



E-ISSN: 2706-8927
P-ISSN: 2706-8919
www.allstudyjournal.com
IJAAS 2024; 6(6): 07-10
Received: 06-04-2024
Accepted: 10-05-2024

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On the English translation of health and wellness tourism publicity texts in Panzhihua city from the perspective of eco-translatology

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DOI: <https://doi.org/10.33545/27068919.2024.v6.i6a.1187>

Abstract

In recent years, Panzhihua City in China has made significant efforts to develop as a wellness-oriented city with abundant sunshine. The government has been focusing on developing health preservation tourism and hosting international sports events, attracting numerous foreign tourists. Publicity texts in tourism are vital for promoting tourist destinations, enhancing their image, conveying information, increasing knowledge, and fostering communication and cooperation. This study adopts an eco-translatology perspective to analyze Panzhihua City's publicity texts in health and wellness tourism across three dimensions: linguistic, cultural, and communicative. The analysis could help standardize the translation of tourism-related texts, consequently enhancing the city's tourism image.

Keywords: Eco-translatology, health and wellness tourism, publicity texts, tourism image, Panzhihua city

1. Introductions

Panzhuhua City is the only city in China named after a flower (kapok), which has earned the reputation of "the city is a flower and a flower is a city". It is the first city along the Yangtze River, spanning thousands of miles. In the city, there are several tourist attractions, including Ertan National Forest Park, Panxi Grand Canyon, Sago Cycas Nature Reserve, and the Third-Line Construction Museum. In 2006, Panzhuhua City of China proposed the concept of "Sunlit Ecotourism", and then promoted "Wellness plus" concept in 2016. These initiatives have achieved significant milestones in Panzhuhua's health and wellness tourism sector, including resources, policies, and projects, showcasing the brand image of "Sunlit Flower City, a Wellness Resort" nationwide. Simultaneously, with the advancement of globalization and the increasing appeal of the Panzhuhua City brand, the city has witnessed a rise in international exchanges, the hosting of international events, and a growing number of foreign tourists. Publicity texts in tourism serve as textual information disseminated to the public, serving purposes such as alerts, reminders, introductions, and public announcements [1]. These texts act as carriers of attractions, possessing strong promotional functions. Moreover, translating attraction texts into foreign languages contributes to better understanding of the attractions among foreign tourists and enhances their overall experience. Therefore, this study argues that analyzing publicity texts from various perspectives and standardizing their translation can deepen foreign visitor's understanding of local culture, improve Panzhuhua City's tourism image, and promote Panzhuhua's rich cultural heritage.

2. Review on Eco-translatology

Eco-translatology is a new translation theory proposed by professor Hu Gengshen from Tsinghua University. This theory is based on the Translation Adaptation-Selection Theory [2], drawing on the principle of "adaptation/selection" in Darwin's theory of evolution. Ecological Translation Studies applies ecological rationality and adopts a holistic approach from an ecological perspective to study translation. It represents an ecological paradigm and research field where "translation is adaptation and selection" [3]. The translation principles under the ecological perspective involve multidimensional adaptation and adaptive selection.

The multidimensional aspect refers to the dimensions of language, communication, and culture. The translation methods under the ecological perspective involve three-dimensional transformation, which includes adaptive selection and transformation in the dimensions of language, culture, and communication. The evaluation criteria under the ecological perspective include the degree of three-dimensional transformation, reader feedback, and translator competence [4]. In summary, within the framework of Ecological Translation Studies, translation is an activity of adaptation and selection based on the translator's position in the "translation ecological environment". It involves selecting the underlying ecological structure of the source text and making translation choices from the dimensions of language, communication, and culture, aiming to achieve a balance between the ecological systems of the source and target texts [5]. According to Ecological Translation Studies, researchers should establish the central role of translators in the translation process, explore the connection between translation works and natural ecology, and appropriately translate from the dimensions of language, culture, and communication to ensure the accuracy of the translation.

