

Randow Remarks on English for Tourism from the Perspective of Functional Equivalence

—An Analysis of Tourism-themed C-E and E-C Translation Styles

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Abstract: The paper makes an analysis of C-E and E-C tourism-themed translation styles in light of functional equivalence. The Skopos Theory and those by Newmark and Nida have one thing in common—functionalism, albeit on different focus. Translators should refrain from a one-size-fits-all approach to the translation practice and adopt one which well serves the pragmatic purpose. A comparison is made between English and Chinese versions to highlight the functions in the different contexts.

Keywords: *tourism-themed translation; C-E; E-C; functional equivalence; text analysis*

功能对等与旅游英语 ——旅游行业的英汉互译问题

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摘要: 根据功能对等的原则, 对旅游宣传中的汉英以及英汉互译进行了浅析。翻译目的论与纽马克、奈达提出的有关理论虽然侧重点不同, 但核心都是功能主义。依据这一原则, 译者在翻译实践中不是采取一成不变的做法, 而应围绕实用性这一目的展开。基于此, 对英汉互译的文本进行了分析, 以论述功能对等的重要性。

关键词: 旅游翻译; 汉译英; 英译汉; 功能对等; 文本分析

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I. Relevant Theories on Functional Equivalence

As inbound and outbound tourism in China has shown a big boom with an ever-gaining momentum in the recent years, China is set to become the top

tourist destination in the foreseeable future. Along with the tourist bonanza has come the all-pervasive presence of bilingual and even multi-lingual promotions at various tourist and cultural amenities. It turns out, however, that many C-E or E-C translations are a de facto misinterpretation or a sheer nonsense. The translators simply fail to put across what the original version is intended to convey. As a

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result, the foreign tourists more often than not are misled or misinformed by the translations.

It is obvious that the translator's English incompetence is mainly culpable for the bungled job, compounded by inadequate knowledge of Function Equivalence. In this sense, it is imperative that translators should foster a sense of the knowledge in the context of Chinese-English translation and vice versa.

According to American linguist Eugene A. Nida: "A maximal requirement for translational adequacy would mean that the readers of the translation would respond to the text both emotively and cognitively in a manner essentially similar to the ways in which the original readers responded"^{[1]398}. As one of the founders of the modern discipline of Translation Studies, Nida has been well recognized worldwide for his dynamic-equivalence theory. Hence effect-oriented functionalism.

Peter Newmark, who was arguably the most influential linguist from Britain in the field of translation, came up with the theory of Three Functions to translation: expressive, informative, and vocative. The three functions which boil down to the three words of "expressiveness, informativeness and evocativeness" lay stress on the importance of text. Hence text-oriented functionalism.

Another translation theory, The Skopos Theory, as put forth by German linguist Hans Vermeer, has come to enjoy almost equal importance and influence in the field. It holds that translation should primarily take into account the function of both the source and target texts. To translate means to produce a target text in a target setting for a target purpose and target addressees in target circumstances. It is self-evident that his theory revolves around "target", which is exactly what he prioritizes.

The three theories proposed by the three scholars from as many countries all fall into the category of functionalism, which values functional equivalence, but their difference is inherently obvious: Nida and Newmark's theories are prescriptive, and source-oriented; Skoposthorie, on the contrast, is at once prescriptive and descriptive, and target-oriented.^[2]

In the final analysis, the three theories are not at odds with each other. They are purported to be complementary in one way or another. In translation, one should not cling to a hard-and-fast rule, overemphasizing one aspect to the neglect of the other. It is advisable that the text, purpose, cultural settings, target addressees, and even the implied meanings all be factored in so as to attain the greatest functional equivalence.

II. The Purpose Presupposes the Style

In terms of tourism-themed E-C translation and the other way round, the style in itself varies, depending on the end it is intended to serve.

The advertisement, for one, generally features a terse but meaning-laden language style so as to woo the potential clients effectively and instantly. An ad in a Boston-based Apple store standing out in bold relief on the wall is a compelling proof to evocativeness in diction:

Make I-phone your phone.

In this ad, there is an ingenious interplay of "I" in "I-phone" which is acronym for "Internet" and "I" which is a personal pronoun. By employing the tact of word play in the ad, the store builds up a close rapport with the clients.

Sometimes a metaphoric device used in an ad can amplify the effect of persuasion. For example:

Money doesn't grow on trees, but it blossoms at our branches.

The word play on the extended meaning from a "tree branch" to a "bank branch" makes evocativeness all the more powerful.

