

Research on the Translation of Tourism Words From the Perspective of Skopos Theory: A Case Study of Wuzhen

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China's tourism industry has seen rapid growth due to economic and technological advancements. Tourism promotional materials are the primary channel through which foreign tourists obtain information about Chinese tourism. To accurately convey tourism information and attract more visitors to China, the quality of translated tourism texts is particularly crucial. From the perspective of Skopos Theory, taking the town of Wuzhen as an example, this article conducts research and discussion on the translation of tourism words. At the theoretical level, this article demonstrates the feasibility of Skopos Theory in guiding the translation of tourism texts; at the practical level, it provides reference suggestions for the translation of tourism texts. Guided by the three principles of Skopos Theory, by analyzing typical cases, the author flexibly applied translation skills, such as paraphrase, omission, amplification, and literal translation to ensure that the translated content not only accurately conveys the historical and cultural information and tourism characteristics of the destination, but also provides foreign tourists with a higher quality tourism experience, thereby more effectively spreading Chinese culture.

Keywords: translation of tourism publicity, Skopos Theory, translation strategy

Introduction

In today's globalized context, the tourism industry has become a key link for cultural exchange and economic cooperation. China's tourism industry has experienced rapid growth due to economic and technological advancements, attracting an increasing number of foreign tourists with its rich and mysterious tourism resources (Lu, 2006, p. 78). The translation of tourism vocabulary, as a core part of cultural dissemination, is crucial for shaping the international image of tourist destinations and enhancing the visitor experience through its accuracy and appeal (Zhang, 2000, pp. 54-56).

Wuzhen, a paragon of southern China's water towns, draws a multitude of domestic and international tourists with its rich historical and cultural legacy and distinctive folk customs. The author of this article investigates the translation strategies and efficacy of Wuzhen's tourism lexicon through the Skopos Theory. This endeavor seeks to deepen foreign tourists' comprehension of China's traditional culture, historical context, and social customs, thereby enhancing their understanding and appreciation of Chinese culture (Li, 2014, p. 86). Additionally, such translation efforts can stimulate economic growth in the local and surrounding areas, bolstering related sectors, such as dining, accommodation, and retail.

The significance of translating tourism texts is evident in fostering communication and cooperation in international tourism, facilitating the dissemination, and understanding of culture, enhancing the quality and

experience of tourism services, supporting the sustainable development of tourism, and bolstering cultural confidence and identity (Chen, 2007, p. 60). Consequently, when translating tourism vocabulary, it is crucial to maintain both accuracy and vividness.

Literature Review

The tourism text not only contains a wealth of background information about the scenic spot, but also covers a variety of text types. A good tourism text can stimulate tourists' interest in scenic spots. Tourism text translation is to convert the original text information into English in order to convey the information of the scenic spot to foreign tourists.

Many scholars in China have used various translation theories to study tourism text translation, some focusing on the current situation of tourism text translation, and some discussing the problems and strategies in tourism translation. For example, Zhu Yiping (2005) pointed out that different geographical environments, historical backgrounds, religious beliefs and social customs will lead to translation problems (p. 159). Ge and Gu (2005) pointed out that there are grammatical errors, Chinese-English and confusion in the translation of Chinese-English tourism. Although the current research does not provide a comprehensive analysis of the problem and the actual case study, it is found that the use of Skopos Theory to analyze the translation of Wuzhen tourism texts can solve the language and cultural problems in a targeted manner and reduce the confusion caused by cultural differences.

Foreign scholars also expressed their views. As Gutt (2000) pointed out, cultural elements deserve careful consideration when translating travel materials, as visitors from different countries have their own unique cultural backgrounds and cognitive preferences (pp. 23-29). Baker (1991) stressed that one of the basic principles that translators should follow in the translation process is to ensure the vividness of the text (pp. 55-67). Given the crucial role that tourism materials play in attracting tourists to many scenic spots and shaping their travel behavior, it is important to use vivid expressions in the translation of such texts. Foreign scholars place significant emphasis on the cultural connotations inherent within tourism text translation. Such texts are typically replete with cultural elements, encompassing historical, customary, and value-based aspects.