Research has shown that ecological translation often preserves the integrity of the original meaning to a greater extent, avoiding over-interpretation and misleading interpretations [6]. This method can more accurately convey the intended meaning of the source text. Additionally, ecological translation pays greater attention to the context and cultural background of the source text, minimizing ambiguities caused by cultural differences. It avoids excessive literal translation, allowing readers to better understand the translated works. In conclusion, ecological translation is an advantageous and worthy method to explore [7]. This research aims to examine Panzhuhua City's publicity texts from an ecological translation perspective. Its findings can provide specialized knowledge to relevant industries, improve the accuracy of the publicity texts, facilitate understanding for tourists, meet their needs, and standardize the related tourism industry.

3. Material and Methods

The research team conducted field investigations on numerous attractions in Panzhuhua City from February to March 2023. They documented the signage and public notices at these attractions through photography, and identified the weakness in the publicity texts used in the major attractions. The investigation revealed that many of the signage and public notices at the attractions suffered from literal translation or even blatant errors, resulting in a mismatch between the original content and its translated meaning. The overall translation quality was subpar. Furthermore, online searches indicated a lack of foreign language descriptions for Panzhuhua City's attractions. Therefore, this study reevaluated and studied these texts from an ecological translation perspective.

4. Discussion

4.1 Translation Strategies for the Language Dimension of Panzhuhua City's Tourism Publicity Texts from an Ecological Translation Perspective

The language dimension under the ecological translation perspective refers to the selection and transformation of the linguistic form of translated works based on different

language environments to enhance the adaptability of the target text [8]. English and Chinese, as two different languages, have significant differences in linguistic structure and style, and it is important to consider their respective linguistic conventions during the translation process. In the language dimension, word choice is crucial for creating an ecological translation context. Translators should fully consider the vocabulary and grammar of the target text and transform the language form accordingly.

For example, a sign at Lisu Terrace Scenic Spot in Xinshan saying "保护环境·请勿乱扔垃圾" was translated as "Do not disorder rubbish here". In fact, "Do not" is grammatically incorrect, and the word "here" introduces ambiguity. The main emphasis of the sign is not on "here" but rather on not littering within the scenic area since it does not imply that littering is allowed elsewhere. Contextual dependence, while English often employs more nouns with rich connotations but limited extension. Based on this characteristic, a more appropriate translation for the sign would be "No littering".

Another common issue is the misuse of capitalization in many signs. For instance, the translation of "水深两米" in a park in Panzhuhua City was rendered as "Water Depth Of 2M". From an ecological perspective, the translation is suggested to be revised as "Water Depth of 2M", for the preposition does not require capitalized initials.

During the translation process, translators should also adapt the language form according to the actual circumstances of the attractions. For example, a sign near the Jinsha River in Panzhuhua should not be translated literally as "Not to Fall into the Water!" as it would sound awkward and comical. From an ecological translation perspective, a more appropriate translation would be "Caution! Deep Water" using a more subtle and concise language form.

From the examples above, it can be seen that ecological translation often involves the translation of specialized terminology and concepts, which requires ensuring the accurate conveyance of professional information in the translation process, in order to avoid ambiguity and misunderstanding. For some texts in the Chinese context, it is necessary to consider the strength of the dependency between the two texts, and then choose the appropriate one according to the target audience and purpose to ensure the quality of the translation.

4.2 Translation Strategies for the Cultural Dimension of Panzhuhua City's Tourism Publicity Texts from an Ecological Translation Perspective

Culture encompasses the material and spiritual wealth acquired by humans in the process of social practice. The cultural dimension under the ecological translation perspective aims to guide translators in correctly translating the connotations of translated works in different cultural contexts and avoiding cultural conflicts caused by cultural differences. In the cultural context, it

is essential to focus on understanding the transmission and interpretation of different cultural connotations. Translators should possess cross-cultural translation competence and fully consider the different emphases of language in different cultures.

For example, a sign in Panzhuhua Park saying "请保护好攀枝花的山和水" was translated as "Please protect the mountains and rivers of Panzhuhua". In Chinese,

we tend to emphasize the decreasing importance of elements from left to right in a sentence, so the translation emphasizes the mountains and rivers. However, in Western cultures, if a noun is used as an attributive after “of”, it puts more emphasis on the part after “of”. Although the translation process may result in similar meanings for different vocabulary, the conveyed meanings may differ slightly in different cultural backgrounds. In order to respect cultural differences, the translation “Please protect the mountains and rivers in Panzhihua” is more suitable, focusing on the importance of protecting the mountains and rivers.

