

Study on the Mistranslations and Countermeasures of the Publicity of Chengdu Museum from the Perspective of Skopos Theory

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Abstract

The English translation of Museum commentary is an important means to publicize Chinese culture to all countries in the world. With the development of exhibition economy in Sichuan, Chengdu Museum has been more and more favored by tourists at home and abroad. Nowadays, the cultural publicity function of Chengdu Museum is becoming increasingly prominent, and the quality of its English translation of publicity is significant. Taking the English translation of the commentary of Chengdu Museum as an example, based on the Skopos Theory under the Functional Translation Theory, this paper analyzes the errors in its publicity translation, and puts forward appropriate improvement suggestions, in order to promote the quality of publicity translation of Chengdu Museum, promote the development of exhibition economy in Sichuan and the international exchange and promotion of Chinese culture.

Keywords

English Translation of Publicity; Skopos Theory; Chengdu Museum; Exhibition Economy; Chinese Culture.

1. Introduction

With the in-depth development of exhibition economy, Chengdu has closer and closer communications with the world. As one of the capitals of international exhibitions, Chengdu's economic strength and cultural value should not be underestimated. Chengdu is not only the first batch of national famous historical and cultural cities, but also the core city of Chengdu Chongqing economic circle. It enjoys the titles of exhibition economy capital and ancient civilization capital. As the main front for foreign friends to learn about Chinese culture, the museum has an increasingly powerful publicity function. The English translation of Museum publicity has attracted the attention of the state and all sectors of society, but there are still many problems in the English translation of Museum publicity in China, which hinders the effective dissemination of Chinese culture. Therefore, starting from the English translation of the commentary of Chengdu Museum, the author focuses on analyzing its mistranslations, and puts forward corresponding modification suggestions and solutions under the guidance of Skopos Theory, so as to promote Chengdu Museum to better serve the spread of Chinese culture.

2. English Translation of Publicity of Chengdu Museum under the Exhibition Economy

2.1. Current Situation of Publicity Translation of Chengdu Museum

Publicity translation refers to the translation of external publicity and reports in written or oral form by Party, government and military organs at all levels, enterprises and institutions, social groups or individuals through various media or communication platforms. Special publicity

activities have a clear purpose. It has a specific starting point, behavior subject and target audience, and has a clear and desired effect [1]. With the improvement of China's international status, there are more and more international needs to learn about Chinese culture through various ways. Chengdu Museum directly represents the historical and cultural spirit of Chengdu and is a window for Chinese people and foreign friends to feel the glorious history of Chengdu. With the development of convention and exhibition industry, Chengdu's foreign exchanges are increasing. Chengdu Museum also welcomes an increasing number of tourists, and the publicity undertaking is becoming more and more prosperous. However, there are many deficiencies in the publicity text of the commentary of Chengdu Museum: the inappropriate language expression of the translation, the low level of the translator and the lack of relevant cultural background knowledge, which affect the achievement of the communication purpose of Chengdu Museum.

2.2. The Importance of Chengdu Museum Publicity

Chengdu Museum is the largest cultural infrastructure invested in Chengdu since the reform and opening up, providing diversified public cultural services for the city [2]. Since its opening in 2016, Chengdu Museum has been selected into the list of "top ten exhibition boutiques of national museums" twice and the list of national first-class museums in December 2020. Chengdu Museum is an important approach for foreign tourists to learn about Chengdu's history and culture. It is also the main position for receiving foreign envoys in China and carrying out academic exchanges. Publicity translation is an important symbol of China's opening to the outside world and internationalization. The publicity translation of museums has high application value and research significance [3]. The English translation of the commentary of Chengdu Museum is not only an important means to achieve cross-cultural communication, but also a powerful driving force to promote the economic and social development of Chengdu. Therefore, the English translation of the commentary of Chengdu Museum is very important, and its translation level directly affects the international image of Chengdu and even China.

3. An Overview of German Functional Translation Theory and Skopos Theory

Functional Translation Theory originated in Germany in the 1970s. It takes Skopos Theory as the core and emphasizes problems and translation functions. German Functional Translation Theory put forward by German scholars Katharina Reiss, Hans Vermeer, Justa Holz Mänttari and Christiane Nord in the 1970s. It mainly includes: Reiss' text type and language function theory, Mänttari's translation behavior theory, Vermeer's skopos theory and Nord's function plus loyalty theory [4]. Faithfulness, expressiveness and smoothness are the principles that should be followed in all translation activities. The three principles of Skopos theory are skopos rule, coherence rule and fidelity rule. Among the above three principles, skopos rule is the primary principle, which coherence rule and fidelity rule are subordinate to. The translation under the guidance of Skopos theory has certain functions, and the different purposes of the translation will determine the use of different translation strategies, that is, "Purpose determines means". For example, the main purpose of the foreign publicity translation of the museum is to let foreign friends understand Chinese culture and spread Chinese civilization at the same time. Therefore, Skopos theory is actually an important guiding theory of Museum publicity translation.

