

On the English Translation of Culture-Loaded Words in Tourist Texts in Light of Skopos Theory: A Case Study of Attractions in Nanjing

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Abstract—Tourist texts, serving as an essential introduction, carry crucial importance in the tourist industry and bridge the gap between Chinese culture and visitors. Therefore, to facilitate foreign visitors to obtain a comprehensive grasp of local culture, the English translation of tourist texts, especially those culture-loaded words inside, should be prioritised. Prior studies on translations of cultural terminologies in tourism offer a range of strategies and methodologies. Yet Chinese cultural connotation is intricate and implicit due to its various formation processes, complicating the search for appropriate English equivalents. Instructed by Skopos Theory, the study collects culture-loaded words regarding three prominent tourist attractions in Nanjing, namely Nanjing Museum, Imperial Examination Museum of China, and Nanjing Presidential Palace. The research examines the implementation of three translation principles of skopos rule, coherence rule, and fidelity rule. Findings reveal that many translations fall short of expectations, primarily due to deviations from these principles. The research evaluates the current translation version, identifies key issues, and provides systematic recommendations for further modification. Working as a reference for translating tourism materials, this study also lays the foundations for further tourist translation research.

Index Terms—Skopos Theory, culture-loaded words, tourist texts

I. INTRODUCTION

Tourism is an intricate amalgamation of culture, language, and communication, wherein the translation of cultural concepts plays a pivotal role in influencing tourists' perceptions and impressions. In the era of globalisation, comprehending the representation and translation of cultural diversity in tourism texts is of paramount significance, especially in historically rich sites like Nanjing.

Nanjing is known for its profound cultural heritage and historic legacy. As one of the four capitals of ancient China, Nanjing draws millions of tourists annually, both domestic and international. Nonetheless, limited studies delve into the dynamics of cultural interaction and communication in tourist texts. Moreover, the translation of tourist texts often presents challenges, as translators and readers operate within distinct cultural systems, complicating the task of rendering culturally specific terms.

Skopos Theory is a crucial branch of translation studies, which refers to the translation strategy that adopts purposeful criteria to achieve the target text (Du, 2012). By digging into its applicability, the research examines the translation strategies used to translate these cultural elements into English and evaluates its effectiveness in conveying cultural meanings. Through conducting a case study of specific attractions in Nanjing, China, namely, Nanjing Museum, Imperial Examination Museum of China, and Nanjing Presidential Palace, the study seeks to explore the culture-loaded words in the English version and analyse their effectiveness in conveying understandable meanings to target audiences.

The paper is structured as follows. The introduction is followed by a comprehensive review of existing literature on the translation of cultural terms in the tourism industry. The framework of Skopos Theory is outlined in the third section, presenting the selection of tourist texts, and culture-loaded words. Subsequently, translation errors found in the texts are listed as examples in the fourth part, presenting the analysis and discussion of translation violations and effectiveness. The last section comprises a summary of principal findings and recommendations for further research. The study is expected to enhance intercultural communication and translation studies by providing insights into the application of Skopos Theory in translating cultural concepts within tourist texts.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

To lay a foundation for the investigation, this part explores previous research associated with the translation of cultural words, especially in the tourism industry.

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A. *The Introduction of Culture-Loaded Words*

Culture-loaded words are words and idioms that signify something specific to a certain culture, directly reflecting some vocabulary that has been gradually accumulated by a group of people with a long history, which differs from the ways of activity of other people (Ding, 2023). According to Bao Huinan and Bao Ang (2004), every language is a product of the cultural development of a country and has a long historical background and rich connotations. The concept of “cultural translation” first appeared in the article “Translation and Culture” by scholar Liu Shan in 1982, and it marked the beginning of cultural translation studies in China. Henceforth the investigation of translation expanded to the aspect of culture and cross-culture (Li & Yi, 2023). Many translators have investigated the definition and translation of culture-loaded words. In a study on the translation of journalistic discourses, researchers state that various cultural words must be translated in specific contexts in a meaningful way when they are suitable and understandable for another language in different cultural backgrounds where the target audience agrees with it (Guessabi, 2021). Ball (2021) emphasizes the communicative function and translator’s subjective in his research and proposes that translation needs to adapt to the reading habits and cultural background of readers. Hu Wenzhong (1999) defines culture-loaded words as words, which are direct and indirect reflections of the national history and culture in the linguistic vocabulary. Li Xiaoying and his colleagues (2023) in their study on the translation of culture-loaded words in Chinese medicine, claim that the accurate translation of these words requires the understanding of the items’ connotations. Minor linguistic changes possibly result in different reader responses (Repke & Dorer, 2021). It’s necessary for translators to compare the Chinese and Foreign cultures in order to seek common and put aside differences, and only then can we select the most faithful and appropriate words that bridge the cognitive gap.

