

A Study on the English Translation of Introduction Boards in Jinsha Site Museum from the Perspective of Skopos Theory

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Abstract: Jinsha Site Museum, located in Chengdu, is a national first-class museum. The cultural relics in Jinsha Site Museum have distinct local and national features, and the publicity scripts can present visitors the historical inherent value. And the English version is an indispensable part for foreign tourists to travel to the ancient Shu kingdom. After analyzing, the English translation introduction boards of Jinsha Site Museum basically follow the three principles of Skopos theory. Most of them have faithfully converted the original meaning of the Chinese version at the language level, showing the original information of the exhibits in Jinsha Site Museum. However, some translations fail to meet the Skopos, coherence and fidelity rule. If some translations can be improved, the English translation of Jinsha Site Museum can better achieve the purpose of displaying the history and culture of Jinsha Kingdom to foreign tourists.

Keywords: Jinsha Site Museum, Introduction Boards, Skopos Theory.

1. Introduction

For tourist visitors, Chengdu is an important hub connecting the southwestern parts with the rest of China, so more and more foreign tourists are coming to Chengdu to experience Shu culture. Available archeological records show that the ancestors of Shu had lived here for quite a long time. The cultural relics in Jinsha Site Museum have distinct local and national features, and the publicity scripts of the relics can present visitors the historical value and inherent value of Jinsha Site. With the development of tourism industry, the Jinsha Site Museum has attracting an increasing number of foreign visitors every year. Therefore, the quality of the English translation boards in the museum is of vital importance.

This thesis aims to study the English translation of the introduction boards in Jinsha Site Museum from the perspective of Skopos theory. It analyzes whether the translation has provided the information and performed the intended function from the lexical, syntactic and textual level. The author evaluates whether the translation has fulfilled the three principles of Skopos theory, analyzes the reasons for failures, and puts forward suggestions for improvement. Generally speaking, the English translation of tourism texts is still based on the principle of conveying information and spreading culture.

The Jinsha Site Museum is a scenic spot about Chinese history and culture that attracts more and more foreign tourists every year. The visitors to this scenic spot may not always be scholars. Instead, majority of the visitors are ordinary people. Therefore, the English translation of the introduction boards should let tourists learn Chinese history and culture in the simplest way. This paper, guided by Skopos theory, analyzes whether the English translation of Jinsha Site Museum has achieved its translation purpose, and points out its advantages and disadvantages, so as to give some useful suggestions to other Chinese museums.

2. Literature Review and Theoretical Framework

This part is a brief literature review of the two related research topics. One is the studies of museum-related translations; the other is studies of Skopos theory, which serves as the theoretical foundation of this paper's analysis.

2.1. Literature Review

Many domestic scholars have studied and discussed the translation of museums-related texts. For instance, Zheng Jia published an article which collected commentaries of National Museums of Chinese Writing, studied its translation, and concluded some strategies such as: amplification, omission and so on for translating commentaries from the Skopos theory (Zheng Jia, 2011). Chen Huajie and Xiao Cheng, under the guidance of Skopos theory, analyzed the translation strategies of Tibetan tourism texts and study the parts of speech and sentences in the process of translation. It found that the conversion of language and culture should be based on the different cultural deposits and language characteristics of China and foreign countries. So the translators need to get the differences and forms of expression of language and characters in various aspects (Chen Huajie and Xiao Cheng, 2018).

Some scholars analyze the English translation of Jinsha Site Museum from the perspective of communication. They pointed out that "In the English translation of tourism texts, foreign tourists should be taken as the center, and translation methods and techniques such as amplification, inversion, conversion, division, combination should be comprehensively used to convey the cultural connotation of the original texts, so that foreign tourists can get the required information more quickly" (Sun Yang and Chen Da, 2020).

Skopos theory moved translation from a static linguistic phenomenon to an intercultural communication behavior. It is especially powerful in the assessment of non-literary works. At present, some scholars have studied the English translation of Jinsha Site Museum from the perspective of

communication, and some scholars have analyzed the English translation of Jinsha Site Museum from the perspective of "faithfulness, expressiveness and elegance". Despite many researches on the translation of it, practically none of them has used the Skopos theory to assess whether the English translation is successful or not. Therefore, my research is necessary.

2.2. Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework of this paper is Skopos theory. "Skopos theory", meaning "the end justifies the means" (Nord, 2001:124), is an approach to translation which was first put forward by Hans J. Vermeer and developed in the late 1970s. The word "skopos" which was derived from Greek, is a technical term for the aim or purpose of a translation (Vermeer, 2001: 227). The theory focuses above all on the purpose of the translation, which determines the translation methods and strategies that are to be employed in order to produce a functionally adequate result.