In some cases, the rhyme and rhythm are employed to highlight expressiveness. For example, the night view of Huston is capsuled in a well-rhymed six words in a pictorial:

Starlight on Skyline, Galaxy of Glamor^{[3]326}

Thanks to the repetitive initial letters "S" and "G" as a rhythmic device, the spectacular scene of Huston instantly plays out in the mind's eye of the reader.

The following is a promotion on a fast-food restaurant which goes like this:

Go Big, or Go Home

By repeating the word “go”, the promotion is a potent persuasion to goad the potential clients into a splurge on its burgers.

In contrast to the intended effect of expressiveness and evocativeness in ads, the introduction of the scenic attractions is preferably on the side of informativeness through a no-frill description. A passage quoted from “The Terra Cotta Warriors”^{[4]201} speaks volumes of the function:

The cavern is 230 m long, 62 m wide and 5 m deep, and contains the infantry section of Qin's massive clay army. Ranging in size from 1.78 m to 1.87 m in height, the 6 000 warriors are clad in armor or short belted gowns. The torsos are hollow, with solid arms and legs. Each face was individually sculpted, with models chosen from throughout the military ranks of China.

As can be seen, the above examples in tourism-themed English showcase the expressive, informative and evocative functions. Such styles are likewise well-applied in the Chinese context. So there is a close analogy of the two languages in terms of text styles. A close-up perspective above has reinforced the point that both English and Chinese resort to the informative, expressive, evocative styles in the tourism-themed texts. As for the use of a most appropriate style, there is not a master-key. The intended function is the rule of thumb instead. What's more, the addressee, the source language and target language, and even the cultural difference etc all play a role in one way or another.

III. C-E Translation Styles and Vice Versa

English is Indo-European Language as opposed to the Sino-Tibetan Language which Chinese belongs to. The discrepancy of the two languages dictates that the former is hypotaxic while the latter parataxic. Thus the style which is aptly used in one language is often deemed inappropriate in the other unless the linguistic elements of target language are fully taken into consideration. According to Nida^{[5]12}, “Translating consists in reproducing in the receptor

language the closest natural equivalent of the source language message, first in terms of meaning, and secondly in terms of style.” Such a rule holds true for translation in tourism-themed texts. The following example is a case in point.

Whether guests are spending the day visiting the magnificent castle realm of the Theme Park, celebrating the night away at the Entertainment District, cooling off at the themed Water Park or relaxing at the magnificent Spa Resort, there is no limit to the world of discovery and adventure that awaits. With the wide variety of entertainment and leisure choices, this truly unique development offers choices for everyone and is certain to become the yardstick by which all others are measured.

The English passage above is composed of two long sentences. The first main sentence gives prominence to “discovery and adventure”, preceded by the *whether*-clause; the second one, with “development” as the subject, lays emphasis on a wide scope of choices it provides. A Chinese version rendered by 叶子南^{[6]241} deviates from the word-by-word translation path and proves to be a translation which conforms to the Chinese style.

游客白天在主题公园历险,晚上能在休闲娱乐,在主题水上公园嬉水乘凉,在温泉浴池让身心为之一爽,新发现、新探索,惊喜接踵而来。想娱乐、要休闲、此园独步天下,游人各得其所。三堡王国为休闲娱乐业定下了看齐的标准。

Obviously, the Chinese version distinguishes itself as a loosely-strung structure with twelve verbs in almost as many sentences. The cohesion and coherence of the English version are based on a conjunction clause and a prepositional phrase respectively; the Chinese version dispenses with the clause and phrase, and follows the typically parataxic structure. The message the passage delivers makes much sense to the Chinese readers from the perspective of cohesion and coherence. By holding to such a criterion, a seasoned translator will shift gear in style when doing a translation from Chinese to English, as the following example indicates:

京都涮羊肉之所以名冠全球,誉满中外,是因为它集前人制作之经验,博采众人之长,又创建了

自家的风格,具有选料精、加工细、佐料全、刀火旺等特色。

The Chinese version is abundant with well-rhymed phrases “名冠全球”“誉满中外”“选料精”“加工细”“佐料全”“刀火旺” and even alive with an antithetical sentences “集前人制作之经验,博采众家长之”. The English translation will be redundant and even nonsensical if rendered on a word-by-word basis. A shift to hypotaxic approach as appropriate to the target language makes the text as informative and illustrative as, if not better than, the original one.