Theoretical Framework

Translation is an activity with a clear purpose, and the translator must consider all relevant factors to ensure that the translated text has the desired effect for the readers of the target language (Katharina & Hans, 2014). Hans Femmer, the forerunner of Skopos Theory, proposed a new perspective on this theory, and Nord was the master of Skopos Theory, who not only perfected Skopos Theory, but also systematically organized various academic ideas and proposed the principle of fidelity.

Foreign research on Skopos Theory primarily concentrates on the domains of scientific and technological translation as well as literary translation. Katharina (2014) proposed that translation is not only a language conversion process, but should also be regarded as an activity of transferring linguistic and non-verbal communicative symbols from the source language to the target language, which is essentially a communicative act. In China, Chen (2021) applied Skopos Theory to poetry translation analysis. They argue that although the purposefulness of literary works may not be as obvious, this does not mean that they lack purposefulness. In any case, no matter whether the work adopts the strategy of naturalization or alienation, or whether it is a literal translation or a paraphrase, the translator's behavior is purpose-driven.

In summary, the research on Skopos Theory mainly focuses on the above aspects, but there are relatively few studies on tourism texts. The purpose of this dissertation is to use Skopos Theory to guide the translation of tourism texts and to explore the characteristics of such texts. In order to achieve the desired translation results, the translator must adhere to the principles of purpose, faithfulness and coherence to ensure that the translated text can effectively achieve the communicative purpose of the target audience (Christiane, 2016).

Analysis of Chinese-English Translation of Tourism Texts from the Perspective of Skopos Theory

From the Skopos Theory, translators need to take into account the cultural background, mindset and language habits of Western tourists, in order to attract tourists, stimulate their interest in visiting, and effectively promote the destination. This paper selects the translation materials of Wuzhen's official tourism website as a case study to discuss the strategy of translating tourism texts.

Skopos Rule

The Skopos Theory states that translation should follow the "Skopos Rule," ensuring translations meet the expectations of the target language recipients within their cultural context.

Paraphrase. To ensure translated content aligns with the source language's primary functions, translators may abandon the original text's literal meaning.

Example 1. 中国最后的枕水人家。

Translations: The Last Riverine Town in China.

Analysis: The phrase "中国最后的枕水人家" comes from Du Xunhe's poem "Sending People to Wu," describing ancient Suzhou dwellings by the water. The term "枕水" here refers to "those houses built right next to the water's edge." The translator translated it as "Riverine Town," which not only highlights the unique character of Wuzhen, helps tourists understand the title and cultural background more accurately, prevents possible misunderstandings and ambiguities, but also attracts the interest of tourists while promoting and praising Wuzhen.

Example 2. 古建筑外观上保留了古色古香的韵味.....

Translation: The exterior of the ancient buildings retains the ancient charm...

The Chinese idiom "古色古香," imbued with poetry, is used to describe objects that embody the style and charm of ancient times. The translator has cleverly transformed this artistic conception into "the ancient charm," effectively conveying the ancient allure and appeal preserved in the appearance of historic buildings. When English readers come across the term "ancient charm," they associate it with the unique appeal and historical significance of ancient architecture, which is consistent with the cultural charm conveyed by the original text. This conversion exemplifies the approximate expression of the original text's artistic conception in paraphrase.

Conversion. Conversion entails altering the part of speech or the role of words in a sentence, ensuring that the original text's meaning remains intact, so that the translation aligns with the expression, style, and idiomatic usage of the target language.

Example 3. 东栅水乡风貌完整, 生活气息浓郁, 手工作坊和传统商铺各具特色, 特色展馆琳琅满目。

Translation: East Gate water town has a complete landscape and a rich flavor of life. Handmade workshops and traditional shops have their own features, and the featured exhibition halls are dazzling.

Regarding parts of speech conversion, Chinese adjectival phrases are frequently transformed into English noun phrases or verb phrases to accommodate the structural requirements of English sentences. For example, “风貌完整” is translated as “complete landscape,” adopting an adjective and noun structure, and “生活气息浓郁” is rendered as “rich flavor of life,” also employing an adjective and noun structure, thereby ensuring the entire sentence aligns more closely with English idiomatic expression.

Example 4. 古镇不再仅仅是一个“活化石”、“博物馆”，而是完美地融合了观光与度假功能。

Translation: The ancient town is no longer just a “living fossil” or “museum,” but a perfect integration of sightseeing and vacation functions.

