

Application of the Skopos Theory, Cooperative Rules, and Communicative Translation in Chinese-English Tourism Translation

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ABSTRACT

This study takes tourism texts of well-known scenic spots and historical sites in China as subjects, and Skopos Theory, Cooperative Rules, and Communicative Translation as guiding principles, to propose suitable and effective strategies or techniques for Chinese-English tourism translation. This study can provide enlightenment for those who devote themselves to tourism translation by offering some regulations to follow and some rules to go by.

Keywords: Chinese-English tourism translation, skopos theory, cooperative rules, communicative translation.

1. INTRODUCTION

The increasing number of travelers who desire for exploring an exotic cultural experience has made tourism a rosy, sunshine, and green industry in present-day society. As a country with time-honored civilization, significant culture, and spectacular scenery, China has always been a popular tourist market that attracts numerous tourists both at home and abroad. Hence, the accurate, fluent, appropriate, and comprehensive Chinese-English tourism translation is of great significance to boost the development of the Chinese tourism industry.

A decent translation cannot be completed without the guidance of translation theories. Therefore, this study will present the application of three translation theories— Skopos Theory, Cooperative Rules, and Communicative Translation — in Chinese-English tourism translation.

2. SKOPOS THEORY

Proposed by Hans J. Vermeer, the Skopos theory regards the “skopos” which is the “purpose” of translation as the prime principle that determines the translation methods and strategies to produce a functionally adequate result. There are three major rules in Skopos theory to guide the translation process: the

skopos rule, coherence rule, and fidelity rule. The skopos rule is the top-ranking rule for translation. The fidelity rule is subordinate to the coherence rule while both of them are subordinate to the skopos rule [5].

2.1 Skopos Rule

The skopos rule states that the target text should function “in the situation in which it is used and with the people who want to use it” [5]. In other words, the target text should adhere to the skopos of translation. In view of that, it is essential to determine the purpose of translation first. According to Reiss’s text typology, tourism text can be divided into either informative text (to transmit the information, knowledge, opinions, etc.) or operative text (to appeal or to persuade the reader). Hence, it is reasonable to infer that the main purpose of tourism text is to attract potential tourists to visit a tourist destination by conveying information and arousing their interests.

Example 1:

Source Text (ST): 上世纪 20 年代出土于辉县、现存于国家博物馆的子龙鼎是我国已发现的最早最大的圆形青铜器。

Target Text (TT): Zilong Ding (Ding is an ancient Chinese vessel that represents power and status), unearthed in the 1920s in Huixian County and stored in

the National Museum now, is the oldest and biggest bronze ware with a round shape found in China so far.

Since most foreign readers are not familiar with Chinese cultures, so they fail to realize that the bronze ware “鼎” (Ding) stands for power and status in ancient China. Guided by the skopos rule, the TT uses the amplification method to add the cultural connotation of “鼎” (Ding) while translating “子龙鼎” (Zilong Ding) [6]. In this way, the target readers can have a clear understanding of Zilong Ding and know more about Chinese culture.

2.2 Coherence Rule

The coherence rule claims that the translation should be comprehensible and meaningful for target readers.

Example 2:

ST: 西沽公园具有独特的自然风光，园内树木葱郁，绿草如茵，茂密如廊的树荫，绿水荡漾的湖泊，处处恬静优雅，无不显示自然风光的美。

TT: The Xigu Park boasts a unique natural beauty. Inside the park are verdant and luxuriant trees, and green lawn.

One remarkable feature of Chinese is the abundant use of four-character expressions or phrases to increase the sense of aesthetics and vividness, even though some of them are repetitive and useless. For example, “树木葱郁”, “绿草如茵” and “茂密如廊” are all used to depict mainly the verdant and luxuriant trees. However, English readers are not keen on this flowery linguistic style and may get confused by the repeated expression. Besides, English readers prefer the genuine and plain description of the natural scenic scenery to get the concrete and detailed information they need at ease. Thus, the sentence “处处恬静优雅，无不显示自然风光的美” is unnecessary to translate since it mainly shows peoples’ feelings after seeing the scenery rather than the description of the scenery. Therefore, to adhere to the coherence rule, the TT uses the omission method to reduce the redundant and superfluous information, thereby making the translation more comprehensible.

2.3 Fidelity Rule

The fidelity rule emphasizes that there must be coherence between the target text and the source text.

