

Strategies of Tourism Translation from the Perspective of Skopos Theory

Kun Wang

Yunnan Normal University, Mianyang 650550, China.

Abstract: From the perspective of Skopos Theory, this thesis analyzes translations of scenic spot introductions and environmental communication signs, exemplified by representatives taken from domestic tourism texts. It attempts to explore effective translating strategies that can be adopted to improve the quality of tourism translation. As one of the pillar industries of Tengchong and Tianjin, tourism takes a huge part in bringing economic benefits and boosting cultural communication. Taking source texts and versions from introductions of scenic spots in Tianjin and Tengchong respectively, this thesis critically analyzes the texts from the perspective of Skopos Theory, namely Skopos rule, coherence rule, and fidelity rule. Tourism translation of high quality is in urgent need to accurately convey the information of various scenic spots and its cultural connotation to foreign tourists. Through the illustrations it points out the merits and problems in the English versions and induces corresponding translation strategies, aiming to testify the applicability and guidance of Skopos in tourism translation.

Keywords: Skopos Theory; Tourism Translation; Translation Strategy

1. Introduction

1.1 Relevant Background

Tianjin, located in north of China, is the main node of the China-Mongolia-Russia Economic Corridor. It serves as the strategic pivot point of the Maritime Silk Road, the intersection of the Belt and Road. Another city, Tengchong, which is located at the West Yunnan Tourism Zone, works as an irreplaceable spot for tourism along the western Yunnan border. Tourism translation provides an opportunity for foreign tourists to have a better understanding of the two cities. The quality of tourism text and its translation, therefore, takes up a huge portion in boosting the prosperity and conveying the culture of Tianjin and Tengchong. It can be seen that the further development and prosperity of China's tourism market is just around the corner. The translation of tourism texts in Tengchong needs further improvement and study.

1.2 Significance of the study

This thesis is intended to analyze the strategies of tourism translation from the perspective of Skopos Theory for the sake of enhancing the quality and accuracy of tourism translation in two cities mentioned above. Meanwhile, studies on this type of text can also enrich the applicability of the Skopos Theory and expand its application scope.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Previous Studies on Tourism Translation Abroad

Many scholars abroad have shed light on tourism translation, which provided theoretical principles for translators. By explaining the notion of "Covert Translation", Gutt^[1] suggests that translators need to be careful to take into consideration the cultural presumptions in tourism translation. Furthermore, in cases like tourist brochure, he points out that there is no necessary relationship between the source language and the target language since without reference or resort to the source language, the communication act presented by the target language could still succeed in conveying information.

Munday^[2], one of the representative scholars who studies the theories and application of translation, maintains the existence of tourist brochure to be a hybrid of types when distinguishing different text types. Another two scholars, Baker^[3] and Hickey^[4] argue that when translating, translators need to bear in mind to use vivid description. Hickey points out that exaggeration can even be employed if necessary.

As mentioned above, tourism translation studies abroad enlighten translators to consider different principles when translating. They give more attention to the universal principles and functions of this area. However, specific translation strategies, especially

Chinese-English translation did not get enough exploration.

2.2 Previous Studies on Tourism Translation at home

Based on studies abroad, scholars at home investigate not only the principles but also the specific strategies in tourism translation.

Cultural differences should firstly be noticed in translating tourism texts. Liu Huimei and Yang Shoukang^[5] illustrate the differences between Chinese and English culture in tourism text, namely, mental difference, moral difference, aesthetic difference, and customary difference.

In the views of functionalists, the function or the purpose is of priority of an action. Jia Wenbo^[6], a renowned expert in translation theory and application of China, holds that there are mainly two functions of tourism materials. One is to express information. The other one is to induce action on traveling. Pu Yuanming^[7] puts forward three strategies which are commonly used in tourism translation: addition, deletion, and rewriting. The three strategies are put forward in that there are various differences in language habit use between Chinese and English. Chinese text is characterized by its cohesive and cryptic use of language, while English one highlights the authenticity and concrete statistics. By addition of necessary information, the expression of the target text can be natural and coherent that meets the aesthetic need so as to achieve the function of tourism translation and finally drive travelling behaviors^[8]. Chinese tourism texts prefer magnificent expressions, which have little practical meaning and are only for the purpose of creating certain atmosphere. Another scholar, Bao Huinan^[9], proposes that translation strategies of amplification, omission and analogy are applicable in tourism translation. Since there are many towns with a long history in Zhejiang Province, his translation includes poetry translation and history translation.