B. *The Tourism Translation of Culture-Loaded Words*

Cultural or heritage tourism is an expanding area for translation research with the dramatic growth in the number of tourists (Liao, 2018; Richards, 2018). Regarding tourism translation, Cappelli and Gloria in 2007 discussed the translation of texts related to travel websites. They think keyword analysis, in fact, cultural keyword analysis, is an important part of the translation process (p. 97). The translation of tourism signs catches researchers’ attention as well. Since 2000, empirical translation studies have become popular across the country. In 2014, Tao used Ecological Translation Theory to evaluate the English translation of Nanjing’s tourism website, indicating that translators need to make necessary reconstruction of the translation ecosystem. In the same year, Ye (2014) wrote a study on the English version of the tourism text materials in Nanjing Museum under the perspective of communication studies. She believes that the principles of tourism translation are accuracy and sufficiency, readability, and acceptability, which form the foundations of the questionnaire for international tourists involving the texts in the Nanjing Museum. Moreover, Liu (2020) investigates the cultural translation in coastal cities. With a broader context and a similar purpose to this study, she analyses the problems existing in the translation of tourism publicity and seeks a higher-quality English version. Jia (2020) analyses it from the perspective of Skopos Theory, revealing the existing translation problems in Chongqing. She provides meaningful and feasible suggestions for the revision. Signs in Guangzhou are also studied and given revisions to the English version. Apart from traditional qualitative analysis, technical development nowadays enables researchers to conduct a more effective quantitative investigation. Li et al. (2022) employ the corpus linguistics method to study the English geo-tourism translation from the perspective of cultural terms. They build a model platform for the relevant study and provide translation pedagogy for further research. All these studies have laid a foundation for the present research which focuses on the translation of culture-loaded words in tourist texts of Nanjing. Increasing attention has been paid to the practical application of translation in China. However, there are still deficiencies in the translation of tourism texts in Nanjing so far. Researchers hardly concentrate on the shortcomings of the existing English version, whilst this study makes up for this gap and puts forward practical advice for translation problems in Nanjing tourism text.

III. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This section outlines the main concepts of the Skopos Theory, namely skopos rule, coherence rule, and fidelity rule. It introduces its necessity in the translation of culture-loaded terms in tourist texts and emphasizes its relevance in guiding translation strategies to fulfill specific communicative purposes.

Developed by Hans J. Vermeer in the 1970s, the functionalist Skopos Theory is introduced as a central framework for understanding translation as a purposeful action guided by the communicative needs of the target audience. Katharina Reiss in 1971 first proposed the use of functional relationships as a basis for translation criticism. Since this, the idea of the Skopos Theory was first systematically mentioned in his thesis *A Framework of General Translation Theory* in 1978. He proposed that “any form of translational action, including therefore translation itself, may be conceived as an action, as the name implies. [...] The word skopos, then, is a technical term for the aim or purpose of a translation (Reiss, 1978, p. 83)”. Then Vermeer and Reiss published the book *Towards a General Theory of Translational Action* which presented the main contents of Skopos Theory in detail.

Entering the 21st century, Skopos Theory has been more widely welcomed in China. In 2001 and 2004, the books of Christiane Nord and Katharina Reiss were published in China. Since then, increasing scholars have dug into investigation from this perspective in order to explain the modern Chinese translation situation. For instance, An and

Sun (2023) mainly focus on a specific research point on legal terms in the translation of the *Civil Code*, while Wang and Zhou (2023) take a broader view on the research techniques for improving further translation quality. Skopos Theory has been widely noticed and explored, and many studies have shown that it plays an extremely important role in the translation of functional texts.

