A Comparative Genre Analysis of Chinese and American Hotel Introductions

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With the fast development of China's travel industry, the publicity campaign of the hotels has become a frequently discussed question. The English introductions of Chinese hotels are usually the direct translation of the Chinese version ignoring the differences in the interior cognition of language and the exterior social and cultural influences. These of course will weaken the effect of our publicity efforts. The purpose of this study is to identify the communicative purposes and generic structures of Chinese and English hotel introductions (CHIs/EHIs) through analysis of collected samples in order to find the similarities and differences of them and explore the underlying social cultural reasons in order to provide some meaningful suggestions for those involved in the job of composing or translating hotel introductions in China.

Keywords: hotel introduction, genre analysis, move structure, comparative study

Introduction

With the fast development of China in economic, technical, and cultural fields, and further implementation of the open-up policy, the tourism industry has been boosting in this great country. In the same time, many international events were or will be held in various big cities. And more and more investment opportunities turning up in second even third tier cities are attracting unprecedented number of business travelers from over the world. All the above factors have contributed to the blossom of Chinese star hotels. However, the competition will also be fierce as nobody is willing to give up such a profitable market.

So, how to gain a favorable position in this competition is the most urgent question lying in front of Chinese star hotel runners. Apart from improving the accommodation facilities and services, the publicity campaign should also be considered which will help hotels make themselves known to tourists and business travelers. Hotel introductions, as the name card of a hotel, play a very important role in hotel promotion.

Many hotels are now using websites to publicize. Unfortunately, the English written introductions appeared on the Chinese hotels' websites are, in most cases, literally translated from the Chinese versions without taking different culture, custom, and thinking pattern into consideration. This surely reduces the promotional effect.

For that reason, this thesis attempts to conduct a comparative genre analysis of Chinese and English hotel introductions (CHIs/EHIs). Based mainly on the theoretical framework of Swales' Create A Research Space (CARS) model, Bhatia's seven-step model of sales promotion letters, and Hasan's notion of Contextual Configuration

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(CC) and Generic Structural Potential (GSP), the thesis will examine the structure of hotel introductions and reveal how the communicative purposes are realized and the supporting lexical-grammatical features of them.

Definitions of Some Important Concepts

Genre

The word genre comes from the Latin word "genus" meaning "kind" or "class". In *Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English* (1998, p. 631) genre is defined as "a class of works of art, literature, or music marked by a particular style, form, or subject".

Move and Step

The term "move" was first used by Bellack (1966) to refer to the maneuvers of students and teachers in the classroom discourse.

Swales used move in his article introduction genre analysis but did not give a clear definition to it. Dudley-Evans and St. John (1998, p. 89) explain move and step as follows: A "move" is a unit that relates both to the writer's purpose and to the content that s/he wishes to communicate. A "step" is a lower level text unit than move that provides a detailed perspective on the options open to the writer in setting out the moves.

Three Traditions of Genre Analysis

The Swalesian ESP School. Researchers in ESP have been interested in genre as a tool for analyzing and teaching the spoken and written language required of nonnative speakers in academic and professional settings. Swales (1990) provides a theoretical framework (CARS—Create A Research Space) of genre analysis by adopting the approach of structural move analysis in academic and research settings. On the basis of Swales' study, Bhatia (1993), bringing psychological factors into genre interpretation, proposes a seven-step process to analyze discourse in business and professional settings.

The Sydney School. The Sydney School of genre analysis has centered its study on the basis of systemic functional linguistics which is developed by the well-known linguist Halliday. According to Halliday, the forms of language are shaped by key features of the surrounding social context.

New Rhetoric School. New Rhetoric refers to a variety of disciplines concerned with L1 teaching, including rhetoric, composition studies, and professional writing which are geologically confined to North America. The New Rhetoric Researchers have emphasized the socio-contextual aspects of genres, and are more concerned with helping university students and novice professionals understand the social functions or actions of genres and the contexts in which these genres are used.

A Comparative Study and Discussion

Data Collection

The data analyzed in this paper are introductions of both Chinese and American star hotels in their respective native language of Chinese or English. They are all currently used ones from the homepages of currently running Chinese and American star hotels. The Chinese hotels are all located in metropolitan cities including Beijing, Shanghai, Guangzhou, and other first pier cities like Xi'an, Jinan, and so on. The American hotels are similarly the metropolitan cities like New York, Washington DC, Los Angeles, Seattle, and so on. As the United States has a different system of rating hotels, the samples chosen in this paper are from hotels of about the same status in the U.S.