Wang Xin^[10] introduces strategies of English introduction in scenic spots as follows. Firstly, translators can convey the information by combining the history to the scenic spots. And then translators should use the language that is close to the habit of the visitors. Thirdly, the priority needs to be distinguished and highlighted. Last but not least, make use of language skills.

3. Theoretical Framework

3.1 An Introduction to the Scopos Theory

The Scopos Theory has three major stages of development. It is firstly put forward by Vermeer in 1996^[11]. Before it, Reiss points out that strategies of translation are based on purposes in 1993^[12], which is assumed to be the core of the functionalist theory. Breaking the equivalence mode in previous theories, Vermeer then maintains some of Reiss's thoughts and argues that the target text is of priority in translation. Then formally he brings up the Skopos Theory. In 1997, the third stage, Nord^[13] inherits the theory of the two previous scholars, and then he further improves the Skopos Theory. Reiss and Vermeer mainly draw attention on the process of translation, roles of participants and the environment, while Nord emphasizes on readers' response. Translation, like other behaviors of people, is an activity with particular purposes. Another integral part of this theory is Vermeer's three main rules of Skopos theory which are as follows. In Vermeer's description, each text is produced for a specific purpose and will serve for it. Next one is the coherence rule. This rule holds that translation must conform to intra-textual coherence, namely, the target text should be readable, acceptable to the readers. The last one, fidelity rule, which requires the source text and the target text should achieve inter-textual coherence. But the degree of fidelity can be changeable with translation purpose^[14].

3.2 Application of Scopos Theory in tourism translation

The Skopos Theory can be well applied in tourism translation in that, on one hand, it has theoretical advantages, and on the other hand, there is shared property between the two.

The theoretical advantages of Skopos theory lie in that, as an applied translation theory guiding translation practice, it overturns the previous equivalence translation model that focuses on the original text. Apart from it, this theory pays attention to the goals of translation and the subjective initiative of translators, shifting translators from a mechanical writer to a creator who communicates between the writer of the source text and the reader of the target text by providing an agile translation method.^[15] It is a functional theory close to real life, especially applicable to the translation of non-literary texts such as advertisement, tourist brochure, and news, which can meet the expectations of informativeness and practicality of translation.^[16] Tourism translation has two main purposes. Firstly, it aims to spread native culture. Secondly, it intends to attract people to pay a visit. Different from other types of translations, tourism translation is more direct, prominent and practical^[17].

With the common features, this theory can be well applied to tourism translation. Guided by this theory, the author considers that there are three types of strategies that can be well employed in analyzing tourism translation. They are: materialization, omission, and rewriting.

4. Application of Skopos Theory to translation analysis

To put the theory into practice, this chapter analyzes the examples and translations chosen from the official websites of Tianjin Binhai Library and Tianjin Museum, The Theme Park of the Boundary of Population Distribution in China, and Tengchong the Eden Flower Ridge Tourist Attraction.

4.1 Translation Strategies

4.1.1 Materialization

Materialization here refers to the specific description in Chinese-English translation, the concrete size, number, length, height of the scenic spots included.

Example 1:

Source text: 天津滨海图书馆...面积 43230m²,藏书 181 万册。

Target text: Composed of four libraries, Tianjin Binhai Library has a total area of 43230 square meters and a collection of a 1.81 million books.

In translation of Chinese to English, translators should fully consider the language habits of the target readers, avoiding imprecise and obscure description. Instead, the specific and real statistics are supposed to be added to the target readers. In Example 1, in order to highlight the richness of Tianjin Binhai Library, the adjective "多" is used to describe its composition. However, for English readers, it is more necessary to know the exact number of the libraries. If words like "several" or "many" are employed to translate it, it will continue the ambiguity of the description and cause confusion and misunderstanding. Therefore, "多" is translated into a more specific number —4 in TT or 4 is added to exemplify the number, so that target readers can directly understand that Tianjin Binhai Library consists of four sub-libraries.