In order to have a deeper understanding of this theory, the following section gives a detailed introduction to the three rules of Skopos theory. Vermeer puts forward three possible kinds of purposes: the general purpose aimed at by the translator in the translation process, the communicative purpose aimed at by the target text in the target situation and the purpose aimed at by a particular translation methods or procedure. Generally speaking, Skopos refers to the purpose of the target text (Nord, 2011:28).

Skopos theory points out that translation is a kind of human behavior with a distinct purpose. The specific principles of Skopos theory are as follows:

Skopos rule: Vermeer pointed out in a Framework of General Translation Theory that in the process of Translation, the first principle to be followed is the Skopos rule. (2001) The purpose of translation is crucial to the process of translation, which directly determines the translation strategy to be adopted and the form to be presented.

Coherence rule: It imposes onto translators the requirement that any target text should make sense according to the target culture of the target language so that the receivers can make sense of it. Thus, under this interpretation, intra-textual coherence would specify that a translation is only considered adequate if the receivers can understand the text and interpret it to be coherent with the communicative situation and culture.

Fidelity rule: While this rule is highly similar to the 'faithfulness' aspect in previous equivalence translation theories, one significant difference distinguishes them from each other. The fidelity rule differs from 'faithfulness' as the latter is static and unchanging compared to the dynamic nature of the former, where form and degree of the translation changes depending on the translator's interpretation of the source text.

3. Application of Skopos Theory to English Translations of Jinsha Site Museum

Skopos theory is of guiding significance for the analysis of applied translation. Therefore, this chapter analyzes the English translation of Jinsha Museum's introduction boards from three principles of Skopos theory. It focuses on translation accuracy and quality at lexical, syntactic and textual levels. Hereinafter "example" is shortened as "Eg", "source text" is referred to as "ST", and "target text" is "TT".

3.1. Lexical Level

In translation, words are the most basic components. It is advisable for us to understand all from the part. Under the guidance of Skopos theory, lexical analysis can deepen our understanding of the English translation of Jinsha Site. Following are some typical examples:

Eg.1 ST: 商周蛙形金箔、商周大金面具、商周石虎

TT: Frog-shape gold foil, Gold mask, Stone tiger

The objects in this example are the precious collections in the exhibition hall of Jinsha Site, which fully reflect the development level of Jinsha period. The whole pattern of frog-shape gold foil shows that it is a frog or a toad. Such gold articles are peculiar to the Jinsha site. In the book *The Jinsha Site*, the author refers that the frog was a symbol for the worship of reproduction and worship of the moon in ancient China, and Chinese ancestors used to offer sacrifice to the frog to pray for rain. (The Jinsha Site, 2010: 52) The gold mask has rectangular face with flat forehead, convex eyebrows, big precluding eyes, high bridge of nose, and rectangular ear carving ear hole. It seems to be a dignified appearance. So far, this is the biggest and most well-preserved gold mask at the same period of China. The stone tiger was made of a piece of serpentine-peridotite, with the white spots and veins of the rock aptly used to represent the spots on the tiger's skin. The crouching tiger looks fierce, powerful, and full of vigor. This delicately carved tiger in an austere style is a rarely found artwork of the Shang and Zhou dynasties.

In translating the name of this particular cultural relic, the translator did not literally refer to the Chinese dynasty as Shang and Zhou, but followed the Skopos rule in the text. The translator chose the provincial translation and only translated the words describing the shape of the cultural relic, so that the translated words are easy to understand. The words "frog shape, gold, stone" can all find their equivalents in translation. At the same time, the translation is carried out in accordance with the word order of the original text.

Eg.2 ST: 玉璋、玉圭、玉钺

TT: Jade Zhang, Jade Gui-tablet, Jade Yue-axe

Jade is compact, opaque gemstone that is beautiful, durable and rare. Ancient Chinese often associated jade with the virtue of gentlemen, who carried jade articles all the time, and they also presented jade objects as offerings to Heaven, Earth, and gods. In this example, as shown by the objects on the display, the jade Zhang has a concave in the middle due to the material used. Its shape is quite odd: the upper part is flat, without sharpened edge, and the bolster section has six bulged decorations, with some remnants of vermilion left on them. The blade has no handle. It is conjectured that this object might have been transformed from a damaged Zhang blade. The Gui tablet was an important artifact in the ancient times and the symbol of social position. The Gui tablet, as shown by the objects on the display, was made of excellent material and workmanship. Its bolster section has a number of carved fine lines. These details show this Gui tablet was of a high class. This jade Yue-axe was a ritual artifact symbolizing the political and military power of rulers in the pre-Qin period. In the exhibition hall, we can see the jade Yue-axe has a large round hole. On the lower part of the axe was left a large patch of black glutinous matter, possibly the glue used to fix the axe on a wooden handle transversely. This jade Yue-axe of Jinsha is the first to be found in Sichuan, showing the noble identity of its owner.