4. Mistranslations of Chengdu Museum Publicity and Countermeasures under the Guidance of Skopos Theory

The publicity texts of Chengdu Museum mainly adopt the translation methods of literal translation and omission. After investigation, it is found that the publicity texts mainly include language and grammar problems, logic problems, missing information caused by excessive omission, ambiguity of meaning and so on. This series of translation errors affect foreign tourists' understanding of Chengdu culture. In today's increasingly frequent international exchanges, mistakes in the translation of Museum publicity are apt to be amplified. The English translation of Museum publicity represents not only the level of the museum, but also the level of a country's foreign cultural exchange to a certain extent.

4.1. Information Loss and Grammatical Errors Caused by the Absence of Translation

Example 1:

Original text: 较之其他木偶,体型较小,偶头高约一寸。

Translation: Compared with other puppet, the Glove Puppet is small in size.

Analysis: The Skopos translation principle pays attention to the information transmission of the target text. The lack of translation “偶头高约一寸”, resulting in information loss and incomplete expression of meaning, which violates the Skopos principle of information exchange. “高约一寸” is a specific description of the previous text, which is material information so it cannot be omitted. Due to excessive omission, the translation violates the faithfulness principle. This principle is the basic principle that all translation theories should follow, especially the Skopos Theory in Functional Translation Theory, so as to achieve the effective transmission of information. The author suggests completing the translation as “Compared with other puppet, the Glove Puppet is small in size and its head is about an inch high.”

Example 2:

Original text: 宋代以前是“三雕七画”阶段,即三分雕刻七分绘画: 艺人先粗略雕出偶头形状,再进行“粉头”(绘脸),然后制作偶身和服饰。

Translation: Before the Song Dynasty, painting is the priority for modeling.

Analysis: The merit of the translation lies in the direct disposal of “三雕七画” as “painting is the priority”, which is concise and easy to understand, and does not deviate from its meaning. So that it is in line with the translation principles of faithfulness and conciseness in the Skopos translation principles. But there is a grammatical error in this sentence, “宋代以前” is the past time, and the predicate verb should consistently use the past tense “was”. The translator omitted all the sentences describing the puppet making process in the second half of the sentence, resulting in the lack of information, which is not desirable. The exhibition section mainly explains the modeling and production of puppets. The author believes that the most basic description of the production steps should be retained in the translation of commentaries, so as to provide foreign tourists with a more comprehensive cultural experience. In addition, this sentence also involves the translation of specific dynasties in China, and the translation method of additional translation should be adopted. Here is the additional translation of time tagging method, and the specific year should be added to the translation. To sum up, it is suggested to translate into “Before the Song Dynasty (960-1279), painting is the priority for modeling. The artisan first roughly carved the shape of the head, then painted the face, and then made the body and clothes.”

Example 3:

Original text: 成都平原属亚热带季风性湿润气候,自古享有“天府之国”的美誉。

Translation: The Chengdu Plain belongs to the humid subtropical climate and enjoys the reputation of "land of abundance" ever since ancient times.

Analysis: In the translation, "humid subtropical climate" only translates "亚热带湿润气候", but lacks the "季风性", which is apt to lead to the understanding deviation of the target language readers and it is not in line with the faithfulness principle of Skopos theory. The complete translation should be "Subtropical Monsoon Humid Climate", and the initial capital should be noted. In addition, there are grammatical errors in this sentence. Skopos translation principle focuses on the expression effect of the target language. The communicative purpose of the target language, that is, the translation, is the primary purpose of Skopos translation principle. Therefore, grammatical errors in translation must be avoided. The original text "自古享有“天府之国”的美誉" shows the tense, so the tense of the predicate verb in the translation should be the present perfect continuous tense, and the "since" in the translation is also a sign of the perfect tense. Therefore, the predicate verb "enjoys" is grammatically wrong and should be translated as "has been enjoying". To sum up, it is suggested to translate this sentence into "The Chengdu Plain belongs to the Subtropical Monsoon Humid Climate and has been enjoying the reputation of "land of abundance" ever since ancient times."