In the original text, the phrase “完美地融合了” was translated as “a perfect integration of,” which translates the Chinese verb structures into English noun phrase structures accurately and fluently, following the English expression habits. In English, normalization structures are often used to describe the characteristics or functions of things, which can successfully convey the meaning and function of the original text to English readers. This alteration not only preserves the core meaning of the original sentence, but also expresses the result of the integration through the use of the noun phrase “a perfect integration of,” making the entire sentence more compact in structure and simultaneously appearing more idiomatic and fluent in linguistic expression.

Coherence Rule

The coherence rule requires translations to be intra-textually coherent, readable, and acceptable, allowing recipients to understand and find meaning within the target language’s cultural context and communicative setting.

Omission. Omission in translation is the process where certain words from the original text may be omitted and do not require translation.

Example 5. 乌镇的名人大家数不胜数，自古名人荟萃学子辈出……

Translation: Wuzhen has been home to numerous noble figures since ancient times....

“数不胜数”和“自古辈出” expressed a similar meaning, emphasizing that Wuzhen gave birth to many outstanding figures. Therefore, there is no need to reuse the two idioms, and to omit them will not affect the transmission of the meaning of the original text, but can make the translation more concise. By applying omission techniques, the translation maintains the essence of the original text, making the language more concise, natural, and fluent, in accordance with English expression norms.

Example 6. 清明日起，四乡蚕农齐赴普静寺烧香祈蚕……

Translation: The sericulture farmers from four townships go to Pujing Temple to burn incense and pray for silkworms

In this sentence, “齐赴” is translated as “go to.” Here, “齐” signifies together or jointly. This may be because “go to” inherently conveys a sense of collective action in English, or perhaps the translator deemed it unnecessary to explicitly emphasize the notion of “together,” thereby opting for a more concise expression. This omission represents a simplification of the original phrase. This approach also avoids semantic ambiguity or redundancy that might result from literal translation, thereby enhancing the quality and readability of the translation.

Amplification. Amplification is a translation technique that adds words to convey the original meaning more clearly in the target language.

Example 7. 佛徒为此乃“慈航普渡”，道徒称这是“照冥引路”。

Translation: Buddhists and disciples refers to this as “Compassionate navigation and universal crossing,” and Taoists referred to it as “Illuminating the darkness to guide the way.” “慈航普渡” is a Buddhist term that specifically refers to the act of Bodhisattvas (such as Guanyin) extending their compassion to save all sentient beings. The translation breaks down the four-character idiom into two verb-object structures, adding “航行” (navigation) and “普渡” (universal) to explain the imagery. By verbifying, the translation enhances the sense of action. “照冥引路” is translated as “Illuminating the darkness to guide the way”: In the original text, “照冥” refers to a Taoist ritual that illuminates the netherworld and guides the way for the souls of the deceased (such as the “Fang Heling” event during the Zhongyuan Festival to guide the wandering souls). The translation adds “黑暗” (darkness) and “指引” (guide), converting the static noun into a dynamic action, clearly expressing the purpose of the Taoist ritual - to dispel the darkness and guide the souls.

Example 8. 全部点清则寒尽春来，开始耕作，意在敦促人们在消寒休闲中不忘耕作。

Translation: When they are all dyed, the winter is over and spring begins. People start farming, which is intended to urge people not to forget farming in the leisure.

This translation supplements the implicit information and cultural background of the original text through the method of adding translation, making it easier for English readers to understand the folk cultural connotation. “开始耕作” is translated to “People start farming,” while the original text did not clearly specify the subject of the action, and the translation adds “people” as the subject, which conforms to the mandatory requirement of English grammar for the subject and avoids ambiguity. This translation, through addition and supplementation, makes the expression of the original text more specific, clear, and complete. The added translation not only enriches the semantics of the sentence, but also enhances its logic and expressive effect, making it easier for readers to understand the intention of the original text.

Fidelity Rule

The fidelity rule, a cornerstone in the realm of translation, dictates that the faithfulness to the original text hinges not only on the translator’s intent, but also on their profound comprehension. It is a principle that underscores the importance of preserving the essence, the spirit, and the nuances of the source material.

Literal translation. Literal translation aims to be as faithful as possible to the original text’s literal meaning, preserving the source language’s expression and conveying the original meaning and form accurately.

