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On the C-E Translation of Lanzhou Tourism Texts from the Perspective of Skopos Theory

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Abstract

Since the "opening up and reform" policy, China stays open to the outside and the Chinese people have more communication with other people from the rest of the world in the area of economy and culture. Therefore, more foreign tourists can come to China to appreciate the splendid scenes and know about the Chinese history and custom. According to the statistics, China has been the country which has the most inbound tourists in the world. Now the tourism industry of China is in a period of great prosperity. The rapid development, of course, promotes the tourism translation and vice versus the progress of tourism can also give impetus to the advertisement and popularization of tourism industry. But the current condition of tourism translation is worrying because of some existing distinct of language and culture and many tourism translation texts restrict and even drag the development of tourism industry rather than improving it. Then the question "how to solve the problems well in tourism translation under the guidance of relative theory" has been a heated project focused by many scholars.

The writer does this research on the basis of tourism translation about the Five Spring Hill Park in Lanzhou. The writer chooses many examples from this text and analyzes them under the guidance of Skopos theory. Then, it is easy to find that now the translation texts are paying emphasis on the redundancies of lexis and stereotyped coherence of translation.

The translation text is lack of the complementary explanation about the cultural background and the accurate translation about specialized nouns. Sometimes, there are grammatical mistakes. The writer tries to find some ways to solve these problems and also give some versions translated by the writer self. Generally speaking, the current condition of Lanzhou tourism translation is not satisfactory and the problems are in culture, linguistics, and so on. The writer hopes to contribute to the improvement and development of Lanzhou tourism translation.

Keywords: Tourism texts; C-E translation; Skopos theory

1. INTRODUCTION

As tourism is becoming increasingly popular in China, even in the world, more foreign tourists come to China and particularly to the northern area of China to go on a trip. Lanzhou, as the capital city of Gansu, is also the heated destination of domestic tourism. As we all know that tourism industry is beneficial to the economic development. It is the same in Lanzhou that tourism has given enormous impetus to the economic development of the local government. Therefore, tourism has been an integral part of the economy in Lanzhou. But there are some significant issues which may cause some inconveniences to tourists and have negative influence on the development of tourism. The tourism texts in scenic attractions sometimes are not appropriate and will make the foreigners feel confused and embarrassed. Now the tourism translation faces its period of difficulty and it can have further development only by changing the current condition through improving its quality on the whole. And "how to push the tourism translation to develop better?" this question leads people to ruminate. In this paper the writer does research on this question under the guidance of Skopos theory and analyzes the problems in the tourism texts of some tourist attractions in Lanzhou, after which the writer accordingly concludes the reasons for these problems and gives out some suggestions on the basis of the result of this research.

1.1 Tourism Translation

Tourism translation is a means of professional translation which serves to some activities and industries in tourism. Generally speaking, it is a means of communicative activity which crosses language, society, psychology, and culture. It includes dynamic translation of tourism information such as tour guide, expositor, and simultaneous interpreter, and static translation including tour brochure, detailed map of tourist attractions on board, and public signs (Chen, 2004).

1.2 Tourist Texts

Tourist text is the material that can give brief introductions about tourist attractions to the tourists before travelling. When they travel, they need scenery introduction. Good tourist texts translation will make tourists feel satisfactory and impressed as well as attract as more tourists as possible. Therefore, tourist texts take the responsibility of advertising domestic culture and attract more tourists.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

This part is mainly divided into three sections. The first section is the introduction about the foreign research on the tourism translation and the

second section is about the domestic research. The former one states the contributions made by the foreign researches and the later one is about research conditions of our countries' researchers up to now. All these researches are paying way for our next step of research.

2.1 The Foreign Research about the Tourism Translation

The Skopos theory promoted by the scholars of functional theory is applied in the practice of tourism translation for making the texts serve the foreign tourists better. This theory is completed by Vermeer, Nord, Reiss and so on in order with the idea that all movements have the some certain Skopos and the doer chose a proper way to achieve its goal according to the surrounding conditions. The translator will choose an appropriate way to do translation under the guidance of its Skopos (Nord, 2000).

House proposed a functional equivalence approach which means the translation and the original text should match on the perspective of function. She thinks that tourism translation is a type of "covert translation". House regards covert translation as a "translation which enjoys or enjoyed the status of an original source text in the target culture (House, 1981: 94)."

Graham MS Dann is a representative in the research area of tourism translation on the aspect of linguistics. He thinks that tourism translation is more complicated than people suppose. With the help of attractive words, the TT of tourism translation aims to encourage millions of tourists to travel here, make them curious and change their attitudes (Graham MS Dann, 1996).