Communicative Purpose of Hotel Introduction

It is proposed by Swales and supported by most linguists that a genre is determined by its communicative purposes. Communicative purpose is, in fact, the defining feature by which a genre is distinguished from other genres. The main function of a hotel introduction is persuasive; the hotel introduction should be informative; the hotel introduction should be impressive; the hotel introduction should serve as the first link between the hotel and the potential customers.

Through careful study, the writer finds that both English hotel introductions and Chinese hotel introductions share the above-mentioned communicative purposes with their respective focuses slightly diversified.

Analysis of English Hotel Introductions

Table 1

Move and Step Structures Identified

Move 1	Headline (H)	A welcome and summary of the most protruding feature of the hotel
	Establishing Background (EB)	
	Step 1 Name	
Move 2	Step 2 Location	An overview of the hotel and an introduction to the hotel in terms of its external conditions
	Step 3 History	
	Step 4 Renovation	
	Endorsement (E)	
Move 3	Step1 Rating/Awards/Association Membership	Detailed introduction of the hotel in terms of its internal conditions
	Step 2 Celebrity Endorsement	
	Step 3 Press Accolades	
	Introducing Services/Facilities (IS/F)	
	Step1 Hotel Building	
	Step 2 Views	
Move 4	Step 3 Guestrooms	Displaying positive feedback from various sources
	Step 4 Function Room	
	Step 5 Dining	
	Step 6 Service	
Move 5	Offering Incentives (OI)	Provision of free items
	Conclusive Statement (CS)	
Move 6	Step 1 Invitation	Giving an end to the introduction by either extending an invitation of staying in the hotel or giving a summary to the hotel's features
	Step 2 Summary	
Move 7	Using Pressure Tactics (UPT)	Attractive discount or special offer upon immediate action

Table 2

GSP Analysis of English Hotel Introductions

Move/Step No.	Move/Step name	Number of occurrence	Frequency of occurrence	Status
Move 1	Headline (H)	27/30	90%	Obligatory
Move 2	Establish Background (EB)	30/30	100%	Obligatory
Step 1	Name	30/30	100%	Obligatory
Step 2	Location/Transportation	30/30	100%	Obligatory
Step 3	History	13/30	43%	
Step 4	Renovation	8/30	27%	
Move 3	Endorsement (E)	16/30	53%	Optional

(table 2 continued)

Move/Step No.	Move/Step name	Number of occurrence	Frequency of occurrence	Status
Step 1	Rating/Awards/Association Membership	11/30	37%	
Step 2	Celebrity Endorsement	6/30	20%	
Step 3	Press Accolades	4/30	13%	
Move 4	Introducing Services/Facilities (IS/F)	29/30	97%	Obligatory
Step 1	Hotel Building	13/30	43%	
Step 2	Views	4/30	13%	
Step 3	Guestrooms	24/30	80%	
Step 4	Function Rooms	17/30	57%	
Step 5	Dining	17/30	57%	
Step 6	Service	20/30	67%	
Move 5	Offering Incentives (OI)	11/30	37%	Optional
Move 6	Conclusive Statement (CS)	15/30	50%	Optional
Step 1	Invitation	13/30	43%	
Step 2	Summary	2/30	6%	
Move 7	Using Pressure Tactics (UPT)	13/30	43%	Optional

Analysis of Chinese Hotel Introductions

In the following figure, the additional steps in Chinese hotel introductions as compared with the English ones are put in italics while the missing move and step in CHIs as compared with the EHIs are bold.

Table 3

Move and Step Structures Identified

Move 1	Headline (H)	Telling what this article is about
Move 2	Establishing Background (EB) Step 1 Name Step 2 Location Step 3 History Step 4 Renovation *Step 5 Inventors*	An overview of the hotel and an introduction to the hotel in terms of its external conditions
Move 3	Introducing Service/Facilities (IS/F) Step 1 Hotel Building Step 2 Views Step 3 Guestrooms Step 4 Function Room Step 5 Dining Step 6 Service *Step 7 Management*	Detailed introduction of the hotel in terms of its internal conditions
Move 4	Endorsement (E) Step1 Rating/Awards/Association Membership Step 2 Celebrity Endorsement **Step 3 Press Accolades**	Displaying positive feedback from various sources
Move 5	Offering Incentives (OI)	Provision of free items
Move 6	Conclusive Statement (CS) Step 1 Invitation Step 2 Summary *Step 3 Wishes* *Step 4 Promises*	Giving an end to the introduction by either extending an invitation of staying in the hotel or give a summary to the hotel's feature
Move 7	**Using Pressure Tactics (UPT)**	**Attractive discount or special offer upon immediate action**