4.1.2 Omission

The omission strategy is, in general, applicable to the following two situations: one is to skip the exaggerated words commonly used in Chinese tourism texts. Another case is to omit low-value information.

Example 2:

Source text: 据学者...这件太保鼎是西周成王时的重臣召公奭所铸造的。

Target text: Textual research indicates that this Taibao ding was cast by the important minister Duke Shi, during the reign of King Cheng of the Western Zhou.

In Example 4, ancient prose was employed as history information to emphasize the cultural background, while in TT only the very last sentence is translated. It is because not only it will be intricate to translate the name and the sentence of ancient prose, but also it will be difficult for target readers to completely understand the history and the relationship of the ancient people in China. Deleting them is helpful for readers to have a quick knowing of Taibao ding. This translation presents the principle that the culture differences need not be equally reveal in the target language as Gutt suggests.

4.1.3 Rewriting

Rewriting is the moderate modification and adjustment of words and phrases, styles that do not conform to the habits of the target language. Broadly speaking, addition and deletion can also be categorized as rewriting.

Example 3:

Source text: 这件宋钧窑...高 6.5 厘米、口径 22.2 厘米、底径 13.5 厘米...造型端庄、雅致...器里施天青色釉...器外壁为玫瑰紫色乳浊釉, 釉汁肥厚, 色彩绚丽。

Target text: Height 6.5cm, Diameter of rim 22.2cm, Diameter of base 13.5cm. This dish has a greyish glaze with a blue-green-gray under-glaze. The surface of the glaze shows a fluid linear effect, which the ancient Chinese described as "earthworms moving in mud". The outer wall is coated with a thick and splendidly colorful mottled rosy purple glaze.

In the example above, the strategy of rewriting embodies in the structure of sentences and deletion of exaggerated description in the source text. The target text only introduces the practical features of the dish, which are composed by the color, surface, and outer wall. Description like "造型端庄、雅致" "釉汁肥厚, 色彩绚丽" disappears in the English version of the introduction. The dealing of the translation shows the consideration of aesthetic differences. People's aesthetic perceptions are influenced by geography, social environment, politics, economy, religion, and values. According to western aesthetic perceptions, beautiful and attractive language is not

necessarily attractive to them in introducing a work of art. Apart from it, professional words like “施天青色釉” and “玫瑰紫色乳浊釉” are lack of equivalence translation in the target text. Instead, only the color of the glaze is preserved in the target text. Tourists visit the museum to learn about Chinese artifacts and to enjoy the tour, not for archaeological or professional study, so they do not need to be provided with overly detailed specialized knowledge. Because of cultural differences, Chinese people, especially the ancients, like to quote poems and phrases to conform their feelings and opinions after telling an event or describing a site, while western tourists prefer substantive information such as the function, size, and color of an object.

In conclusion, the three translation strategies mentioned above and reduce information on the basis of the original text, all of which are flexible methods to overcome the cultural, linguistic and aesthetic differences between Chinese and Western readers, so as to achieve better results than that direct translation can bring.

4.2 Mistranslation in Tourism Translation

With abundant traveling resources in Tianjin and Tengchong, there is much translating work to be done. Following are mistakes of translation in The Theme Park of the Boundary of Population Distribution in China, and Tengchong the Eden Flower Ridge Tourist Attraction and the correction by the author. As few studies have been carried out on tourism translation in this two scenic spots, the author aims to provide valuable reference for further research.

4.2.1 Mistranslation of names

Example 4:

Source text: 中央大学

Target text: the central university

Correction: National Central University

In Example 7, there is not only mistranslation of the name of this university but also the improper spelling of the capital letter. After searching on the Internet, it is found that The English name of "中央大学" is National Central University. The wrong translation disobeys the fidelity rule and leads to the inaccuracy of it. Here the strategy of materialization is also applied to specifically translate the name of this university.

