

Analysis of Translation Strategies for Tourism Texts from the Perspective of Skopos Theory: A Case Study of the Promotional Materials of the Forbidden City Museum in Beijing

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Abstract

The present study investigates strategies of translating tourism texts from a Skopos-theoretical viewpoint with samples taken from the promotional literature of the Forbidden City Museum in Beijing. The Skopos theory is located on an entirely different path, which was developed by Hans J. Vermeer, who believe that the aim of the translation, governs the strategies and actionable decisions made by the translator. Through an analysis of the translation of these materials, the current study reveals the key strategies which are utilized to adapt context and language to the (largely) LIS-unaware international audience, while keeping the essence of the source text intact. The findings highlight the translation emphasis in a specific context in the tourism field and the implications for translation practice in the future.

Keywords

Translation Strategies; Tourism Texts; Skopos Theory; Promotional Materials.

1. Introduction

Tourism is one of the most powerful engines of the world economy and a catalyst for trade and cultural progress across borders. Translation in Tourism Industry: As the world becomes more interconnected, the importance of translation in tourism industry has never been more importance. The translation of tourism material, be it a tourism promotion brochure, detailed exhibition documents, or marketing content, fills in the gap between the experiences of local cultures with international customers. Such is especially so at major cultural landmarks such as the Forbidden City Museum in Beijing, which receives millions of visitors each year from near and far. As one of the best-known and most historically significant destinations in China, the Forbidden City Museum depends on translation to convey its cultural heritage, art collections, and historical importance to non-Chinese-speaking visitors of different linguistic backgrounds. However, without The proper translation These fundamental messages would be lost or misunderstood Therefore, it is very important to make sure that these were not only accurate linguistically but they were accurate culturally and accessible to the international tourists of all the diversity

Translating these materials, whether in the form of promotional brochures, exhibition labels or even online content, leads to a number of challenges. Some deal with the challenges of describing nuanced cultural and historical ideas to those without prior knowledge of Chinese history, language, or customs. A word-for-word rendering often doesn't make sense, and though it is rooted in the original, creates additional problems. Translation also has to make sure the materials are engaging and easy to understand, and keep the museum's brand identity intact while ensuring its offerings are palatable to worldwide audiences. When the audience is unfamiliar with Chinese culture or history, this becomes an even more difficult task. That's why you can't just translate words from one language to another, you must make an experience that

makes sense and means something to the target audience while being loyal to the core of the source content.

In this respect, the Skopos theory offers an applicable tool to analyze the translation strategies employed in the promotional materials of the Forbidden City Museum. Hans J. Vermeer proposed Skopos theory, which posits that the purpose (or "skopos") of a translation should be the guiding factor in the translation strategies that are adopted. This theory also stresses the functioning nature of translation, where the purpose envisaged for the target text dictates the translator's choice. The reason is not just knowing that the place is beautiful, but you must send signals that a site has cultural and historical significance, addressed to a wider world audience, hoping to attract potential visitors. In this paper, the author attempts to illustrate how translation strategies in the promotional materials of the Forbidden City Museum serve this purpose with the application of Skopos theory. More specifically, it explores how these strategies allow for the produced translation to both cater to the communicative needs of international tourists and to also retain the cultural richness and historic integrity of the original Chinese content. The objective of this paper is to provide a deeper understanding of the influence of the particular goals of tourism texts on translation decisions, using Skopos theory which highlights the subtle trade-off between cultural adjustment of translation, versus fidelity to source content..

2. Skopos Theory

Guided largely by the works of prominent theorists such as Hans J. Vermeer and his Skopos theory, it centers around the belief that translation should not simply be a whimsical process, but one which requires the translator's actions to be firmly rooted within the intended goals and objectives of the target text. This theory posits that the purpose of the translation—whether to inform, entertain, persuade, or to elicit an emotional response—dictates the approaches that a translator will use. The view that translation is by nature functional, and that translation's goal is to fulfill a function in a context. In tourism translation, for example, the purpose is usually to convey essential information about the destination to entice potential visitors to experience the culture, history, and products of a destination. This often require in turn that content be adjusted to ensure alignment with the expectations, cultural context and knowledge of international audiences. Not only do they need to accurately communicate the linguistic message, but they also have to make all the necessary choices so the cultural message from the source material comes across as closely as possible, while remaining suitable for a foreign audience.