Table 4

GSP Analysis of Chinese Hotel Introductions

Move/Step No.	Move/Step name	Number of occurrence	Frequency of occurrence	Status
Move 1	Headline (H)	14/30	47%	Optional
Move 2	Establishing Background (EB)	30/30	100%	Obligatory
Step 1	Name	30/30	100%	Obligatory
Step 2	Location/Transportation	29/30	97%	Obligatory
Step 3	History	11/30	37%	
Step 4	Renovation	2/30	7%	
Step 5	Inventors	8/30	27%	
Move 3	Endorsement (E)	15/30	50%	Optional
Step 1	Rating/Awards/Association Membership	15/30	50%	
Step 2	Celebrity Endorsement	1/30	3%	
Move 4	Introducing Services/Facilities (IS/F)	30/30	100%	Obligatory
Step 1	Hotel Building	9/30	30%	
Step 2	Views	11/30	37%	
Step 3	Guestrooms	24/30	80%	
Step 4	Function Rooms	21/30	70%	
Step 5	Dining	22/30	73%	
Step 6	Service	20/30	67%	
Step 7	Management	10/30	33%	
Move 5	Offering Incentives (OI)	4/30	13%	Optional
Move 6	Conclusive Statement (CS)	20/30	67%	Optional
Step 1	Invitation	10/30	33%	
Step 2	Summary	7/30	23%	
Step 3	Wishes	1/30	3%	
Step 4	Promises	4/30	13%	

Conclusions

Similarities of Chinese and English Hotel Introductions

First, they share similar communicative purposes, even though their communicative purposes are not exactly identical.

Secondly, they have similar move-step structures. They both follow a "Headline → Establishing Background → Endorsement → Introducing Services/Facilities → Offering Incentives → Conclusive Statement" structure. Only in some EHIs there is an extra move of Using Pressure Statement in the end as the last move.

Differences of Chinese and English Hotel Introductions

Different move-step structures. First, in EHIs there are seven moves while in CHIs there are only six moves with the last move Using Pressure Tactics missing. This move is an optional one in EHIs; however, 43% of the collected samples adopted this move showing it is an important strategy in English hotel introductions. And as this move is to press the already inclined or half-inclined customers to take immediate action, the EHIs appear to have stronger promotional power with the adoption of this move.

Second, in EHIs Moves 1, 2, and 4 are all obligatory ones while in CHIs, only Moves 2 and 4 are obligatory. Move 1 headline which appears in 90% of EHIs only exists in 47% of the CHIs. In the realization of

this move, the EHIs mainly provide a noun phrase to demonstrate the most protruding feature of the hotel while the CHIs simply use a very general four-character word meaning "the hotel introduction" or "the hotel overview" without providing any specific information related to the hotel to capture readers attention. This shows that the CHIs do not attach much importance to the first move, and do not have effective strategies to make this move more power-carrying thus more promotional.

Third, Move 5 Offering Incentives appears in only 4 out of the 30 CHIs samples while the figure in EHIs is 11. Even though this move is an optional one in both CHIs and EHIs, the English hotel introductions obviously use this move much more than the Chinese hotel introductions do.

Forth, in Move 2 Establishing Background, the CHIs have one step of Inventors that the EHIs do not have. And in Move 4 Introducing Services/Facilities, the CHIs again have one extra step of management that never appears in all the EHIs samples collected. Even though these two steps belong to two different moves if a closer look is taken at them, it will be found that they have some inner relations. Inventors and management actually do not have direct impact on potential customers' decision-making but are more connected with the macro-aspect of the hotel. However, a large number of Chinese hotels choose to provide their potential customers with this information because they assume that a well-known inventor or management firm may be equal to good quality and service. And this is also a very popular way of thinking among the general public in China. This is a very distinctive difference between CHIs and EHIs.