Translation based on Skopos Theory needs to follow three rules, namely skopos rule, coherence rule, and fidelity rule.

(a). *Skopos Rule*

Among the three, skopos rule is the first and foremost. It emphasizes the significance of considering the purpose and intended function, guiding translators to produce target texts that are both linguistically appropriate and functionally effective. The term “skopos” is often used to refer to the purpose of a translation, derived from the Greek word. In addition to skopos, Vermeer (1996) uses the related terms “aim”, “purpose”, “intention”, and “function”. He describes the skopos rule as follows: “Each text is created for a specific purpose and shall serve for that purpose (p. 35).” The skopos rule recognizes that translations are purposeful acts of communication. Before translation, the translator needs to make clear the functions and goals to be achieved by the translation act, and accordingly decide the whole subsequent translation research process. The universal one is to fulfill the communicative purpose of the translated text, including providing technical support, conveying information, and so on.

The skopos rule allows for adaptation and creative change on the part of the translator. This means that the translator may need to modify and polish elements of the source text to ensure that the target text effectively serves its purpose in the target culture. While linguistic accuracy is important, functional equivalence takes precedence (Li, 2021). What is more, the skopos rule admits that translation involves interpretation and negotiation of meaning between the source and target cultures. Translators must make decisions about how to convey the intended meaning effectively, even if it means deviating from the literal or surface-level meaning of the source text. It also needs to be recognized that the skopos of a translation, influenced by various factors, can be dynamic and may evolve throughout the process.

(b). *Coherence Rule*

The coherence rule is also called “intra-textual coherence”, which guides translators to create internally coherent and cohesive texts (Nord, 2001). Coherence refers to the logical and meaningful connection between different parts of a text, while cohesion means the linguistic devices used in it. The coherence rule emphasizes the importance of ensuring that the target passage makes sense and reads smoothly in its own context, even if this requires adjusting or reorganizing.

The translation needs to conform to the language structure of the target language and can enable the users to understand linguistically and culturally (Zhang & Wang, 2021). This requires translators to take into full consideration the context. While translating, the ideas, themes, and arguments presented in the target text should be logically connected and should not contain contradictions. Translators must also ensure that the target text follows a logical progression of ideas and events. The coherence rule also requires translators to consider cultural and contextual factors that may affect the coherence of the target text. Translators must ensure that the target text is culturally appropriate and contextually relevant for the target audience, even if it means making cultural adaptations or adjustments to the source text.

(c). *Fidelity Rule*

“One possible kind of inter-textual coherence could be a maximally faithful imitation of the source text (Reiss et al., 2014, p. 113).” The fidelity rule is also known as the loyalty rule, which refers to letting the translated text accurately convey the information of the original one. While the skopos rule emphasizes the importance of achieving the intended purpose or function of the translation, and the coherence rule focuses on linguistic and textual coherence, the fidelity rule addresses the translator’s responsibility to maintain an appropriate level of faithfulness or loyalty to the source text which translators are expected to approach with a sense of respect and to strive to convey its meaning and message accurately in the target language.

While the primary focus of translation is to achieve the skopos or purpose, the fidelity rule requires translators to prioritize the preservation of meaning from the source text to the extent possible. This means accurately conveying the content, tone, style, and nuances of the source text in the target language. In addition to linguistic fidelity, the Fidelity Rule also encompasses cultural and contextual fidelity. Translators must be sensitive to cultural differences and nuances, ensuring that the target text is culturally appropriate and resonates with the target audience while remaining faithful to the source text. The rule also involves ethical considerations related to the representation of the source text and the intentions of the author. Translators must adhere to ethical standards and avoid misrepresenting or distorting the meaning of the source text in the translation process.

IV. ANALYSIS OF THE TRANSLATION PROBLEMS OF CULTURE-LOADED WORDS IN TOURIST TEXTS

Culture-loaded words are precisely the representations of unique language and culture in a country or nation, bearing distinctive features. In terms of English and Chinese languages and translation, cultural terms mainly contain two categories: one is words that have the same meaning without corresponding expression in the Chinese and English cultures; the other is words that seem to correspond in the two cultures, but their meanings are different or even

completely opposite. Since there has been a dispute between direct translation and indirect translation in the translation world, some scholars believe that the Skopos Theory can provide useful guidance for the translation of culture-loaded words (Jiang, 2024; Zhu, 2023; Chen & Cao, 2024).

