchant them with the story or natural charm, the translator can apply liberal translation to the translation. We know there is a very famous cultural scenic spot “文庙” in the Gongcheng County of Guilin, which is related to Confucius, a famous scholar in ancient China. If it is translated as “Wen Temple” literally, then no real meaning is transferred, then of course it won’t be appealing. However, if it is translated into “Confucius Temple” by applying liberal translation, the tourists may understand more easily, and therefore be more tempted to visit.

### **2.2 Addition**

Because of the differences existing in language and culture, it may be difficult for the target reader to catch the real sense of the information. Therefore, when translating some typical Chinese terms related to people’s names and historic events, even a Chinese person can hardly be familiar with them all, so some explanatory background information should be added to the original text in order to make the text easier for the target reader.

Example 1: 读书岩: 位于独秀峰东麓, 南朝刘宋时期, 著名文学家颜延之任始安郡(今桂林)太守时, 常在岩洞内读书写诗。(摘自王城景区内景点介绍)

Original version:

Reading Cave: It is located on the eastern foot of Solitary Beauty Peak. During Liu Song Period of the Southern Dynasty, the famous writer YanYanzhi often read and composed poems here when he was the governor of Shi’an County (today Guilin).

The difficult term for the target reader is “Liu Song Period of the Southern Dynasty” in ancient China. There is a special way to record the times by using the name of the emperor of that reign which is different from the international one. So, in accordance to the international habit of recording the period, the additional information “A.D.420--479” should be added.

### **2.3 Deletion**

Since the function of the target text justifies the means of the strategies of translation, in order to help the potential tourists to

remove the obstacles on their road to understand the information, some difficult expressions such as obscure idioms, Chinese poems, couplets or some abstract big words, etc. can be deleted.

Example 2: 山峰突兀而起, 峻拔伟岸, 形如刀削斧砍, 周围众山环绕, 孤峰傲立, 有如帝王之尊。(摘自王城景区独秀峰)

The original version: The Solitary Beauty Peak is often compared to be a king as it erects from the flat ground like a unique column propping up the blue sky.

In this example, some abstract adjectives and metaphors are omitted in order to please the target reader by keeping the same thinking pattern and expressing habit.

## 2.4 Analogy

Though many differences exist between Chinese and English, there are still some similarities between them. Thus, we should look for the similarities when doing tourism translation so as to make the meanings more connected by applying analogy. Suppose some very difficult terms can be compared to some widely accepted words in the target language, why not save the energy and just simply use the corresponding equivalent.

Example 3:

徐霞客久慕独秀峰盛名, 曾五次请求入城登峰, 均被靖江王拒绝而抱憾离开桂林。

The original translation is “Xu Xiake (China’s Marco Polo) wanted to climb up the peak, but only to be rejected five times and he felt regretful for his lifetime.”

Although XuXiake is a very famous traveler in ancient China, he is a “stranger” to foreign tourists. Considering that there is a famous traveler Mark Polo in the world, it will be very easy for the tourists to know who Xu Xiake is when they see “China’s Mark Polo” followed.

## 3. Summary of the Translating Strategies from a Functionalist Perspective

In the Functionalist Approach, both “Skopos Theory” and “Text Type Classification” as well as “Dynamic equivalence” and “communicative translation” all put efforts into highlighting the communicative effects of the target text. In order to achieve an ideal communicative function in a target context, a single translating strategy appears rather weak. Consider that the various text types and corresponding different functions, as well as many cultural differences including tourist materials and various translating strategies, should be adopted. The above listed possible strategies are only a part of the whole; they are applicable but not sufficient.

In tourist translation, in accordance with the highest guideline of “Skopos rule”, the idea of applying various translation practices in the process of translation is feasible. As has been argued “there is no fixed translating method to translation, but it is feasible if there is the guideline of certain translating theory”, thus, to the tourism translation, the aim is to convey the information about the scenic spots to the tourists in a pleasing and attracting way to elicit their positive reaction.

## References:

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