Cross-Cultural Study of Text Types under Reiss' Text Typology Theory—Taking *Glimpse of Gardens in Eastern China* as Example

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Abstract. Recently, with the development of the medium carrying information, text types of traditional literature are changing rapidly. Texts that synthesize different types of textual expressions are increasingly being popular among readers. Therefore, more translation studies are focusing on the specific types of texts. This paper is based on Reiss' text typology framework, selecting the English text of the book *Glimpse of Gardens in Eastern China* as the research object, and analyzing the text types and writing strategies of the selected texts. As a classic masterwork introducing Chinese gardens, this book combines both artistic and explanatory elements, achieving a good balance between professionalism and accessibility. Its content has certain research significance for English translation of Chinese texts in specific fields, and it is also a significant challenge for translators. Translators are required not only to possess professional skills, but also to have good aesthetic literacy. Through case analysis, it can be found that the selected texts include informative text and expressive text. The former is used to explain the arrangement of landscape and architectural elements in the design of Chinese gardens, while the latter is used to convey the author's aesthetic interests.

Keywords: Translation Study, Text Types, *Glimpse of Gardens in Eastern China*.

1 Introduction

In recent years, translation studies have shifted towards specific fields. Many scholars' practical application of translation theory also tends towards specialization and subdivision. In China, many scholars focus on how Chinese culture and its aesthetics are translated. A key question for these scholars is how to effectively convey unique features of Chinese culture in English.

The issue of how to convey knowledge and connotations in a specific field through translation has always been a literary and artistic topic worthy of attention. Due to the difficulties of decently delivering above elements, many classic works that can reflect Chinese culture and aesthetics have not been fully studied and spread.

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This paper uses the theory of text types to analyze the original English text of the book *Glimpse of Gardens in Eastern China*. The author of this book, Tong Jun (also known as Chuin Tung), is a famous Chinese architect. In his later years, he wrote a large number of works related to bilingual Chinese and English in order to introduce the features and aesthetics of Chinese gardens to the world, especially gardens in Suzhou, China. The author masters both Chinese and English languages, and as a famous researcher in the field of architecture, has conducted in-depth research on the design and construction of gardens in eastern China.

In recent years, some scholars have conducted analysis on Tong's works. His written works basically focus on architectural criticism, architectural history, and garden history [1]. These scholars mostly have a background in the construction industry and have conducted research by using methods of multi-text reading and discourse analysis. For example, they focus on the architectural critiques written by Tong Jun that targeted the International Style of design [2]. Research on Tong's English works and their Chinese translations remains limited, with most existing studies appearing in the form of graduate theses. Therefore, this paper mainly starts from the case of specific texts content in *Glimpse of Gardens in Eastern China* and analyzes it under the guidance of text type theory, aiming to enrich the content of such research.

In order to examine the language strategy of English Chinese bilingualism in the process of spreading Chinese culture, this paper chooses the original English text from the author's book *Glimpse of Gardens in Eastern China (2018)*. This paper takes the English text of essay collection in the field of architecture as an example, aiming to provide insights for professional Chinese to English translation, and explore effective language strategies and translation methods in the process of promoting Chinese culture.

2 Literature Review

This chapter reviews studies on text types that introduced by Katharina Reiss. This theory, text typology, belongs to the German functionalist, which focuses on the equivalence between languages in translation.

This paper employs text types, also known as text typology, as its main theoretical framework. Developed by Katharina Reiss, this approach classifies texts into four main types, which are informative text type, expressive text type, operative text type, and audio-medial texts. Each requires different translation strategies to fulfill its specific purpose. By analyzing text types, translators can select appropriate methods to achieve their intended goals in translation.

2.1 Studies on Functional Theories of Translation

The functionalism has had a significant influence in the field of translation studies since the late 20th century. Contemporary linguistic typology represents the functionalism, one of the two main approaches in modern linguistics [3]. The representative figures of this school include scholars such as Nord, Reiss, and Vermeer. Some key works, such

as Nord's *Text Analysis in Translation: Theory, Methodology, and Didactic Application of a Model for Translation-Oriented Text Analysis*, Reiss' *Type, Kind, and Individuality of Text: Decision Making in Translation* proposed some important theories of this school. Functionalist scholars have proposed the Skopos Theory, which no longer focuses solely on the transition between two languages, but studies the equivalence between languages and cultural factors.

