Research on Tourism English Translation Based on Cultural Difference

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Keyword: Tourism English Translation, Cultural difference, Factor

Abstract: Tourism, especially foreign tourism, is a kind of typical cross-cultural communicative activity. Tourism English translation is involved in all aspects of cultural differences in China and western countries. Therefore, it is essential to master the skills when translating. Through analyzing the four main factors that affect the tourism English translation and from the respective of Chinese and Western cultural differences and different rhetorical in tourism English, this paper puts forward constructive ideas to further improve the accuracy of English translation in travel information, and thus make the tourists in the world have a better understanding of China.

With the rapid development of globalization and the acceleration of international exchange, cross-border tourism is showing a rapid development trend. As one of the preferred world’s places—China, a large number of monuments scenic spots attract the bulk of international tourists come to China and visit it every year. The translation of tourist information becomes an important way to promote and publicize the tourism landscape to overseas, and the translation quality of tourism information can directly affect the Chinese tourism industry, especially the prospects and development of inbound tourism market. Meanwhile, the English translation of tourism shoulders the great mission of the heritage of the exchange between Chinese and Western cultures, and it plays an important and immeasurable role in the dissemination of culture, the elimination of cultural differences, the integration of culture, and the protection of cultural aspects etc.

Current Status and Problems of Tourism English Translation

China has five thousand years long history of cultural heritage, as well as 9.6 million kilometers of vast territory, leaving valuable and rich tourism resources for people in the world, and each year it attracts tens of thousands of international tourists to sightseeing. According to the investigation of the motivation of Frenchman, German, American, Japanese and Englishman to travel to China, international tourists that want to be able to understand traditional Chinese culture take up 100, people that want to know about Chinese historic culture take up 80%, and people that want to sightseeing take up 40%. It can be seen that the real charm of China’s tourism resources is not the natural scenery of landscape, what really attract people is the rich and mysterious culture connotation hidden behind the beautiful scenery. However, the difference between Chinese and Western cultures, different mode of thinking and perspectives, and the different understanding of the culture etc, would bring some trouble to the travel and tourism activities, and then cause inevitable cultural collision. Tourism English belongs to English of special purpose, its users mainly refers to the tour guides. Tour guides communicate with tourists, the main purpose of which is to arouse interaction in emotions, behaviors and attitudes. But in fact, due to the cultural difference always exists, and it would often bring languages that would cause misinterpretation or misunderstanding to the tourists, resulting in impact on the effective communication of correct information.

Factors that Affect the Tourism English Translation

The Complexity of the Language Itself

Tourism English translation, also the translation practice of Tourism profession, tourism industry and activities, belongs to professional translation, is a social communication activity of tourism across languages, society, time and space, and culture. During the English tourism translation, it is
necessary to pay attention to the English mode of thinking and expression, but also pay attention to
the English language with wording, thus resulting in the complexity of tourism English translation.
Because, language translation is not only reflected in the surface of language, but also is reflected in
communicative activities in the language level. “In China, people that are engaged in international
tourism and other related industries have more or less gone through the training of English language,
however, this language training is often only limited to the sentence drills, voice imitation, and the
introduction of vocabulary and grammar, with little about types of culture and language habits, and
conversion activities etc. Therefore, mistakes in the English translation occur.” therefore, this
presents us with a lot of requirements: when translating the tourism English, we should understand
the complexity of tourism English translation, be familiar with the using ways and habits of English
native speakers, understand correctly and use appropriately correct term for the context, as well as
the common form of language that both sides use, select appropriate pragmatic functions for
expressing emotions, and improve the English language skills of the translators.