In an article about genre study, which is written by Alex Henry and Robert L. Roseberry, these two writers analyze tourism materials according to the theory of genre. Their analysis includes three moves of tourism materials: location facilities and description from various aspects such as reader address, lexical terms and phrases (Henry, A and Robert L. Roseberry, 1996).

All in all, there are other researches about tourism translation on the aspect linguistics and these researches contribute greatly to the deeper study of tourism translation.

2.2 The Domestic Researches

So far, most of the researches focus on the specific problems of the current translation texts and systematic and descriptive studies are in lack. We can generally divide these researches into three types.

The first type is about the researches on errors of tourism translation. Duan said that more attention should be paid to external publicity. He proposed that the current situation of C-E tourism texts is far from satisfactory (Duan, 1990). Wen said that information and tourists' psychological acceptance should keep relative and be coherent (Wen, 2002). To some extent, the translator needs to take the real condition of tourists into consideration and do not show too much information at one time.

The second type is the researches about cultural differences. Jia notices the differences between Chinese and English in their unique language style and technique of expression (Jia, 2003). He puts forward some detailed analysis on this difference and gives some examples which is convincing.

The third type is the research based on the Skopos theory. Many researchers have agreed that this theory is the basis of tourism translation research and they use it to analyze some English version of Chinese material. The scholars are Chen Xiaowei, Chen Gang, Fang Mengzhi, Jin Huikang. Chen gang is outstanding in the tourism translation of Hangzhou and his books provide guidance for the later tourism translation. Jin huikang is another eminent scholar in this aspect and he is specialized in the TT of Guangdong tourism.

2.3 Summary

Seen from the above review, it is easy to find that there are many theories and researches in the field of tourism translation. Both the foreign and domestic researchers contribute a lot to it for its important status and the later people can benefit a lot from the previous researches. However, the shortcomings still exist in these researches.

Most of them pay more attention on the linguistic perspective but less on the cultural aspect. To some extent, they need to make a more systematic analysis of the current tourism including linguistics, culture and other points.

3. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

In this part the writer will introduce the Skopos theory used in the thesis. There are mainly three parts in this section. The writer will firstly give brief introduction about this theory and then introduce in detail.

3.1 The General Introduction of the Skopos Theory

Skopos theory is promoted by Vermeer, the functional scholar in Germany, which forms the main stream of functional translation theory. The person who insists skopos theory thinks that translation is a means of communicative action and its target determines the procedure of translation (Nord, 2001). According to the Skopos theory, all actions have aims and the people who take action will choose the best way to achieve their goals in regard to the practical environment. Under the guidance of Skopos theory, the translator needs to take all possible factors into consideration and chooses the most suitable way to translate (Nord, 2000).

3.2 Four Principles in Skopos Theory of Vermeer

3.2.1 Skopos Rule

Translational action is determined by its Skopos, which shows that the end justifies the means. Each text is produced for a given purpose and should serve this purpose (Vermeer, 1987).

3.2.2 Coherence Rule

Firstly, as intertextual coherence, it requires that the translation text need to be understood and accepted by the readers as well as to be readable. Besides, the translation text also needs to be sensible in and coherent with the culture of target language and communicative environment of translation text.

3.2.3 Fidelity Rule

It refers to the relationship between source and target text under the guidance of Skopos in the framework of translation. It is also regarded as intertextual coherence which exists between source and target text.

3.2.4 Loyalty Rule

On the one hand, the translator is responsible for helping the readers to understand ST. On the other hand, the translator needs to respect the author and regulate the relationship among author, reader, and the translator himself or herself. This rule is to fill the gap between Skopos theory and fidelity theory and solve the problems between cultural differences and translators.

In a word, Skopos theory consists of these four Rules. But Fidelity Rule, Coherence Rule, and Loyalty Rule should obey Skopos Rule, which is primary.

3.3 Summary

The Skopos theory is consisted by four rules: Skopos Rule, Coherence Rule, Fidelity Rule, and Loyalty Rule. The four rules have great importance in conducting the tourism translation and in the following research; the writer will use some of the rules to analyze the Lanzhou tourism texts. If there are problems, the writer can raise questions accordingly.

4. RESEARCH PROCEDURE

4.1 Research Question:

In this research, the writer tries to study the following questions: Are there any problems in the Lanzhou tourism translation texts? If any how to correct them?