Example 3:

ST: 上盘松胜，蟠曲翳天;

中盘石胜，千奇百怪;

下盘水胜，涓流不息。

TT: Pines at the top-level, with the branches curling and obscuring the sky;

Rocks at the mid-level, with all sorts of wonderful things;

Waters at the low-level, with tiny streams running on.

When depicting features of natural scenery, Chinese are inclined to choose four-character expressions and symmetrical words, which can be reflected in the above example excerpted from the official website of Panshan Mountain. The features of Panshan Mountain such as “水胜，石胜，松胜” in Chinese are summed up to in three short and concise clauses. Besides, the structure of the three short clauses is presented in the form of symmetry, such as “上，中，下”. Through the comparison between the source text and the target text, it can be found that the translated version retains not only the content of the Chinese version, but also the aesthetic value, that is, the rhythm and parallelism. In this respect, the translation is faithful to the source text to follow the fidelity rule.

3. COMMUNICATIVE TRANSLATION

According to Newmark, communicative translation attempts to produce on its readers an effect as close as possible to that obtained on the readers of the original [5]. The application of communicative translation can be seen in the following examples.

Example 4:

ST: 济公劫富济贫，深受贫苦人民爱戴。

TT: Jigong, Robin Hood in China, robbed the rich and helped the poor.

In line with the rule of communicative translation, the TT uses the analogy method to compare Jigong to Robin Hood, the hero of the forest in English literature, which not only deepens the understanding of foreign tourists’ image of Jigong’s characters, but also narrows the distance between Chinese and Western cultures and enhances the intimacy [7].

Example 5:

ST: “津门故里”，“沽上艺苑”几个金光闪闪的大字，雕刻在入街口的牌坊上。

TT: An archway stands on either end of the street, bearing the golden characters Jin Men Gu Li (Origin of Tianjin) on one and Gu Shang Yi Yuan (Art Gallery of Tianjin) on the other.

In China, inscriptions are usually carved with four Chinese characters which possess a lot of precious cultural and historical value. In the two inscriptions “津门故里” and “沽上艺苑”，“故里” in Chinese means origin and source, and “沽上” is another name of Tianjin. Considering the fact that foreign readers fail to know the cultural value of these four-character inscriptions, the translator chooses to translate the “津门故里” and “沽上艺苑” to “Origin of Tianjin” and “Art Gallery of Tianjin”

respectively by means of transliteration to supplements extra explanation in the brackets. In this way, the translation can be properly understood by the target text readers, thereby achieving the communicative effect.

4. COOPERATIVE PRINCIPLE

The cooperative principle is the assumption that participants in a conversation normally attempt to be informative, truthful, relevant, and clear. The cooperative principle is broken down into four different maxims [4]:

- (1) Quantity: give the amount of information that is necessary; do not give too much or too little.
- (2) Quality: say only what you know to be true or what you can support.
- (3) Relevance: what you say should be relevant to the conversation.
- (4) Manner: say what you need to say in a way that is appropriate to the message you wish to convey and which (normally) will be understood by the receiver.

Although the four maxims of the cooperative principle are initially used in conversation analysis, they are also instructive on tourism translation.

4.1 Quantity Maxim

The maxim of quantity requires the translator to deliver the information that makes the target reader produce the same response information as the source reader. In the Chinese tourist information, since some cultural allusions and connotations are well known to all the Chinese, it is not always mentioned in the ST. Therefore, when translating these materials, the translator should complete this information, otherwise, the insufficient information will hinder communication and violate the maxim of quantity.

Example 6:

ST: 以中国传统吉语“五福临门”命名的“五福塔”，金碧辉煌。

TT: Five Blessings Tower, which is named from the traditional auspicious words “five blessings come to one's house” is bright and brilliant.

First of all, the “五福塔” and “五福临门” in the ST are translated as “Five Blessings Tower” and “five blessings come to one's house” instead of the simple transliteration as “Wufu Tower” and “wufu comes to one's house”. So, we can easily understand that the translator is trying to explain the meaning of “五福”. However, even such a translation still violates the maxim of quantity for English readers, because the translation does not explain the true meaning of the “五福”. Therefore, in order to accurately convey the source text

information to foreign readers, it is vital to add some necessary explanations so that they can truly understand the meaning of the “五福”. The term “五福” originated from “Book of Songs” and “Hong Fan (Great Plan)”. The first “福” is “longevity”, the second “福” is “wealth”, the third “福” is “health”, the fourth “福” is “virtue” and the fifth “福” is “good end”. Therefore, it is recommended to translate the ST as follows:

Modified TT: Wufu Tower, which is named from the traditional auspicious words “wufu comes to one's house” is brilliant and magnificent (wufu means longevity, wealth, health, virtue and good end) [3].