In addition, when studying the temporary special exhibition "discovering the beauty of traditional Chinese Medicine - cultural relics of traditional Chinese medicine", the author found that the Chengdu Museum has little translation of the contents of this special exhibition. For example, "神农草本经", "本草纲目" and other famous Chinese traditional medicine bibliographies did not translate the relevant contents, but only the title. Nowadays, traditional Chinese medicine is world-famous, and the international influence of Chinese traditional medicine is increasing day by day. Traditional Chinese medicine, a traditional Chinese culture, has long crossed national boundaries and has been accepted and used by countries all over the world. Many foreign medical experts have come to China to explore the mysteries of traditional Chinese medicine. Museums are not only the way for the Chinese people to learn Chinese culture, but also the main front for cultural export. Therefore, the lack of translation of the museum should not be underestimated. Although it is only a temporary exhibition, Chengdu Museum should not ignore its publicity and English translation, but should spare no effort to take care of the publicity and English translation of each commentary, so as to better help traditional Chinese medicine go to the world and serve all the people in the world.

4.2. Normative Issues of Proper Nouns and Letters

Example 1:

Original text: 成都地区位于四川盆地西部。

Translation: Chengdu is located in western Sichuan Basin.

Analysis: Translation from the perspective of Skopos theory lays emphasis on coherence. The principle of coherence requires the translator to comprehensively consider the context and the background knowledge of the reader when translating, so as to make the receiver understand the translation and make the translation meaningful in the target language culture and the communicative context in which the translation is used [5]. "四川盆地西部" is a proprietary geographical name. In order to meet the writing requirements of the target language countries, the translation principle of initial capitalization should be adopted, that is "Western Sichuan Basin", or translated into "the western part of Sichuan Basin".

Example 2:

Original text: "西游记"

Translation: *Story of a Journey to the West*

Analysis: The book 《西游记》 has a standardized proprietary name, namely *Journey to the West*. Once the book title translation established by the people through long social practice, it should be maintained. Different translation will mislead tourists, cause the dissemination of wrong information, and hinder the translation from achieving its communicative purpose. The terminology of museums should adhere to the principle of unity [6], so as to better help foreign tourists understand Chinese culture and promote cultural exchange and dissemination.

During the field visit to Chengdu Museum, the author found that the English translation commentary of the entrance introduction of the permanent exhibition "Man and Nature - Donation from Kenneth E. Behring" had letters falling off. This part of the commentary used pasted three-dimensional characters, in which the letter "l" of the word "responsibility" fell off and was missing, leaving only "responsibility". Perhaps in the eyes of most people, this is a trivial matter, but it is enough to see big things through small ones in the museum with great publicity function. The negligence of the museum staff may cause foreign tourists to leave a bad impression on the Chinese Museum. In addition, this exhibition is located on the first floor of the museum entrance, which is the exhibition area with the largest number of tourists in the whole museum. So that its influence can not be ignored.

4.3. Logical Problems

As for the Chinese shadow puppet show, the lack of translation in Chengdu Museum is very serious. In addition to failing to achieve the expected publicity effect, it also brought a series of other negative effects. Shadow puppetry involves many proper words, which are bitter and difficult to understand. The missing of information and unclear logic caused by the lack of translation of key information has further exacerbated foreign tourists' understanding of Chinese traditional culture. When visiting the exhibition area, the author found that some foreign tourists only stayed in front of the commentary board of the exhibition area for a few seconds. They were only attracted by a wide range of shadow puppet molds with different postures, and did not devote themselves to reading the commentary of their English translation. They just look around and fail to really feel the glory of China's excellent intangible cultural heritage. I think one of the main reasons is that the English translation of commentaries with chaotic logic has badly affected the reading experience of foreign tourists. According to the translation requirements of Skopos theory, the reading effect of the target text is the first, so the logically confused translation violates the principle of Skopos theory.

Example 1:

Original text: 在皮影演出时,, 上天入地、腾云驾雾、喷烟吐火、换头变脸等传统戏曲难以表现的种种特技, 也可于瞬间完成。

Translation: such as lightening and thunder, mounting the cloud and riding the mist, spitting fire and swallowing smoke, changing head and face which can be done easily in a shadow play but not easy to be presented by traditional opera actors.