4.2 Methodology

In this thesis, the writer mainly uses qualitative data to do the research. The writer takes advantage of the collected data from websites and books about the tourism information to analyze the existing problems in the present TT of tourism translation under the guidance of theory. In the process of analysis, the writer will adopt some specific principles of the theory to pick out problems carefully in the TT and promote some correct suggestions according to the theory.

4.3 Analysis of the C-E Translation of Lanzhou Tourism Texts from the Perspective of Skopos Theory

In this part the writer will analyze the problems specifically in the current TT of Lanzhou tourism with the help of principles of Skopos theory. After that the writer will propose accordingly some methods to correct the original TT or find some advantages to study in it. The research procedure will be gone on the basis of the principles including Skopos, intratextual coherence, intertextual coherence, cultural specialty and other issues.

4.3.1 Skopos Rule

The Skopos Rule is primary in the whole theory system, which determines the ways to deal with ST of the tourism translation, of literal translation or paraphrase or the both. This helps appease the debate between the two sides (Nord, 1997). One of the founders, Reiss, thought that the type of text determines the methods of translation and the divide in the function of text is beneficial to its analysis and translation. There are three functions: informative, expressive, operative. But in many cases, one text may have multi-function (Reiss, 1981). For example:

ST: "甘露泉在文昌阁之西,有亭掩护,大旱不干,久雨不淫"(Han & Han, 2006:22)。

TT1 (excerpt from a book): "Sweet Spring located to the west of Tower for Literary Elite, known in Chinese as Wenchangge, has a kiosk over it. In dry weather it has enough water to supply but not to brim over in rainy days" (Han &Han, 2006:22).

TT2 (my own translation): Sweet Spring, located in the west of Wenchang Pavilion which in the ancient time is the official institution for education and becomes the place for sacrificing the previous excellent persons, is under the shelter of a kiosk. The most specialty of it is that it can keep wet when the weather is extremely dry and will not overwhelm in the heavily rainy day.

A: In this paragraph, the TT1 mentions the Wenchang Pavilion but do not tell in detail what it is, which may not be beneficial to the expression of information the foreign readers cannot have a better cognition of this ancient architecture. If the translation text does not well in sending information, the reader cannot know the background and they will not feel the appreciative emotion included and then they will not have the desire for visiting there. As a result, the translation text is failed. The contextual amplification aims to express the content of original text appropriately, coherently, and completely, which needs to be helpful to express the original meaning (Wang, 2008). After realizing this point, the writer modified the TT1 and changed it into TT2 to make the informative and expressive function come true. Then it can better attract tourists, to some extent, it can help realize the operative function. When there is curiosity, tourists will be glad to have deeper knowledge of it and have a view of the real scene.

The other two Rules of Skopos theory are intertextual coherence and intertextual coherence.

4.3.2 Intertextual Coherence

The intertextual coherence, the coherence rule, means that the translation text needs to cater to the custom of targeted language for making the readers understood and itself meaningful, which is similar to the expressiveness, stated by Yanfu. The famous scholar Qian Zhongshu said: TT should be loyal to ST and not seem like TT, for making it more authentic for readers. Readers will not feel uncomfortable to accept it.

There are three types of problems existing in expression which does not confirm to the usual habit of English language: impersonal subject sentence, too many scattered clauses, and inappropriate collocations. The following is the detailed analysis, for example:

4.3.2.1: impersonal subject sentence:

It is a common way of expression in English and will make the article objective and judicial, but the Chinese pays emphasis on the subjective thought and also starts from the person himself to describe objective things, therefore the personal pronouns are usual in its expressions (Lian, 2002: 77).

ST: "掬月泉,泉形若井状,秋夜赏月,月影直投泉心,如掬月盘中。古诗云:"夜色月可掬"、"掬水月在手",故名"(Han & Han, 2006: 22)。

TT1: "The spring was originally shaped like a well and when enjoying the moon at night in the fall the projection of the moon was right in the center of the spring, looking very much like the scooping of the moon from a tray. An old poem goes like this: "the moon can be scooped up in a moonlit night" and "with a scoop of water the moon is right in the hand", hence the name of the spring" (Han &Han, 2006:22).

A: In this text, the ST mainly focuses on the description of scenes and there are few clauses which use personal subject. Therefore, the translator does not make such mistakes and its translation is worthy of learning.