A simple translation of the word "Zhang, Gui, Yue" will

make it difficult for foreign visitors to understand what it is at first sight. When foreign visitor reads the “jade” on the introduction board, and sees the artifact on display, he would understand that it is a sculpture of jade. Here, the translator adopts the strategy of combining transliteration with free translation to translate the cultural relic. From this point of view, these translations well follow the skopos rule. Due to the differences between Eastern and Western languages and cultures, when translating the name, the translator first carries out a simple free translation, so that foreign tourists have a preliminary understanding of the cultural relic. And transliteration can supplement the cultural connotation of scenic spots, help foreign tourists better understand Chinese culture and increase their interest in visiting.

In coherence rule, the content of the translation is smoothly connected to meet the standard of intratextual coherence, that is, the translation is readable and acceptable, and can make the recipient understand and make sense in the culture of the target language and the communicative context in which the translation is used. But there exist other English translation for “玉璋、玉圭、玉钺”. On Jinsha site official website “<http://english.jinshasitemuseum.com/>”, they were translated as “Jade Zhang Blade, Jade Gui Tablet, Jade Battle-Axe” Although there are no major changes, the English translation of Jinsha Museum should be regarded as a whole, and the translations should be consistent. From the perspective of coherence principle, these translations of Jinsha Museum need to be adjusted and improved.

From the above analysis, it can be seen that most of the words used in the scenic spots in Jinsha site follow the Skopos theory, especially in dealing with the key and difficult words loaded with Chinese culture. In order to convey the information simply and clearly, the translator simplifies the terminology of cultural relics which are difficult to translate. Although there are some defects in some places, most of the vocabularies have achieved the purpose of conveying information effectively, and on this basis, the introduction boards in Jinsha site spread Chinese history and culture successfully.

3.2. Syntactic Level

Syntax is the part of grammar that deals with the constituent parts of a sentence and the order in which they are arranged. This part offers a syntactic analysis of the English translation of Jinsha Museum, in order to evaluate whether the English translation follows the three principles of Skopos theory.

Eg.3 ST: 制作玉器要经过采料、选料、开料、切割、钻孔、刻纹、镂空、掏雕、打磨、抛光等多项工序，往往需要经年累月才能完工。

TT: It may have taken years to make a piece of jade artifact, through a series of techniques including jade mining, selection, separation, cutting, drilling, pattern engraving, hollow-out or pull-out carving, grinding and polishing, etc. Fantasy of the Jinsha Kingdom and step into its world...

This example is taken from the second hall, which is used to introduce the jade making techniques in Jinsha. However, the translation of this sentence seems to be an error. The translation “Fantasy of the Jinsha Kingdom and step into its world...” is not only has no relation with the original text, but also cannot constitute a full sentence. The principle of fidelity requires that the target text should first be faithful to the purpose of translation, and then, in general, the target text should be faithful to the source text as much as possible if it

does not make concessions for the purpose of realizing the principle. This goes against the principle of fidelity in translation.

Eg.4 ST: 此厅以大型半景画和原状态大型考古遗迹为主，展示了金沙时期的生态环境与生活场景，形态逼真，气势磅礴，极具视觉冲击力。

TT: An impressive diorama and archaeological remains bring us great visual impact on the eco-environment in Jinsha period.

This example was an introduction of the first hall “Primitive Homeland”. This hall was on the second floor. If using literal translation, the first part should be “This hall is mainly composed of large half-landscape paintings and large archaeological relics in their original state, showing the ecological environment and living scenes in the Jinsha period”. But the translation changes the subject of the original sentence, breaks the original structure, and is more in line with the English expression. The translator tries to present the translation in a way that foreign visitors can understand. This strategy follows the Skopos rule which means the purpose of translation directly determines the translation strategy to be adopted.

From the syntactic level, most of the English translations of Jinsha Site follow Skopos theory. Except for a few sentences that violate the principle of fidelity, most sentences follow the three principles of Skopos, coherence and fidelity. In some sentences, the translator will break the sentence patterns of the original text and reorganize the sentence structure according to the Skopos rule and fidelity rule. This reflects the translator's adherence to the Skopos and fidelity rule in Skopos theory.

3.3. Textual Level

Text refers to the language unit actually used and is the whole language constituted by a series of continuous paragraphs or sentences in the communication process. Functionally, it is equivalent to a communicative act. In general, a text consists of more than one paragraph or sentence, among which the components were cohesion in form and coherence in semantics. This part will study the English translation of Jinsha Museum from the textual level, so as to have a macro grasp of its English translation.