Another example is found in different translations of the same slogan in a nursing home in Miyi County, Panzhihua. “请尊敬老人” was translated as “Please respect the old people” and “Please respect the elderly”. In Chinese culture, both translations convey a similar meaning. However, in Western cultures, the word “old” is not as respectful and carries a slight derogatory connotation, while “elderly” better reflects the older population and is more polite. And therefore the translation “Please respect the elderly” aligns more with the cultural dimension translation strategy under the ecological translation perspective.

Then, at the restaurants of Panzhihua Park, “红烧狮子头” is often served, but it is directly translated as braised head of lion, which will frighten and panic foreign tourists, because lions are sacred representatives in the West and cannot be served on the table. In fact, “红烧狮子头” does not really braise real head of lion, but it’s a more elegant name. Given that the main material for making braised lion’s head is meatballs made of pork, so translating it into meatballs will be more appropriate and will not cause cultural conflict.

When understanding translation from the cultural dimension, it is important to note that translation, writing, and language themselves are all important components of human culture, so we should pay attention to the cross-cultural differences in translation and the cross-cultural study of the translation ecosystem to avoiding cultural conflicts.

4.3 Translation Strategies for the Communicative Dimension of Panzhihua City’s Tourism Publicity Texts from an Ecological Translation Perspective

The communicative dimension under the ecological translation perspective emphasizes the communicative intention and linguistic purpose of translation, requiring translators to achieve both language information exchange and cultural connotation dissemination. This enables ecological translation to fulfill its communicative function [9]. Building upon the language and cultural dimensions, the development of the communicative dimension further allows foreign readers to have a clearer and deeper understanding of the cultural implications in tourism promotion texts.

For example, in the Third Line Construction Museum of Panzhihua, the phrase “数百万建设大军·很多来自繁华都市” was translated as “Millions of construction workers in the construction area came from flourishing cities.” The phrase “came from” alone fails to capture the spirit of dedication and struggle of millions of workers. However, if it is translated as “Millions of builders trooped in the third line construction, many of whom came from flourishing cities,” the phrase “trooped in”

can better convey the commitment and selfless spirit of the workers. Through ecological translation, the deeper meaning of the original text can be more effectively conveyed while expressing the intended message.

English and Chinese have fundamental differences. Chinese tends to use elaborate expressions to create an atmosphere, while English emphasizes concise and meaningful sentences [10]. Chinese values coherence between meanings, while English pays more attention to logical relationships, among other aspects. Given such significant differences between English and Chinese, tourism promotion texts do not need to be translated word-for-word for English speakers’ better understanding of the details of the tourist destination. Instead, the focus should be on ensuring the completeness of sentence information and relatively accurate translation while reducing literal translation and incorporating simple and objective phrases. Directly expressing the characteristics of the attractions is more conducive to English speakers’ in-depth understanding. Ecological translation can play a genuine role in the communicative dimension by appropriately adapting the translation to suit the target language and readership.

5. Conclusion

Ultimately, ecological translation originated from the exchange of ideas between China and the West, blending theories from natural sciences, humanities, and social sciences. By bridging Chinese and Western theories, it offers a more expansive stage for equitable dialogue between Eastern and Western translation theories. Ecological translation studies take a holistic and systematic approach, intertwining translation studies with its external environment, known as the translation ecosystem, incorporating multiple disciplines and perspectives. This paper examines the tourism promotional texts of Panzhihua City through the lens of ecological translation, focusing on language, culture, and communication. The study identifies translation challenges within these dimensions and suggests appropriate solutions. Translators can accurately convey tourist attractions, ensuring standardized translations of tourism promotional materials and signs in Panzhihua City, by adopting the ecological translation approach along with considerations of language, culture, and communication. Consequently, this will boost Panzhihua City’s reputation as a “sunny, healthy, and joyful tourism destination”.

6. Funding

This research was funded by Panxi Research Center of Health and Wellness (No. 36) and the Innovation and Entrepreneurship Training Program of Panzhihua University entitled “Research on the English translation of health and wellness tourism publicity texts in Panzhihua city from the perspective of Eco-translatology (No.S202311360081).

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