4.3.2.2 The combination of too many scattered clauses:

The biggest difference between the English and Chinese is the length of clauses. In English the long sentences are normal but it is on the contrary in the Chinese. The sentences without punctuation are not usually seen in Chinese which commonly make sentences in short pieces and each group of sentences will be divided into many small parts and stand side by side (Lian,2002). In English, the translator needs to combine all the short pieces in Chinese and make it long to fit for the habit of foreign reader. For example:

ST: "惠泉在西龙口下,泉呈圆形,水净沙明,泉水流出与岩头清流汇合,曲折而下,喷珠漱玉,叮咚有声,清幽无比,故有"小蓬莱"、"小洞天"之称"(Han & Han, 2006: 22)。

TT1: "Beneficial Spring (Huiquan) in Chinese under the Western Dragon Mouth, is shaped round with water and sand so limpid and clear that one is able to see right to the bottom of it. Bubbling out, the spring water joins the clear streamlet at the rock-head, twisting and turning, spattering and splashing down to form a scene of cascades, presenting a melodious chime in a secluded recess. Hence it is known as the "Little Wonderland of Penglai" or a "Tiny Cave world" (Han &Han, 2006: 22).

TT2: Hui spring is from the western fracture of five spring hill park and appears in circle, with clear water. The branches of this spring flow down from the mountain and converge, making some enjoyable sounds. Therefore, it is called "Penglai" which is the wonder land in China. Among the five springs, Hui spring is particularly appreciated by the tourists for its sweet taste and proper application for boiling tea.

A: In this paragraph, there are many scattered words for the description of Hui spring and they are in short pieces in Chinese. Some of them are four-word phrases but others are short sentences. The translator does well in connecting and grouping them into five long English sentences. According to the English rule in the TT, the translator does recombine the short sentences into a longer one which caters to the custom of English readers. It may let the foreigners feel natural and plain without excessive embellishments (Jia, 2003).

4.3.2.3 Inappropriate collocation:

There are some fixed collocations in English and the translators need to confirm the standard of using right collocations or the targeted translation will be confusing and bring misunderstanding to the readers. The right

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collocation of phrases is the basic need in writing process, but in this translation text there are some misuses which need to be pointed out:

ST1: "相传汉武帝时……"(Han &Han, 2006: 22)。

TT1: "Saying has it that..." (Han & Han, 2006: 22).

ST2: "掬月泉在文昌阁之东"(Han &Han, 2006: 22)。

TT2: "Scooping moon spring is by the east of the Tower for Literary Eliite" (Han &Han, 2006:22).

ST3: "秋夜赏月,月影直投泉心,如掬月盘中"(Han & Han, 2006: 22)。

TT3: "In the fall, the projection of the moon was right in the center of the spring, looking very much like the scooping of the moon from a tray" (Han &Han, 2006: 22).

A: In the TT1, it is a fixed collocation. In English "xiangchuan" should be written as "tradition has it that" or "according to the legend". But the translator misuses the subject of this phrase through using the similar word to replace the original word. While in TT2, the mistake is the wrong use of the expression of the location. In English, it should be that "somebody or something is at the east of some place". Then in TT3, "look" should be used in past participle to describe a means of condition and also express the passive meaning.

4.3.3 Intertextual coherence

Intertextual coherence is also called Fidelity Rule which is different from the Faithfulness, stated by Yanfu too. In the system of Skopos theory, the Fidelity just refers to a kind of congruent relationship, but not to require the total similarity in the content between ST and TT. The loyalty in the Skopos theory is determined by the purpose of translation and the translators understand of ST (Nord, 1997).

4.3.3.1 Meaning distortion

Although the Skopos theory requires that the translators need to obey Fidelity Rule in their translation, the TT does not need to be totally corresponding with its ST. Or it will be falling in expressing its meaning and achieve its goal. The rigid word for word translation will reduce the function of information expression and lead confusion to the foreign readers. For example:

ST: "古诗云: "夜色月可掬"、"掬水月在手", 故名"(Han & Han, 2006: 22)。

TT1: "An old poem goes like this: "the moon can be scooped up in a moon night" and "with a scoop of water the moon is right in the hand", hence the name of spring" (Han &Han, 2006: 22).

TT2: An old poem goes like this: when you hold water with both hands you can see the projection from the water in your hand, which seems like that you hold the moon in your hand.

A: In this sentence, the translator needs to translate a piece of poem. But in the TT1, it just directly translates the poem into the English version word for word and will make some misleading to the readers. The meaning carried by the poem cannot be expressed clearly and appropriately.