Analysis: The principle of coherence requires that "The information generated by the translator must be able to be interpreted in a way consistent with the situation of the target recipient" [7]. The logically confused translation limits the target reader's understanding and acceptance of information, thus violating the coherence principle in Skopos theory. There are many mistranslations of this sentence. First of all, the translation of "上天入地" into "lightning and thunder" is out of nothing. There is no word related to "lightning" in the original text. It is illogical to equate "heaven" and "Earth" with lightning, which should be translated as "going from heavy to earth". Secondly, "喷烟吐火" is not "吞烟吐火", so the translation of "swallowing smoke" is wrong. "swallowing" means "吞" or "咽", which is contrary to the meaning of "喷 - puff". Therefore, it should be translated into "puffing smoke and spitting fire". In addition, the word order of the translation is chaotic, and the logic of subject-predicate relationship is

unclear. In the translation of Museum commentaries, we should pay special attention to avoid textual translation errors, so as not to hinder the realization of its translation purpose. To sum up, it is suggested to translate it into "In shadow plays, ..., various special effects that are difficult to perform in traditional operas, such as going from heaven to earth, flying through clouds and fog, puffing smoke and spitting fire, changing heads and faces, can also be completed in an instant."

4.4. Rigid Translation Thinking

Example 1:

Original text: 洞穴壁画

Translation: Cave Wall Painting

Analysis: Translation is not a one-to-one transformation between languages, but a communication between different cultures. In Skopos theory, the purpose of translation is also usually a communicative purpose. This translation method is a kind of rigid literal translation with strong Chinese thinking. In fact, "cave painting" means "洞穴壁画". There is no need to translate "壁" into "wall". The language of museum should also follow the principle of brevity. This word-by-word translation instead plays a role in painting a snake with feet, which means superfluous. At the language level, translating "壁画" word by word into "wall painting" does not conform to the writing habits of foreign languages, so the translation does not have coherence at the same time. In English, we only need a single word "mural" to express "壁画". The Skopos theory of functional translation theory pursues the translation of functional equivalence rather than word sentence equivalence.

5. A Summary of Strategies for Mistranslations in Chengdu Museum under the Guidance of Skopos Theory

The main purpose of Museum publicity translation is to spread and exchange cultures. While spreading Chinese culture to the outside world, it also attracts foreign tourists to take the initiative to learn about Chinese culture. Therefore, the translation of Museum publicity should pay special attention to the principle of purpose and faithfulness. Skopos theory is the core of functional translation theory, and Skopos principle is the primary principle that all translation activities should follow, that is, to choose translation strategies flexibly according to the expected purpose of the translation. Under the guidance of Skopos theory, the publicity translation of Chengdu Museum can use translation strategies such as amplification, paraphrase, omission, literal translation plus annotation to translate according to different types of text themes, so as to increase the comprehensibility and acceptability of the translation and reduce translation errors.

The improvement of mistranslation is not only supported by excellent translation theory, but also to improve the quality of translators. Translators should have a strong sense of responsibility and rigorous working attitude. When dealing with historical problems they do not really understand, they should consult literature, constantly expand their bilingual cultural reserve knowledge, and try their best to avoid translation absence of historical information. Museum translators can not only skillfully use the target language to express relevant meanings, but also have a solid cultural foundation of their native language to ensure the coherence of the translation. In the process of Museum publicity translation, the translator needs to overcome cultural barriers and make the translation close to the target language culture, so as to facilitate the effective dissemination of Chinese culture abroad. The state and the government should also issue relevant policies to standardize the translation standards of museums, and provide financial support for the training of professional translation teams of museums, in order to improve the English translation level of Museum publicity.

6. Conclusion

Museum publicity translation is guided by Skopos Theory and adopts different translation strategies to achieve different functions such as informative text and vocative text. The cultural function of the museum and the exhibition economy have a mutual promotion. The museum is not only the main approach of cultural publicity, but also a carriage driving the economic and social development of the city. Chengdu Museum is of great significance to carry forward Chengdu history and spread Chinese culture. In order to achieve the effective dissemination of culture, high-quality publicity translation is essential. Due to the author's limited personal ability, there are some limitations in the analysis and research of translation theory when writing the thesis. With the mentality of learning and discussion, this paper analyzes the mistranslations and Countermeasures of the English translation of the publicity of Chengdu Museum, hoping to make a modest contribution to the dissemination of China's splendid history and culture and the development of related industries. The author believes that if this paper can be combined with the English translation texts of foreign publicity of other domestic museums to study, compare, analyze and learn from each other, its results will provide greater help to the improvement of Museum mistranslation.

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