Example 5:

Source text: 胡焕庸

Target text: Huan Yong Hu

Correction: Hu Huanyong

In Example 8, as it is known that in Chinese the first name is family name and the second name is the given name, there is no need exchanging the order of them. Besides, in the given name, the first letter is the only capital one. If there are more than two words in Chinese given name, they should be linked together when translating into English.

4.2.2 Inappropriate sentence structure

Example 6:

Source text: 先生是我国人口地理学的开创者。

Target text: He was an important one of the founders in Chinese geography.

Correction: He was one of the important founders in Chinese geography.

In this example, there is a grammar mistake in the target text that causes the wrong sentence structure. The correction can be done by using sentence pattern like "one of the + noun in plural form " to realize the accuracy of language. The application of rewriting can be embodied in the exchange of the phrases in the sentence to achieve coherence rule.

5. Conclusion

5.1 Summary of the study

This thesis analyzes strategies in translating tourism text and points out the shortcomings of the translation in scenic spots in Tengchong. The tourism translation is a kind of cross-cultural communication. It features a combination of informative and vocative functions. According to Skopos theory, purposes determine the overall translation practice, including the choice of translation strategies and methods. In practice, these methods are of some value for the translator to deal with the cultural problems and they do shed light on future tourism translation.

5.2 Suggestions for further research

The process of communication depends on the information the target readers get from the translation. In order to achieve the desired effect of cross-cultural communication, translators need to study related books and materials thoroughly to learn more about tourism culture, forming cross-cultural awareness, paying attention to the use of appropriate translation methods. From the perspective of the Skopos Theory, translators should take comprehensive account of cultural differences, language habits, aesthetic values and other factors of the target language readers, flexibly employing translation strategies to realize the purpose of publicizing tourism information.

References

- [1] Gutt EA. *Translation and Relevance: Cognition and Context*. 2nd New York: Routledge, 2014.
- [2] Munday J. *Introducing Translation Studies: Theories and Application*. 2nd Taylor&Francis e-Library, 2010.
- [3] Baker M. In *Other Words: A Course Book on Translation*. London and New York: Methuen, 1991.
- [4] Hickey L. *The Pragmatics of Translation*. Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1994.
- [5] Liu HM, Yang SK. English translation of tourism materials from a cultural perspective. *China Translation* 1996, (5): 10-14.
- [6] Jia WB. "Theory of Applied Translation Functions". Beijing: China International Translation and Publishing Company, 2004.
- [7] Pu YM. Let's talk about a few questions about the English translation of tourist information. *China Translation* 1987, (3): 30-32.
- [8] Wang H. "Desirable" also needs to be "appropriate" - from a textual point of view to translation. *China Translation*, 2003(1):38-41.
- [9] Bao HN. *Chinese Culture and Chinese-English Translation*. Beijing: Foreign Languages Press, 2004.
- [10] Wang X. *Research on Modern Tourism Translation Theory and Translation Strategy of Public Announcements*. Nanjing: Southeast University Press, 2019.
- [11] Vermeer, H. J. *The Skopos Theory of Translation*. London and New York: Routledge, 1996.
- [12] Reiss K. *Translation Criticism: Potential and Limitations*. Manchester. St Jerome and American Bible Society, 1993.
- [13] Nord C. *Text Analysis in Translation: Theory, Methodology, and Didactic Application of a Model for Translation-Oriented Text Analysis*. London: Brill, 1997.
- [14] Bian JH. *Inheritance and Transcendence: A Teleological Study of Functionalist Translation*. Beijing:China Social Sciences Press, 2008.
- [15] Li Q, Luo TN. English translation of domestic tourism websites from the perspective of teleology. *Journal of Southeast University*, 2012. (S3): 112-114.
- [16] Wang Q. Tourism text translation guided by functional teleology. *English Abroad* 2019(11): 161-162.
- [17] Chen G. *Tourism Translation and Foreign Tour Guides*. Beijing: China International Translation and Publishing Company, 2004.