In Move 6 Conclusive Statement, the EHIs have two steps while the CHIs have 4. Promises and Wishes are two extra steps in CHIs. Different from Invitation and Summary which are two common steps in both CHIs and EHIs whose function is to make the readers take action and deepen their impression of the hotel, Promises and Wishes are mainly to establish good relations with the customers. Based on Hall's high and low context theory and Hofstede's (1980) five cultural dimensions theory, many scholars have done extensive research in this field. According to their research, the United States is a low-context country; people's work, private life, and personal relations are all separated. China, on the contrary, is a high-context country, and people's purpose of communication is to establish and maintain interpersonal relations. This well explains why in many cases Wishes and Promises are used to end the Chinese hotel introductions. A certain number of American hotel introductions are ended with pressure tactics with the focus to achieve immediate result in the promotion and this move does not exist in CHIs.

Different focus in word distribution. After careful analysis of the 60 samples, it is found that EHIs and CHIs devote their biggest space to different moves. For EHIs, the background, especially the location and transportation of the hotel is their biggest focus, while for CHIs the focus is the services and facilities.

The study shows that the total number of characters appearing in the 30 Chinese hotel introductions is 11,855. And of all these characters, 2,297 are used to describe the location or transportation accounting for 19.4% while 6,900 characters are adopted to introduce the services and facilities accounting for 58.2%. In the English hotel introductions, the total number of words is 7,403, among which 2,563 words are about location and transportation and 2,276 words are about services and facilities accounting for 34.6% and 30.7% respectively.

In CHIs, the characters used to introduce services and facilities which take up about 58.2% of the total characters are three times of the characters used to describe locations and transportation which take up only 19.4% of the total. In EHIs, the number of words on services and facilities is similar to that on locations and transportations. If a horizontal comparison is made, it will be found that the numbers of words used in

describing these two aspects of the hotel take up 77.6% and 65.3% in CHIs and EHIs respectively, almost the same.

So, in both CHIs and EHIs, the location/transportation and services/facilities are the most important focus. However, the CHIs give more attention to services/facilities which is about three times of that given to location/transportation. EHIs seem to attach equal importance to the two aspects.

Difference in style.

First-person vs. third-person perspective. In the Chinese hotel introductions, the writer in most cases uses the hotel's name to refer to the hotel. However, in EHIs, "we" is the most frequently adopted word when referring to the hotel. This shows that in CHIs, the writer tends to compose the introduction from a third person perspective. In only 3 out of 30 Chinese hotel introductions exist the words "我" or "我们" which mean "I" or "we" in English. Similarly, when addressing the readers the CHIs prefer to use "各界宾朋"—friends from all walks of life in English instead of "you".

However, in EHIs, things are totally different. "We" is the most frequently used word when referring to the hotel and "you" appears in 85% of the EHIs.

I/We-oriented vs. uou-oriented. Even though the CHIs seldom adopt "we" as the pronoun to refer to the hotel, the attitude exhibited in the CHIs is rather I/We oriented. This means that CHIs focus on what the hotel can provide, which consequently lack the force in pushing the readers into immediate action. On the contrary, the EHIs are more concerned with what the customers can get. The organization of the EHIs are you (customer)-oriented. Though the information provided is still about the hotel, it is given from the readers point of view thus makes the introduction more persuasive. So EHIs compared with CHIs have stronger promotional power.

Four-character phrases in CHIs. Four-character phrases are widely used by Chinese people in various writings to create a kind of formal and stately feeling. It is the same in Chinese hotel introduction writing. Four-character phrases can be seen in almost all the 30 CHIs. Many of them carry little meaning and cannot give readers a clear idea of what it is really about or like. For example: "四合宾馆, 礼遇八方, 气派非凡, 一枝独秀, 傲立京都." These are surely very florid expressions that can impress readers at first glance. However, the problem is that after feeling the aesthetic beauty the readers are not able to know anything real about the hotel, only very abstract concept but nothing concrete.

Suggestions on Hotel Introduction Writing and Translation

First, attention should be paid to the differences in the move-step structure of the CHIs and EHIs. When a Chinese hotel introduction needs to be translated into English, the translator needs first rewrite the introduction to cater to the western readers' needs and customs instead of merely translating the Chinese into corresponding English. In the process of rewriting, the moves that commonly appear in EHIs but are missing in the CHIs should be supplied while those existing in CHIs but never seen in EHIs should be eliminated.

Second, when writing or translating the hotel introductions, the different orientation and person perspective should always be borne in mind. The English hotel introductions should be more of a first-person perspective and you-oriented.

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