This part will introduce the selection of tourist attractions and culture-loaded words inside. Data collection methods, analysis, and limitations are discussed to provide a comprehensive understanding of the research. Meanwhile, according to the three rules, this part will conclude the reasons for the translation errors and suggest appropriate translation revisions for further improvements.

A. Data Collection

The attractions selected for this study are based on specific criteria, including their cultural significance, popularity among tourists, and availability of tourist materials such as brochures, websites, and signs. Attractions that meet these criteria are chosen to ensure the relevance and richness of the database.

As the capital of Jiangsu Province, Nanjing is a national key tourist city that is extremely popular among citizens. The attraction of Nanjing was chosen due to the city's rich historical and cultural heritage, which makes it an ideal occasion to study the translation of culture-loaded words in tourism texts. The investigation chooses three out of the most popular tourist attractions to conduct the investigation (Nanjing Daily, 2023). Based on these data and the research purpose, the author collected bilingual texts used for the study of culture-loaded words from three famous tourist attractions, Nanjing Museum, Imperial Examination Museum of China, and Nanjing Presidential Palace. Various types of tourism texts are collected, including texts from websites, signs, and interpretative materials. These materials are obtained from official tourism websites, tourist information centers, and physical scenic spots. Then the collected linguistic data are scanned by word and sentence to sort out the culture-loaded words and their translations separately, and the translation errors are marked. As the research attached importance to whether the translation complies with the Skopos Theory, the improper translations are then categorized according to the three rules, and formed into three categories as well, violation of these three rules. Data and table records are created as described below. The study records the classification and integration of various problems and then organizes the use of words so that the revised translation is more local and fluent.

B. Translation Errors

(a). Violation of Skopos Rule

Skopos rule is of most value among the three rules, and it is easy to be violated as well. The aim of translation is a cultural and social practice of processing, reconstructing, and retransmitting knowledge across languages (Yang, 2021). Tourist texts are designed to convey Chinese culture and spirits in an accessible way. That is the aim and goal that translators should keep striving for.

According to this, the research analyses the source texts and summarizes 28 errors in total. In exploring their contributors, the main reason can be summarized as that the translation text fails to meet the requirement of cultural function and cannot point out the cultural connotations. On one hand, it is impossible to translate these culture-loaded words one by one directly according to the original word order as English and Chinese have different grammatical structures. Moreover, the meaning of the source text needs to be accurately elucidated with the maintenance of the original stylistic style and without any distortion or deletion. Translators need to consider whether to keep both the content and the structure of the source text. On the other hand, translators have to avoid translating the text from the word level while ignoring the purpose and meaning of sentences. Context, thus, cannot be overlooked since it always contributes to an adequate understanding of source messages, especially within the hidden humanistic connotation. To fully understand the connotative and denotative meaning of traditional culture, it is necessary to comprehend background information and related implications. Hence, translators must pay attention to the context. Negligence of this principle will cause inadequate translation and even failure in the communication of cultural messages. A few examples are as follows.

Example 1:

ST: 一旦考中进士，即被称为“登龙门”，“鱼”即变为“龙”，从此踏上仕宦之路。

TT: As long as they could be selected as Jinshi, they were called “enter the dragon gate”, as if the “fish” became the “dragon”. Since then, they began their official careers.

Revised version: As long as they could be selected as Jinshi, they were called “enter the ‘loong’ gate” (succeed in the imperial examination), as if the “fish” (ordinary people) became the “Loong” (successful people). Since then, they began their official careers.