Eg.5 ST: 精心设计的大型半景画与实景结合，真实再现了3000年前金沙先民的生活环境：碧野蓝天下的摸底河水淙淙流动，绿草丛中莺歌燕舞、万兽嬉戏，林荫掩映着古朴的民居，远处传来狩猎归来的欢声笑语。在这里，画与景、虚与实和谐自然地交融在一起，淡化了时空的距离。

TT: A large diorama and archaeological remains of ancient flora and fauna are integrated to reconstruct the original ecological environment.

This example is taken from the introduction of the large-scale semi-landscape painting in the first hall of Jinsha Museum. This painting vividly show the ecological environment of Chengdu Plain in Jinsha Period. This sentence uses some idioms to describe the beautiful scenery of Jinsha, which makes people feel at the scene and forget to leave. But the English translation avoids the description “碧野蓝天下的摸底河水淙淙流动，绿草丛中莺歌燕舞、万兽嬉戏，林荫掩映着古朴的民居，远处传来狩猎归来的欢声笑语”，which doesn't correspond well to the original. In addition, the translation neglects the important time “3000 years ago” in the original text, and does not accurately convey the meaning of the original text. Meanwhile, the structure of the original

text is arranged according to what is seen and felt, but there is a clear spatial order of what is seen and felt, so that the paragraph is closely linked to form a whole. It is a pity that the translation fails to translate this part so that foreign visitors can not enjoy the scene through the words. In this paragraph, the meaning of the original is not fully reflected in the translation, which violates the principle of fidelity.

Eg.6 ST:人们在领略了金沙古蜀王国的雄姿丰采之后,或许会问,这个神秘的国度何以产生?其实,成都平原有着悠久的历史传统文化传统。近半个多世纪以来,经过几代考古学人的不懈努力,“蚕丛及鱼凫,开国何茫然”的旧况早已改观,现已基本厘清古蜀文明的演进脉络,金沙正是植根于本地文化传统尔后精进发展而来。

TT: Now we can see at the magnificent Jinsha site the glories of the ancient Shu kingdom. People may ask: how was this mystical kingdom formed? In terms of cultural history, the Chengdu Plain was the core of the proto-historic Shu kingdom and showed a wide time range of cultural tradition. Decades of hard work by generations of Chinese archeologists make it possible to decipher the early history of the Shu kingdom.

This example traces the origin of Jinsha civilization in order to introduce other civilizations related to Jinsha civilization. The great difference between Chinese and western cultures means that translation is not an easy job. Chinese is a paratactic language, so there is often a lack of subject in a sentence. English, on the other hand, is a hypotactic language, and the subject needs to be clearly translated. In this example, the subject of first sentence is “we”, while the subject of the second is “People”. From the perspective of textual structure, the translator does not do well in subject continuity, which does not conform to the principle of coherence.

At the same time, “蚕丛及鱼凫, 开国何茫然”, meaning that the age of the founding country is really long and cannot be discussed in detail, is formed a contrast with “现已基本厘清古蜀文明的演进脉络”. The translator used only two phrases to sum up these two sentences, which not only failed to reflect the contrast, but also failed to reflect the true meaning of the original text. This is clearly inconsistent with the principle of fidelity

Through the analysis of the English translation of Jinsha Site Museum, we find that the Skopos rule is basically followed in English translation. Except for the information integration in order to serve the Skopos rule, the translation does not make too many changes to the original text. However, at the same time, some chapters need to be more coherent and faithful.

4. Conclusion

Jinsha Site Museum has a variety of cultural heritage, covering a wide range of aspects. Its social status, educational function and culture-spreading media determines the importance of the translation of museum-related publicity

material, bearing the function of "cultural ambassador", that is, spreading social and cultural information to foreign countries. Therefore, the expression of English translation plays a vital role.

According to Skopos theory, the English translation of Jinsha Site Museum mostly follow the Skopos rule. It mainly realizes two functions: information function and expression function. The source text contains a lot of content unique to Chinese civilization, which is the trickiest part of translation. The translator should not only ensure the transmission of the information, but also make readers truly understand the translation and Chinese culture. It is not easy for translators to maintain the balance between expressing meaning in target text and reserving the style and form of the original text.

After the analysis, the author finds that some deficiencies of English translation need to be improved in Jinsha Museum. Specifically, at the lexical level, the overall translations are satisfactory, but the names of some cultural relics are not consistent with the information on the official website. At the syntactic level, some translations are too casual or even grammatically incorrect. At the textual level, some translations fail to pay attention to the context. With these translations improved, the English translation of Jinsha Museum can not only convey the information of the exhibits, but also convey the history and culture contained in the exhibits to foreign visitors without any distortion. It is hoped that this study on English translation of Jinsha Museum can provide some references for the solution of the similar problems existing in the English translation of other museums in China, contributing to the improvement of their English versions and the spreading of relevant histories and cultures publicized by varieties of museums in China to the world.

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