Example 9. 西栅历时四载磨砺，投资十多亿的西栅景区占地面积4.92平方公里，由十二个碧水环绕的岛屿组成，真正呈现了中国江南水乡古镇的风貌。

Translation: After four years of hard work and investment of over one billion yuan, West Gate Scenic Spot covers an area of 4.92 square kilometers and is composed of twelve islands surrounded by clear water, truly presenting the style of an ancient town in Jiangnan, China.

The phrase “碧水环绕” is not just a simple description, it depicts a peaceful and beautiful scene, as if one can hear the gentle whispers of water waves hitting the shore and feel the coolness brought by the crystal clear lake water. And “surrounded by clear water” attempts to capture this natural tranquility, taking readers into an ancient town surrounded by blue waves and experiencing that isolated tranquility. When translating “江南水乡古镇”, the poetic cultural term “江南” is retained, making readers feel as if they are in that place full of historical sedimentation and cultural heritage. The original sentence “历时四载磨砺，投资十多亿...” reveals the accumulation of time and huge investment. Translated as “After four years of...” preserves the sense of time and

scale of investment in the original text. Although it has not been adjusted to the more common post structure in English, this choice also reflects respect and preservation of the original structure.

Example 10. 景区内保存有精美的明清建筑三十余万平方米, 横贯景区东西的西栅老街长度达1.8公里.....

译文: Ming and Qing architecture preserved in the scenic spot. The length of West Gate Old Street, which runs from east to west of the scenic spot, is 1.8 kilometers....

In English, the phrase “景区内保存有...” in the original text is translated as “There are...preserved in the scenic spot,” preserving the subject-predicate-object structure of the original. The sentence “横贯景区东西的西栅老街长度达...” is rendered as “The length of West Gate Old Street, which runs from east to west across the scenic spot, is...,” which, although incorporating a defining clause to modify “West Gate Old Street,” retains the meaning and structure of the original as a whole.

Combination. Combination is the translation of Chinese phrases into English parallel or compound sentences. This process involves not just a simple word-for-word conversion but a thoughtful reimagining of the original phrases to capture their essence in the target language.

Example 11. 街区内的名胜古迹、手工作坊、经典展馆、宗教建筑、民俗风情、休闲场所让人流连忘返, 自然风光美不胜收, 泛光夜景气势磅礴。

Translation: The scenic spots, workshops, classic exhibition halls, religious buildings, folk customs and leisure places in the block make people linger, with beautiful natural scenery and magnificent floodlit night scenes.

In terms of sentence structure, Chinese predominantly employs short sentences and parallel constructions, whereas English places greater emphasis on subordinate structures and the use of conjunctions. The original text features numerous parallel elements, and during translation, the order or structure might need to be altered to prevent excessively lengthy English sentences. The translator condenses the three clauses into a single complex sentence, linking the subsequent parts with “with”: “...make people linger, with beautiful natural scenery and magnificent floodlit night scenes.” The continuous Chinese sentence is transformed into a main-from-complex sentence in English, treating “自然风光” and “夜景” as adverbials of accompaniment that depend on the main clause “make people linger;” the logical connection is achieved through the preposition “with,” which aligns with the “syntactic combination” feature of English.

Example 12. 祭祖扫墓、踏青赏春, 各地皆然。

Translation: Ancestor worship, tomb sweeping, and spring outings are common customs everywhere.

This sentence combines two four-character phrases into one English phrase. “踏青” and “赏春” both refer to “outdoor activities in spring.” The combined translation “spring outings” is both concise and in line with English expression habits, avoiding redundancy. In translation, these customs are translated as “Ancestor worship, tomb sweeping, and spring outings,” which have counterparts in English culture that have been suitably adapted to better align with the cultural context of English readers. This approach of cultural adaptability in translation ensures not only linguistic accuracy, but also cultural accessibility.

Conclusion

This part serves as a critical reflection of the study’s strengths and areas that require further exploration, offering readers a comprehensive understanding of the research’s scope and depth.

In order to effectively disseminate China’s rich history and culture and promote a thriving tourism industry, translators must translate tourism texts accurately in order to convey accurate information to a wider group of

foreign tourists, who will take a keen interest in China's ancient and vibrant land to embark on a journey of discovery. In the process of translating Chinese tourism texts, translators should deeply understand the intended purpose of the translation and the cultural background and reading habits of the target readers under the guidance of the Skopos Theory of translation.

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