Especially with regards to historical site and museum texts, this adaptation process is multifaceted and requires careful considerations of cultural differences. The need for cultural adaptation while trying to retain original meaning and still considering audience expectations have been emphasised by previous studies. The tension of phenomenological mediation, in particular, has been spotlighted by researchers like Katan and Baker ¹ as a necessary function of cultural mediators tasked with the translation of promotional tourism-related texts. Successful translations, they argue, are cultural bridges that enable understanding across the cultures preparing the two texts. In addition to being faithful to the original material, tourism translations must also speak and sound relatable to the target audience, depicting a folklore, or tradition reflected in the original material without necessarily being identical but adapted to the mind of the foreign audience.

Museum texts including those issued by the Forbidden City Museum, should be faced with more complex challenges in translation because the contents of museum texts are by nature specialized materials which not only convey factual information but aim to engage the visitor with the story, importance and cultural essence of the site. Hence, translators should deliver

these cultural references to the target reader in an accessible way, without distorting the message or compromising the value of the text in the source culture. The translator plays a key role being this mediator between source and target cultures. In the process, the translator must negotiate the fine line between making the material accessible and maintaining the integrity of the culture it represents. There is also the option of making content better suited for local consumption by distilling aspects of the original culture that may seem foreign to the target audience. Other times they choose foreignization to preserve the particular flavor of the original material, keeping local references and cultural terms. These two decisions, whether to domesticate or whether to foreignize, are highly dependent [3] on the particular communicative goals of the translation at hand and of the needs of the translation's target audience. Therefore, these strategies can help ensure that translation conveys the intended message while promoting cross-cultural understanding and appreciation.

3. The Application of Skopos Theory

For this reason, the Skopos theory constitutes a useful and distinctive reference to analyze the translation strategies used by the Forbidden City Museum's promotional materials. Skopos theory claims that the primary purpose of any translation should be based on the purpose of the text to be translated. Of course, such content may serve different purposes, as is often the case for tourism texts, which are engaged with the aim of informing the readers about a location of interest, making it easier for the visitors to understand the cultural significance or important historical information about a specific site, such as the Forbidden City Museum, and providing access to a potential international audience where visitors can come from many different linguistic and cultural contexts. Essentially, a translator is not only responsible for faithfully reproducing the semantics of the translated text, but also for accommodating the cultural and contextual expectations of the readership. And as tourism content is targeted to a wide variety of consumers from casual tourists to art and history lovers, the translation must convey the most from the site in a way that is relevant to their different interests and awareness levels.

In this regard, Skopos Theory implies that translators have to change their methods according to the purpose of the text and communicative requirements of the target audience. This could mean modifying certain details or even eliminating them altogether, if they are considered not of relevance to the target audience, or hard to understand. For instance, highly specific references to Chinese history would not be recognizable to tourists from other cultures. In such cases, the translator must simplify the concept, provide extraneous detail, or substitute the original term with a more universally understood one. Generalization by making adjustments ensures the audience receives an accurate translation in terms of content and purpose.

In this view, the translator's job is much more than rendering words into another tongue. The translator is leading the way towards a final product that conforms to the larger communicative purposes of its intended audience. That includes paying attention to the context of how the audience is experiencing and expecting. In translational practice, this might involve an elaboration of complex cultural concepts, a recourse to footnotes or annotations to provide background on specific historical events, or even an adaptation of images and symbols to make them more culturally familiar to a given audience. In line with the Forbidden City Museum, the translator should balance the aforementioned integrity of natives with the need for the text to be readable and entertaining to foreigners.

Skopos theory is built through the analysis of the translation purpose and provides a flexible framework through which translators are free to decide what is the better approach to take that will empower the needs of the target audience. In the field of tourism especially, the target group of the information may not be very much aware of the source culture, so this helps us adjust what information we want to deliver. The knowledge of some visitors about the Chinese

context would be considerable, while others may come with almost no background at all. Thus, it is important for the translator to exercise his²⁴⁷ judgment to deliver an informative yet interesting translation while bearing the heterogeneity of the audience in mind. By adopting this approach, the Forbidden City Museum can create a more inclusive and accessible experience for international visitors and ensure the effective communication of its message to all visitors.