The source text wants to point out the importance of the imperial examination in ancient times when a high-ranked student could win a better future. The related phrases such as “登龙门” and “鱼、龙” are special terms in Chinese. In most cases, “龙”, as a product of the agricultural civilization, is mainly responsible for blessing people with good physical conditions, carrying beautiful symbols such as bravery, vitality, and good fortune. The application of “登龙门” and “鱼、龙” is a special denotation within Chinese culture, referring to a story that after jumping through a special door, one fish can evolve into a “龙”. It is a metaphor for career success or higher status. However, the Western background “dragon”, as a product of oceanic civilization, often breathes fire, and causes casualties, which is mostly

seen as a symbol of evil. The translation of “龙” as “dragon” is a mechanical way to apply a negative Western image to local culture. It is easy to create a pejorative understanding (Zheng, 2008). As a result, translators can translate this word into “loong”, which has been recorded as a symbol of Eastern culture in many dictionaries. Apart from that, it can also add some necessary explanations if we want to keep the translation of “dragon”. The target text, after the discussion, can be polished into: As long as they could be selected as Jinshi, they were called “enter the ‘loong’ gate” (succeed in the imperial examination) as if the “fish” (ordinary people) became the “Loong” (successful people). Since then, they began their official careers.

Example 2:

ST: 清两江总督署史料馆

Target Text: Exhibition of Historical Materials on the Liangjiang Viceroy’s Official Residence

Revised version: Exhibition of Historical Materials on the Mansion of Jiangsu and Jiangxi Provinces’ Viceroy

The original text introduces one of the official positions in the Qing Dynasty. “两江总督”, one of the nine most senior ministers of the Qing Dynasty, was in charge of the military and civil affairs in the past provinces of Jiangsu (including nowadays Shanghai), Anhui, and Jiangxi province. “两江” refers to the provinces of “Jiangnan” (now Jiangsu, Anhui, and Shanghai) and Jiangxi. The original translation only translates it as “Liangjiang” which is likely to confuse foreign visitors, and even result in misunderstanding. For instance, visitors and commentators may mistake it for the Two Rivers Valley, namely the Yangtze River and the Yellow River. As a result, the revised version needs to point out the details and be polished as: Exhibition of Historical Materials on the Mansion of Jiangsu and Jiangxi Provinces’ Viceroy.

Example 3:

ST: 民间还出现了蹴鞠的社团。

TT: Soccer was so widely played that clubs were organized among the people.

Revised version: As the prototype of modern football, Cuju, originating in ancient China, was so widely played that clubs were organized among the people.

“蹴鞠” is a kind of ball game widely spreading in ancient China. It was popular among Chinese people as early as the Warring States Period. Later, it was spread from China to Europe by the Arabs and gradually evolved into modern football. Modern football began in the United Kingdom, and its predecessor originated from “蹴鞠”. Besides, the translation of “足球” cannot make foreign visitors understand the historical significance of “蹴鞠”. Thus, we cannot equate “蹴鞠” with football. The related context is necessary. The revised version can be: As the prototype of modern football, Cuju, originating in ancient China, was so widely played that clubs were organized among the people.

Example 4:

ST: 原碑立于苏州寒山寺。此碑系 1939 年 3 月, “维新政府” 按原碑复制后所立。

TT: The original tablet was placed in the Hanshan Temple in Suzhou. The “Reformed Government” made a reproduction and placed it here in March 1939.

Revised version: The original tablet was placed in the Hanshan Temple in Suzhou. The “Reformed Government*” made a reproduction and placed it here in March 1939.

* *Reformed Government (1938-1940) was established in Nanjing by Liang Hongzhi and others as a puppet regime supported by Japan during the war against the Japanese invasion.*

The source text “维新政府” cannot be simply translated into “Reformed Government” as it will be confused with other several modernization movements in modern China, such as the Hundred Days Reform. Based on the time mentioned in the original source, this Reformed Government of the Republic of China was established in Nanjing on 28 March 1938 by Liang Hongzhi and others. It was a puppet regime supported by Japan during the War of Resistance Against Japanese Aggression. The source text is aimed at introducing the development of the tablet. Though the “Reformed Government” is not the emphasized point, to better assist tourists in understanding the text, the revised text can add some additional notes below as shown above.

(b). Violation of Coherence Rule

The coherence of translation is mainly embodied in four aspects. Firstly, it is necessary to maintain the grammatical coherence within the sentence. The second is to ensure the logical coherence between sentences. That is to say, the transition should be natural and smooth. Thirdly, we need to pay attention to the continuity of the paragraph. Finally, to keep a clear organization and logic at the level of sentence and paragraph, it should be emphasized.