Translation is not only about interpreting language, but also a cross-cultural communication behavior. Reiss and Vermeer developed Skopos theory in their work, and this book was translated and by Christine Nord in 2014. The text is crafted with a purpose, whether clearly defined or loosely held. It constitutes an intentional "act," directed toward another person to achieve a particular goal [4]. Through their studies, interaction such as exchanging thoughts and ideas becomes "communication" when it primarily relies on language - a process naturally shaped by its context, including both internal and external factors. Therefore, they studied translation theory related to translation and interpretation actions in their works. They acknowledge Catford's definition of equivalence, in complete translation, source language (SL) and target language (TL) texts or items are considered equivalent when they are interchangeable within a specific context.

Regarding this theory, Nord believes that, the translator sets the purpose of the target text based on the instructions given by the initiator of the translation. In contrast, Nord does not provide the translator with the freedom to decide what aspects of the text should be fixed. Nord proposed the Function Plus Loyalty principle based on the theory of functionalism [5]. The translator must adhere to the client's requirements while preserving the source text's core functions. It achieves a dual purpose, including retaining the translator's functionalist flexibility while ensuring accountability to both the client and users of translation. Nord focuses on the application of Skopos Theory and Functional Translation Theory in academic research, translation workplace, legal translation, literary and religious text translation, and other fields in the 21st century [6]. From 2010 onwards, it can be found that functionalism can be widely applied not only to translation research, but also to interpretation research and training in interpretation and translation [7]. In translating works related to Chinese culture in English, Nord believes that struggling with how to translate single words may not be the most important thing. Telling this story that happened in China well and letting Westerners who are not very familiar with China know more about China is the guiding ideology that should be followed. Only in this way can we stimulate the reading interest of English readers and actively pay attention to the works of more Chinese writers [8].

2.2 Studies on the Text Typology

Reiss refined the classification of text and demonstrated the connection between conventional text types and their variations based on Karl Bühler's three-text-type model. To keep up with the evolution of media, she adds the audio-medial type into the model. Informative texts, expressive texts, and operative texts are interconnected. Texts that are fact-based and offer knowledge, information, or viewpoints are known as informative texts. For informative text translation, the content itself and the accuracy must be

emphasized. For author, one is required to use simple and clear expressions to convey the meaning, while translators are required to maintain or to the largest extent keep the connotated meaning of the original idea of the text. Expressive texts are creative texts emphasizing linguistic aesthetic. Not only focusing on the meaning of the source text, expressive texts have a significant function of delivering image, which normally contains the authors emotion in it. It is crucial for translators to preserve the author's style and aesthetics in translation, and also delivery the text in a vivid form. Operative texts are persuasion-focused resources intended to prompt behavioral responses, which have the function of influencing people and instructing people with certain purposes. The audio-medial type is related to multimedia-enhanced way of communication, rapidly developing recent years with the fast change of electronic communication devices and network connection. Texts need to synchronize with videos or audios. For example, film subtitles translation is an important category in audio-medial type analysis. In recent years, with the continuous development of technology, the media for information dissemination has also undergone significant changes. Therefore, current scholars use text typology theory to analyze the dissemination of short videos and propose the principle of prioritizing the information value of documentary short video translation [9]. It proves that this theory still has high vitality.

This paper employs text typology as its theoretical framework, a classification system dividing texts into four core categories. Under the guidance of this framework, different text types demand distinct translation approaches to achieve their intended purposes. Analyzing text types enables translators to select appropriate strategies for fulfilling translation objectives.

3 Case Analysis

This chapter is divided in two sections. The first section introduces the design of the case analysis, introducing the process of analyzing specific texts based on text typology framework. It aims to make clear the major questions that are discussed in this chapter. The second section analyzes texts in different types with certain functions in the book *Glimpse of Gardens in Eastern China*.

3.1 Design

In this section, the paper mainly discusses the specific research questions in case analysis. In the selected book *Glimpse of Gardens in Eastern China*, the author mainly introduces the interest of garden appreciation, the method of gardening and the history of gardens [10]. The spirit and connotation of Chinese gardens are highlighted. The book chosen was written directly in English by the author, avoiding the problems of information loss and improper conveying of meaning during the translation process. In addition, the professional identity of the writer is more prominent than those of other authors and translators. The author's professional identity ensures that there will be no inaccurate terminology expression when writing English works.

For the selected texts, this chapter firstly identifies the text function and language features, which means to figure out what is the author's purpose and the background of the source text is created. Then based on this, this section endeavors to determine the specific type of text, making clear whether the source text belongs to the informative text type, expressive text type, operative text type, audio-medial texts, or a hybrid form of them. Finally, identify hybrid text and determine whether the selected text combines the characteristics of different types of text.