The fame of instant-boiled mutton in the Capital stems from a very skillful pooling of the experience gained over the past centuries in a particular way of eating mutton and creating a special style of its own characterized by the exquisiteness in mutton selecting and slicing, condiments assorting and heat controlling. ^{[7]242}

The multiple subject-predicate structures in the Chinese version are rendered into a compound subject-predicate structure in English. The Chinese version is virtually conjunction-free, but what is underscored in the passage can be deduced in a logical sense. In the English version, the order of importance is clearly stated via the means of subordination.

Some Chinese sentences are structured seemingly in a relationship of equal importance which often eludes the understanding of the targeted English readers, the translator is supposed to reshape the structure from coordination to subordination. The contrastive pair as cited below is a typical example:

从东方明珠上俯瞰,上海壮丽的景色尽收眼底。

The Pearl Tower offers a splendid panorama of Shanghai.

Sometimes what is stated in the source language entails the change of sentence pattern in the target language, which drives home the intended meaning all the more. The following rendition is a case in point:

鼓浪屿真是无处不飞花,有山皆佳景,到处是无声的诗,立体的画。

It is true to say that on Gulang Island one is greeted by gorgeous flowers and beautiful sights every step of the way. Can the island not be called a poem of nature beyond words of a landscape painting in

three dimensions? ^{[8]436}

By turning the declarative sentence in the source language into a rhetoric question in the target language, the translator succeeds in striking a chord in the target language readers. Provided that he or she had followed a beaten path in doing the job, the English version would turn out to be lackluster with diminished aesthetic effect.

In terms of the description of a scenic attraction, the Chinese version generally assumes an impersonal tone, as against the stark contrast of personal one of the English version. Such a difference makes it necessary to make changes accordingly.

秀丽的草原,葱郁的林木,闪亮的湖泊,雪白的羊群和这宏伟的陵园,织成了一幅难忘的色彩绚丽的图画。

With the majestic mausoleum standing in a setting of beautiful grassland, luxuriant tree groves and flocks of white sheep, visitors here are greeted with picturesque scenic sights that will long remain in their memory. ^{[8]561}

In the example above, the focus on the natural beauty with an impersonal touch is shifted to the tourist's perspective, which fits in well with style of the Chinese language.

Some tourism-specific texts in Chinese are more evocative through the metaphoric device of personification, so it is an exquisite tact to employ a literal-to-liberal approach to translation, as can be seen below.

The rolling mountains loom blue-green over the vast valley.

苍绿的群山延绵起伏,俯视着宽阔的峡谷。

The Chinese language regarding the scenic attraction in some cases is fraught with graphic terms which even border on being gaudy. In this case it is advisable that the translator should trim and even axe the insubstantial part in the source language so as to cater to the taste of the target readers.

这里三千座奇峰拔地而起,形态各异,有的似玉柱神鞭,立地顶天;有的像铜墙铁壁,巍然屹立;有的如晃板垒卵,摇摇欲坠;有的如盆景古董,玲珑剔透……神奇而真实,迷离而实在。

The original version is awash with four-word-

character phrases which sound rhythmic to the ear, but they are insubstantial in meanings and, if translated in a literary way, will not appeal to the target readers in the same way as the source language does. A condensed version is more informative. Thus “less is more”. Professor Lu Siyuan’s remark^[2] well hits the nail on the head: “The subject-matter of the source text can be retained, deleted, adjusted or changed to tactics ‘The end justifies the means’.”

Three thousand crags rise in various shapes—pillars, columns, walls, stacks and potted landscapes...—conjuring up fantastic and unforgettable images.^{[9]204}

More often than not, the tourism-themed translation involves the cultural implication which is to be reckoned with. Otherwise a mistranslation or under-translation will be inevitable. “曲院风荷” as a scenic spot in Hangzhou is a typical one. A word-by-word translation will merely come to “winding courtyard”, which is poles apart from the implied meaning. As “曲” derives from “蛐”, “yeast” is the very word associated with the yard. So the translation as “Breeze-caressed Lotus in Yeast Courtyard”^{[10]103} which is imbued with the cultural implications reveals the profundity of the original meaning.

IV. Conclusion

As English and Chinese have some styles in common but each has its own unique qualities as well, it is important to instil in the translator a keen

awareness to the qualities specific to each language. Only when he or she is armed with a good mastery of the knowledge can a well-intended text with a full-fledged function takes shape. In a nutshell, functional equivalence is the cardinal rule to abide by and is instrumental to a well-handled tourism-themed translation. To put it plainly: “The end justifies the means.”

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