4.2 Quality Maxim

The maxim of quality requires the TT to truly reflect the information of the ST. Therefore, the translator must accurately convey the source text information and cannot arbitrarily change the content of the source text. Mistranslation and random translation are not allowed.

Example 7:

ST: 洞中千姿百态的石笋、石柱、石幔林立，形成许多瑰丽奇绝、妙趣横生的奇特景致，令人叹为观止。

TT: This tastefully limestone cave is festooned with a variety of multi-colored stalactites. Stalagmites and stone pillar, screens and flowers.

This translation obviously violates the maxim of quality. First of all, the translator mistakenly thought that “瑰丽奇绝” means “multi-colored”. According to the Modern Chinese Dictionary, “瑰丽奇绝” actually means “wonderful”, so the word “wonderful” in the translation can express the information of the source text. Secondly, some false information has also been added in the translation. Although the terms “形成许多...的奇特景致” is included in the source text, the factors such as flowers and screens have never been mentioned and the word “variety” is sufficient to express the message of “千姿百态” and “许多景致”. The translator has arbitrarily added these information which are not true. Therefore, it is recommended to translate as follows:

Modified TT: This tastefully limestone cave is festooned with a variety of wonderful and interesting stalactites, stalagmites and stone pillars [3].

4.3 Relevance Maxim

The maxim of relation requires that TT must be related to the content of ST and its pragmatic purpose. Hence, the translator should fully understand the information provided by the ST and its pragmatic purpose, and look for relevant information in the translated language to make the translation have the best relationship with the readers to ensure the success of communication.

Example 8:

ST: 欲把西湖比西子，淡妆浓抹总相宜。

TT: West Lake may be compared to Beauty Xizi at her best, Beautiful whether richly adored or plainly dressed.

Xizi is another name of Xi Shi, one of the four great beauties in ancient China, is involved in the translation. However, foreigners do not know that Xi Shi is one of the four beauties. Therefore, although the TT has completely conveyed the information of the ST, it cannot bring the best connection between the translation and target readers. The readers must make spare great efforts to think about who “Xizi” is and how beautiful she is. However, if we add “Chinese Cleopatra” after “Xizi” in the translation, to show that the status of the beauty Xishi in China is equivalent to that of the beauty Cleopatra in the eyes of Westerners, all the target readers may be quite clear immediately and easily understand the beauty of Hangzhou West Lake with great curiosity. So, it is recommended to translate as follows:

Modified TT: West Lake may be compared to Beauty XiZi (Chinese Cleopatra) at her best, Beautiful whether richly adored or plainly dressed [1].

D.Manner Maxim

The maxim of manner requires TT to be clear and concise to avoid ambiguities, and simplify sentences as much as possible to avoid repetition.

Example 9:

ST: 这里三千座奇峰拔地而起，形态各异，有的似玉柱神鞭，顶天立地；有的像铜墙铁壁，巍然屹立；有的如晃板垒卵，摇摇欲坠；有的若盆景古董，玲珑剔透……神奇而又真实，迷离而又实在，不是艺术创造胜似艺术创造，令人叹为观止。

TT: 3000 crags rise in various shapes. They are like whips or pillars propping up the sky; or huge walls, solid and sound; or immense eggs piled on an unsteady border; or miniature rocky or curios Fantastic but actual, dreamy but real! They are not artistic works. One cannot help in marveling at the acme of perfection of Nature’s creation.

The TT is a word-for-word translation from the ST with many misunderstandings. For example, why whips can “propping up the sky” and “what kind of eggs” are the immense eggs. In addition, the translation seems relatively verbose and wordy, which is inconsistent with the features of conciseness and clarity in English, so it obviously violates the maxim of manner. Therefore, the modified TT should eliminate ambiguity with simple and direct terms and sentences conforming to English language habits, instead of just the literal translation. So, it is recommended to translate as follows:

Modified TT: 3000 crags rise in various shapes — high pillars, impregnable walls, shaky boards, exquisite miniature, forming unforgettably fantastic but real images [2].

5. CONCLUSION

This study analyzes the Chinese-English translation of tourism texts based on the Skopos Theory, Cooperative Rules, and Communicative Translation. Several suitable and effective translation techniques for these publicity materials are also proposed. It is expected that this study can provide insights into Chinese-English tourism translation.

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