3.2 Analysis

In this chapter, texts from *Glimpse of Gardens in Eastern China* are selected as practical cases to examine the application of text typology. The source text (ST), written in English by the author, is taken from the book. The texts in this book are primarily written to narrate the essence of Chinese gardens and showcase the aesthetic principles embodied in their design. The aim of this chapter is to reveal the texts selected can cover how many kinds of text types based on the text typology theory.

Case 1

ST: Fruit type. From early summer to autumn, some trees begin to bear fruit, good to look at and mostly edible, such as the golden loquat, citron, and Nandina domestica, fig and date trees are deciduous.

This case exemplifies Reiss' informative text type, presenting factual details about fruit-bearing plants in Southern Chinese gardens. The ST lists various kinds of plants and their seasonal characteristics through concise words, which shows one of the main functions of informative text is to objectively describing facts and features, while also having the function of conveying knowledge to readers. Lexical level, the translator keeps the original expression and meaning, plants in Chinese gardens such as "golden loquat" and "Nandina domestica" are translated into English in a proper way, basically follows the rule of literal translation. Therefore, it can be seen that these expressions, which can be defined as terminologies of botanical subject, are appropriately depicted. The essential feature of the ST is to maintain the botanical accuracy in English.

No matter through the text's syntactic form or lexical expression, it is evident to see that the ST adheres strictly to the informative text's principle of knowledge transfer, proving effective references for the introduction of plantings in Chinese gardens. Informative texts only provide additional explanations of its content when necessary. The ST in this case is informative text, and the translation reflects a high degree of fidelity.

Case 2

ST: Over and above such practical deliberations, plant life, besides serving to screen off those elements best not seen too soon, also affords material for topics of poetry and painting, common specimens being pine, bamboo, and plum, the three proverbial congenial companions in wintry weather. An old tree is ever prized for its venerable age and always invaluable as a welcome bequest to a new garden rebuilt on the same site.

In this case, the ST represents Reiss' expressive text type, in which the translation feature is on aesthetics rather than just content. The symbolic and artistic importance of plants, especially pine, bamboo, and plum, is poetically described in the ST. These plants contain special meanings in the Chinese culture. The three plants actually refer

to pine, plum, and bamboo. Plum blooms in the cold weather, while pine and bamboo trees never wither in winter. All these three images are representatives of proud and unyielding, hence they are mentioned together in many occasions. For Chinese people, these three plants symbolize an indomitable spirit, so Chinese garden designers like to use these plants as decorations for Chinese gardens. There are various ways of translating these three important plants into English. Compared with "the three proverbial congenial companions in wintry weather", some translators believe that those plants can be translated into "three friends of winter." This version is simple, however, fails to retain the aesthetic of the Chinese culture.

Chinese garden designers place a strong emphasis on their ability to demonstrate their design philosophy from literature and painting. The language uses lyrical phrasing and rich cultural connotations to express respect for the resilience and beauty of nature.

The expressive text focuses on form and aesthetics. The ST uses metaphorical language, such as "venerable age" and "welcome bequest," which follows the style of the Chinese gardens and translates the expressions of culturally embedded classical Chinese four characters words with their poetic symbolism rather than merely explain them directly. The tone of the ST is presented through deliberate word choices, which echo the ST's appreciation of tradition. The ST presents the idea of the design of Chinese gardens without losing the author's intent, ensuring the target audience experiences the same aesthetic and affective impact.

Case 3

ST: Ubiquitous but not to be despised is unquestionably the arbor or gazebo (ting). This toylike building can even stand on a single post, or take the plan form of a triangle, a square, a circle, any polygon, double square, interlocked circles or a cross. Its top covering thus ranges from a simple pyramid to multi-pointed and multi-hipped roofs. Upturned eaves, curved ridges and other architectural irregularities do much to lend life to the garden's already playful spirit. One or more than one sizeable structure, the pillared and rather lofty hall, occupying a key position, is the accent of a garden composition and preferably open on all four sides with removable windows to command favorable views.

The ST focuses on introducing the characteristics of the pavilion, an important and typical building in gardens, which appears in Chapter 3, *Architecture and Planning* of the book. This paragraph focuses on the characteristics of the "ting" and pays attention to specific content. Except for the use of a few adjectives at the beginning of the paragraph, the author uses the simplest and most direct language to convey information as concisely as possible. The introduction of the structure of the "ting" is logical, from flat to three-dimensional, and focuses on the roof of it essentially.

This hybrid text blends informative and expressive features appropriately, presenting "ting" architecture, including forms, structures, and garden roles. The ST effectively conveys architectural knowledge while adapting to Chinese preferences through clear sentence structure, precise terminology, and literary flourishes, resulting in an English text that is both accurate and accessible for foreign readers.