Under such considerations, two main kinds of violations are identified, namely, grammatical mistakes and nonstandard and inconsistent terminology. Based on this, what can be concluded is that, with 38 in total, there are 16 cases related to the former and 22 cases related to the latter. Further analysis with some examples will be presented as follows.

TABLE 1
TRANSLATION ERRORS THAT VIOLATE THE COHERENCE RULE

	Translation Errors that Violate the Coherence Rule		Total
	Grammatical Mistake	Nonstandard and Inconsistent Terminology	
Number	16	23	39

Example 1:

Source Text: 应天府

Target Text: Yingtianfu

Revised version: Yingtianfu prefecture

“应天府”，also known as Nanjing, was its name during the Ming Dynasty and used to be the capital in the early time. During the Qing Dynasty, it was renamed as “江宁府”. The main focus of the source text is to emphasize both the geographical location, but also the use of the Chinese character “府”. “府” is the name of a Chinese administrative division during the Ming and Qing dynasties. It is the second level of administrative division, whose status is between the province and the prefecture-level city nowadays. If it is directly transliterated as the target text, foreign readers will never understand a strange single-syllable “fu”. “府”, thus, needs to be translated to assist their understanding. So we can revise it into Yingtianfu prefecture. With the help of “prefecture”, English readers will be more likely to have a general imagination of “应天府”.

Example 2:

Source Text: 科举考试

Target Text: civil service examination

Revised version: imperial examinations

In the source context, the non-standardized and different translation of “科举考试” in the tourist attraction will cause cognitive difficulties for tourists. According to the Merriam-Webster dictionary (n.d.), the civil service exam refers to a test to get a job in the civil service (the administrative part of the government). It is more suitable for the modern civil service selection system rather than in the traditional Eastern context. The history of Western and Chinese times is distinctive, and we need to choose culture-loaded words more scrupulously. “Imperial examinations” is a more appropriate and conventional translation.

(c). *Violation of Fidelity Rule*

Fidelity rule means our translation should be in accordance with the original texts. As Pinkham (2000) has contended, translators are charged with translating meaning, not words. Translators ought to maintain a faithful relationship with the original text as far as possible on the basis of skopos rule and coherence rule so that the translation meets the requirements of the target language without losing the spiritual connotation.

As a result, if the translation of tourist texts is inconsistent with the source one, consequently, it violates the fidelity rule. Specifically, the translation errors that violate the fidelity rule can be divided into two types, namely, omission of key information and mistranslation. The omission of key information refers to the situation where some translations of cultural items are omitted intentionally or unintentionally. Thus, readers might find it hard to understand the uniqueness of the tourist attractions. Apart from this, mistranslation means the English translation of culture-loaded words does not match the Chinese ones, such as information bias and misuse of commendatory or derogatory connotations. From the research, the study concludes the number of errors. There are 19 cases of violations in total, 12 cases of omissions of key information, and 7 cases of mistranslation. The chart below shows the analysis. Several examples are shown below.

TABLE 2
TRANSLATION ERRORS THAT VIOLATE THE FIDELITY RULE

	Translation Errors that Violate the Fidelity Rule		Total
	Omission of Key Information	Mistranslation	
Number	12	7	19

Example 1:

Source Text: 魏晋的九品中正制

Target Text: the Nine Rank System

Revised version: the Nine Rank System in Wei and Jin dynasties

The source text is used to describe an exhibited picture that introduces the policy of selecting talents in China. Separated into Upper, Middle, and Lower classes, each of which was composed of three ranks, the nine rank system made nine in total. Each rank was also further divided into standard and secondary ranks so that the entire system contained 18 ranks. The information it conveys is the policy used in the Wei and Jin dynasties, and what should be emphasized exactly is the period of time. The target text has translated the main body of the phrase “九品中正制” without the time, assuming that the reader knows the historical background and dynasty of the selection system. In fact, foreign readers need more information to get familiar with Chinese history. As a result, the dynasty should not be omitted, and the target text can be expressed as: the Nine Rank System in the Wei and Jin dynasties.