4.3.3.2 Style

Almost all the masters of translation pay emphasis on the importance of keeping the original style of ST. Nida has said that a perfect TT should not only keep the content of ST but also the language custom of it (Nida, 1969). Qian zhongshu also has said that when translator translated a text from one kind of language to another, he or she needs to notice that the TT should not show rough and stiff word and the primitive style of the text need to be kept (Qian, 1994). For example:

ST: "糊糊涂涂,将佛脚抱来,求为父母。明明白白,把石头拿去,说是孙儿" (Han & Han, 2006:22)。

TT: "Muddleheaded, s/he who hugs the Buddha's legs wishes to be one's parents, obviously s/he who picks up a piece of stone or tile considers it to be a child" (Han &Han, 2006: 22).

A: In the ST, the custom of these two sentences is easy and humorous. The most important is that these two sentences are corresponding in the number of words, which is the common form in the Chinese poem writing. Therefore, the difficulty for the translator is not only to translate this poem into English version but also to make it keep it original style in Chinese including the language custom and the form of this poem. Obviously, the writer does not break the poem's original pattern and translate it easily and simply to show the humor included.

4.3.4 The cultural specialty

The Skopos theory thought that translation is the comparison of two cultures and it will be sure to relate the specialty of culture. Vermeer thought that culture is a series of social regulation and custom, which needs to be known by individuals to make themselves the same or different with others as a part of their communities (Vermeer, 1987). And the specialty of culture is that one thing exists in one culture but not in the other culture, for which the problems in translation are that the things which do not need to be explained in one culture for the native persons needs to be told in detail hardly (Wang, 1989). In this text, there are many place and person names, with which the native may be familiar but to the readers of translation text, it will be difficult for them to understand without explanation. Therefore, the translation should notice this problem and give some details about the noun with special meaning in domestic culture. But after reading this text, it is easy to find that the translator did not do well in this perspective.

For example, in the previous part, the writer has mentioned the translation about "wenchangge". The writer suggested that some introduction about the background information of "wenchangge" should be added into this translation text to deepen reader's understanding about the culture included. Besides, The Book of Changes mentioned in this text also needs to be given some explications to help the readers to comprehend Chinese culture.

4.3.5 Other issues

Proper Nouns

There are many tourism translation versions in the books and on lines, but about the translation of Proper Nouns, one standard form should be obeyed. On the one hand, the translation standard for special word will be helpful to the readers to remember and realize the same word when they meet it again; on the other hand, it can sow the profession of translation text. In this text, some nouns need to be translated into the Proper ones, or they will influence the quality of translation texts and become the obstacles of promoting the development of tourism. The following Proper Nouns are looked up by the writer in some authoritative nets (for example http://english.gsta.gov.cn/English/englishlz/10735.jhtml) and can be taken as reference.

For example, the "Five Spring Hill Park" has a standard translation: "Five Springs Park"; "WenChangge" is translated in to Wenchang Pavilion; the names of five springs are translated into "Sweet Spring, Scooping-Moon Spring, Fumbling-for-Offspring Spring, Beneficial Spring and Grateful Spring".

5. CONCLUSION

The primary function of C-E tourism TT is to offer information for tourists coming from foreign countries and also attract more potential tourists. But the current situation is not so optimistic and satisfactory. Thus, the translators take more responsibility on improving the development of tourism industry. Under the guidance of Skopos theory, many researches have been made to help overcome these problems. The writer also uses this theory. In the system of this theory, the Skopos principle is more important than other three rules including Fidelity Rule, Coherence Rule, and Loyalty Rule.

With the conduct of Skopos theory, this thesis is aimed at analyzing the problems still existing in the current C-E tourism TT, taking Lanzhou as an example, to help promote the quality of it and achieve the goal of tourists attraction. The writer departs this theory into several parts and analyses this TT about Five Springs Park in Lanzhou with the corresponding theory in each part, to find the issues in this TT and according give some suggestions in modifying the TT. Generally speaking, this translation text has its

advantages and disadvantages. In many cases, the translator can convey the meaning and the style of the ST accurately, which is the optimistic aspect. But in some other cases, the translator cannot match the standard by distorting or not considering the previous meaning or style of the original text. Chen Jianjun said that obviously, the translator is not a real encyclopedia and will not know everything. To some extent, it is unavoidable to make some mistakes for common people; however, this is not an excuse for not performing duties of making the TT perfect (Chen, 2004). Although, the writer has given some suggestions about the alteration of the TT of the original translator, more suggestion from others is still welcome and needed on the basis of the modified one. This is just the view of the writer and in the different situations the Skopos theory may have different conduct meaning.

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