4. Translation Strategies in the Promotional Materials of the Forbidden City Museum

Promotional materials are a means of communication with visitors; these include brochures, exhibition labels, and website content. Predominantly, these pieces are eye-catching guides to educate museum patrons about the museum's history, the building itself and its well-known works. These translations are not merely factual but are meant to create an inviting, entertaining, and knowledgeable experience for international tourists from various parts of the world. In print and weal, from the materials seek to arouse curiosity and inspire exploration, casting the Forbidden City not just as a historical tourist site but an incarnate of Chinese cultural heritage. Therefore, when it comes to the translation of these materials it is not merely a matter of linguistic correctness it requires understanding the cultural context and making the appropriate adjustments to ensure the material resonates with people from very diverse cultural backgrounds.

The main problem in translating promotional materials for the Forbidden City Museum is the challenge of finding a balance of cultural preservation in the text as well as international readability. The references related to Chinese culture and traditions may be very different from direct translations due to the absence of equivalents from target language. Aspects such as the Qianlong Emperor or the Ming and Qing dynasties specifically may not be waist-deep for international tourists who aren't well-versed in Chinese history. Generally, the translator uses strategies such as explication at this level, which is the addition of context to make these quotes more accessible.[3] For example, instead of directly translating the title "Qianlong Emperor", the translator could provide a brief explanation regarding Qianlong's place in Chinese history, such as his achievements in art and culture, or his lengthy reign period, to give the audience an understanding of the historical context of this individual. Your visitor is not left in a confused void but rather has a better grasp of the content as well.

The other common translation strategy is domestication, which is adapting some specific aspects of a culture, aiming to make sense for the target readers. For instance, descriptions of Chinese cultural practices, festivals, and ceremonies may be tailored to resonate more closely with Western counterparts. When the text on Chinese festival events or ceremonies are described in terms of their names and specific references, the translation would find associations or alternative references that might allow the scribes/readers of the targeted text to find comparables within their own environments, their own experiences and form a socio-cultural image around such events. Given that the materials are for an audience with very little exposure to Chinese culture, this ensures that they are both engaging and accessible. To domesticise means to make local and relatable; to achieve relatability and lessen barriers between incoming culture and the audience, in order to build a rapport with it.

Nevertheless, foreignization serves as an equally significant strategy in the translation of museum texts, particularly when the translator seeks to safeguard the particular culture of the hosts. In some instances, translators prefer to keep cultural references and names that are not necessarily known to an audience, but which are vital to preserving the authenticity of the museum's identity. A simple example is "Forbidden City", which itself is hardly translated, because it is a special name with unique cultural and historical meanings deeply rooted in

Chinese heritage. Why not keep such terms as they are, to retain the museum's cultural identity integrity and report gives visitors the opportunity to learn unfamiliar terms, maybe let them pay attention to Chinese history and culture. In this way, both elements not only take the viewer on a journey into new and possibly unfamiliar cultures but are also considering how both pieces will be appreciated while embracing the faithfulness of the original.

This lexicon and Xeyala's "Xeyalan" are translation strategies—explication, domestication and foreignization—that shows the need for a multilayer approach in translating tourism material to an international audience. For example, "You aren't just translating for the sake of translating, you translate to sure that what you are putting in is going to be for the intension of the text to be informing, educating or attracting international visitors, the translator is also keeping the text to be rich in heritage and culture in order to be able to be matched with the original text." By selectively adapting and preserving those elements, translators enable the Forbidden City Museum's promotional materials to bridge the gap between accessibility and cultural faithfulness, enriching the visitor experience with meaningful connections to Chinese history and culture.

5. Conclusion

It can be concluded that the translation strategies on the promotional materials of Forbidden City Museum are the practical example of Skopos theory. Trained on data through October of 2023, by emphasizing the communicative goal of reaching international tourists, the translators have adjusted the content so that it is both comprehensible and steeped in culture. Utilizing domestication, foreignization, explication and other strategies will allow the target readers to understand the importance of the museum and even if the audience does not understand the Chinese culture, they can also feel part of the process because the word is explained. Taken together, these findings shed light on the role of translation for specific purposes in tourism, giving crucial insights into how to approach translation in analogous circumstances in the future.

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