Example 2:

ST: 科举时代，人们对登科的追求与祝愿、对耕读的勉励与劝诫、对孝廉的恪守与宣扬，无不体现在建筑的装饰之中。

TT: In the time of Keju, earning the degree (“Deng Ke”), recommending and investing diligence to learn, strict observance of honesty, and publicity of filiality are some commonly seen patterns in ancient Chinese architecture.

Revised version: In the time of Keju (the imperial examination), earning the degree (“Deng Ke”), encouraging learning with diligence, strictly observing, and promoting honesty and filial piety are commonly seen in the decorations of ancient Chinese architecture.

This source text depicts the decoration of the building which was built during the time of Keju (the imperial examination). The core information of this sentence is the depiction that shows the pursuit and wishes of people in the past. Moreover, the pursuit is reflected in the decoration of the building, rather than itself as a pattern. The original translation ignores the meaning of the sentence, and the translation is misleading and against the fidelity rule. Moreover, “孝” is the value of demonstrating love and respect for one’s parents, elders, and ancestors, especially in the framework of Confucian, Chinese Buddhist, and Daoist moral principles. Based on the official translation in Collins Dictionary (n.d.), the noun’s translation is “filial piety”. This term is academic and widely recognized. The English version can be revised as: In the time of Keju (the imperial examination), earning the degree (“Deng Ke”), encouraging learning with diligence, strictly observing and promoting honesty, and filial piety are commonly seen in the decorations of ancient Chinese architecture.

Example 3:

ST: 妙笔生花

TT: flowery expression

Revised version: elegant writing

“妙笔生花”, as a positive Chinese idiom, refers to that one’s writing technique is so excellent and vivid that readers can even see a real blossom in front of themselves just through the depiction of a flower. It is often used as a metaphor to praise the outstanding writing talent. Thus, the idiom is commendatory. However, the target text, the “flowery expression” does not mean that way. The Cambridge Dictionary explains flowery as “if a speech or writing style is flowery, it uses too many complicated words or phrases in an attempt to sound skillful (Cambridge Press and Assessment, n.d.)”. The word flowery, if used to describe someone’s writing skill, is a derogatory term clearly. As a result, its translation violates the fidelity rule and conveys wrong information and emotional meaning. The mistranslation can be revised as elegant writing.

V. CONCLUSION

This study emphasizes the urgent need for improved translation strategies in cultural tourism, particularly in translating culture-loaded terms in Nanjing’s tourist texts. Guided by Skopos Theory, the research collects bilingual texts from Nanjing Museum, Imperial Examination Museum of China, and Nanjing Presidential Palace, analyses the main reasons, and provides reasonable suggestions for possible revision. By bridging the gap between theory and practice, the research provides a systematic framework for addressing translation challenges, and underlines the employment of Skopos Theory in translation contexts, emphasizing the critical status of cultural terminologies in cross-cultural communication.

The findings demonstrate significant issues stemming from violations of Skopos Theory’s core principles. Specifically, accounting for 39 cases, coherence rule is the most frequently violated rule, including 16 grammatical errors and 23 instances of nonstandard terminology. This should be the focus when the tourism text translation is carried out in Nanjing in the future. These errors highlight the importance of ensuring grammatical accuracy and consistency in cultural expressions. Thus, translators should take the coherence rule seriously, avoiding ignoring normal grammatical mistakes and nonstandard and inconsistent cultural phrases. The second most common type of problem is the violation of skopos rule, which indicates translators to put the translation purpose in the first place. Errors occurred due to misalignment with the translation’s intended purpose, strengthening the necessity of adapting content to meet the expectations and comprehension of target audiences. As the least violated principle, fidelity rule accounts for 19 cases, indicating occasional lapses in maintaining the authenticity and integrity of the original cultural content.

Still, the study has some limitations. For one thing, the investigation selects several major well-known scenic spots in Nanjing instead of all the tourist attractions. The collection and division of the translation database in Nanjing may not be complete. For another, the revised versions of the translation are all provided by the author rather than the universally recognized version. The quality of the translation should be given high attention in order to set a good cultural image of a tourist city, domestically and abroad. Future tourist text translation studies from the perspective of Skopos Theory will involve more tourist attractions, collecting more source texts, and creating a larger database. Moreover, other types of theories will be applied in further study, including translation theory or interdisciplinary theory.

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