Case 4

ST: From the gardens in some dozens of localities cited above, we have a collection of the most sublime specimens of Chinese landscape art. All situated in the temperate

zone, garden architecture is endowed by mild climate with light construction and delicate detail, and the same species of plant life thrive in one garden just as well as in any other. Rockery hill, lily pond and water pavilion are common everywhere. Most gardens, if not owned by, at least were frequented by scholars, poets, and painters. It is also worthy of note, as pointed out before, that gardens in Soochow have never been surpassed in beauty and in number by any other district.

This is another example of a blend of informative text and expressive text, in which the author vividly depicts the essence of the landscapes in Chinese gardens. As informative text, the author in source text describes the structure and the knowledge of the gardening art. In "All situated in the temperate zone…," the author strengthens the causal relation between the climate and the gardening construction. Moreover, in "we have a collection of the most sublime specimens of Chinese landscape art," to bridge the gap with Western readers, the author uses "we" instead of "Chinese," thus reducing the difficulty in comprehension and add the accuracy to readers. Besides, as expressive text, the author adopts mainly two methods to deliver the aesthetic value of the garden and symbolism. First is for the parallel description of objectives like "Rockery hill, lily pond and water pavilion," which is in line with the reading and expression habits of readers, thus maintaining and high-lighting aesthetic value. Another expressive element is in the last sentence "that gardens in Soochow have never been surpassed in beauty and in number by any other district," in which the author strengthens the emotional feeling of the ST. In ST, the author uses "have never been" to reveal the superb quality and extremely pride for Chinese gardening..

4 Conclusion

This chapter contains two sections, followed by the conclusion and limitations of the study.

4.1 Conclusion

With the rapid development and new changes happen to text types, it appeals that more attention has been paid to the study of text typologies. The study of text typologies is beneficial to understanding the purpose of the author of source texts, and helping us better explain the cultural elements and aesthetic expression in English. From the above study, it can be seen that informative text type, expressive text type, and the hybrid of informative and expressive text type are the three main features discussed in the source text. The author of the book, as a well-known Chinese architect, is proficient in both languages. The text written in English seems to be unique and challenging. On one hand, under the language habit of the author himself, the author is able to fully contain the cultural symbol and his idea of expression intentionally, while noticing the differences between Chinese and English. On the other hand, this increases the difficulties for translation, which demand the translator to be fully aware of not only the discrepancies between languages, but also the differences in Chinese and Western cultures. In this case, the author is considered to transcend the boundaries of the two languages to

the fullest extent possible, rigorously and accurately introducing the characteristics and aesthetic values of Chinese gardens in English.

Under the guidance of Reiss' text typology theory, it seems that in cross-cultural communication, translators can learn the strategies in English writing tailored to specific expression purposes and contexts from the book's author, in order to produce better translations in specific fields, intentionally highlight the distinctions among various text types. For the objective existence and knowledge delivery, the translator is required to notice the informative element in the source text, and adopts the methods of being in line with the original expression in both lexical and syntactic level. For expressive elements, the English expression is not restricted by the form and content itself, but focuses more on the symbolic and artistic importance of plants, creating the image and convey the poetic symbolism. In some context, the translators even partly erase the original expression and transform it into the image that is more familiar to target readers. Moreover, the proper way of conveying four characters Chinese words in English is to help strengthening the expression of rhythm and artistic conception in the translation.

Finally, what cannot be ignored is that the mix of informative text type and expressive text is also popular among the translation. To convey simple concepts and precise knowledge, the translator can use simplest and most direct language, while also change the sentence structure and ways of expression for readers to better acquiring knowledge, crossing cultural gaps, and experience aesthetic value. The cross-cultural study of text types under Reiss' text typology theory is not only beneficial for scholars to understand the special text type similar to those in *Glimpse of Gardens in Eastern China*, which includes informative text, expressive text, and the mix of them. Moreover, this study offers a novel view for translators to comprehend the concrete way of delivering knowledge and cultural images, which is considered to be enlightening and inspiring for future cross-cutural study.

4.2 Limitations

Even though this study is conducive to comprehending how the informative text and expressive text is decently translated for better comprehension, there are still limitations and rooms for improvement. First, the research text chosen for this paper exhibits constraints on genre, possessing the dual attributes of prose and popular science literature. Additionally, the extensive specialized knowledge and terminologies concerning gardening backgrounds, coupled with the lack of colloquial expression, heightens the challenges in comprehension and translation, thereby further complicating the understanding of the translated expression and the translator's intentions. Second, considering the length of the study, not all cases in the source text have been fully discussed, which still need more cases as proves to the study.

Disclosure of Interests

The authors have no competing interests to declare that are relevant to the content of this article.

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