Cultural Differences

Purposes of tourism English translation: let tourist whose mother tongue is English can read and
understand, and obtain intelligence information of the nature, customs, culture and geography from
it. Thus, the translator should pay attention to the particularity and complexity of the tourism
English translation, and note different social and cultural backgrounds conveyed in the text of
source language and target language. If we blindly translate according to the Chinese language
habits and words, it will conflict with the appreciating habits and aesthetic psychology of the
English nations. To this end, He Zhaoxiong wrote in “Pragmatics Summary”: “In order to get
success in communication across the Chines and Western cultures, in addition to both sides use the
same language, they should also have some common knowledge or the same background
knowledge.” In addition, people with different culture background, their mode of thinking also
worth special attention. Because people in the East and west have different cultural background, and
there is distinct difference in their mode of thinking. People in the west have the “Bridge” mode of
thinking, their ways of organizing thinking are usually for directly pass their meaning to each other,
like a bridge. However, the mode of thinking for people in the west is like “stepping stone”, they do
not express their meaning directly, instead, they use the roundabout and implicit way, like throwing
“stepping stones” one by one in the water. Listeners and readers can only understand the meaning of
the speaker or author by means of those “stepping stones”. When translating tourism English,
constant attention to the difference of the mode of thinking of people in the east and west need to be
paid, so that the translated text is more likely to be accepted by international tourists.

Determination of Context

The first concept of “Context” was brought up in 1930s by the anthropologis Malinowsky.
Malinowsky thought that:”context is the most important factors in all translation, and its importance
is greater than all the rules, theories and basic semantics.” If the tourism English translation wants
to obtain the desired results, the context of translation should be of full consideration, and the
complex context should be noticed. The concepts of a variety of contexts are as follows:

1. The context—internal environment of the discourse.
2. The context of the scene—the surrounding circumstances, what happened, location, time, the
relationship between the participants, the mental emotion of the participants, communication
channels etc, when the discourse happens.
3. Cultural context—refers to the specific social cultural background, traditional thinking of history
and culture, outlook on life, values, emotional and social psychology etc, when using the language.

Phenomenon of Vacancy

With the rapid development of economic globalization and technology, especially the rapid
development of multimedia technology and the widespread of internet, the phenomenon of vacancy
has become a common and long-term problem in cross-culture. The existence of the vacancy
phenomenon is the inevitable product of a nation in the process of conception of the world, as opposed to other peoples of the cognitive process differences. Culture vacancies include:

1. **Character Vacancy**
   The formation of a nation’s character has its profound historical origins, which is the product of certain cultural environment, politics, economy, philosophy, society, and thus establishing the national character of their own characteristics and styles. For different ethnic groups, people have different views. For example, views towards the American are “Practical” “realistic”; views towards the French are “warm” “romantic”; views towards the German are “punctual” “rigorous”; views towards the Italian are “unrestrained” “free and easy” and so on.

2. **Vacancy in Mode of “Thinking”**
   Vacancy in mode of thinking is unique to a nation, while another nation is lack of defective ways of thinking. The east and west belong to completely different culture system, and therefore, form two types of completely different ways of thinking. People generally believe that westerners have strong logical thinking, while the Asians are more emotional and pay attention to intuitive experience, and are accustomed to the intuitive sort of understanding.

3. **Emotional Vacancy**
   Westerners have a demonstrative way of doing things. This extrovert type of characteristics origins from the western culture of openness, factors that determine the openness include western unique geographical environment, historical features, and the specific law reflected in the development of capitalism so far, and each of these factors are essential.

4. **Vacancy of Space Concept**
   Different cultural groups have different views for the use of space, including personal areas, physical distance, the attitude of the bustling crowds and crowdedness etc.

The application of the vacancy theory is very strong, it could help people find, respect, prevent, eliminate and understand the not corresponding or existing vacancy phenomenon in different culture, and in order to serve for the conduction of smooth exchanges and cooperation with different countries and different culture groups, strive to obtain the best results.

**Strategies to Deal with Cultural Differences in Tourism English**

Due to the huge difference between English and Chinese, the stylistic and syntactic difference cannot be avoided. With many cultural differences between China and west countries, and particularity of travel information in certain degree, when translating tourism information, we must not apply mechanically, scripted, rigid, and should be flexible. Under the premise from the original text, to properly deal with relevant cultural factors in the text, and make the appropriate translation that foreigners could understand, and to meet the urgent and strong desire of foreigners that want to know Chinese customs through travel. For questions in the tourism, the author adopts the following main processing strategies:

**Translation of Scenic Spots and Attractions**

In translation related to scenic spots and attractions, most people advocate the adoption of a transliteration plus free translation, which can on the one hand facilitate the understanding of international tourist, and could on the other hand help pass the correct names information, and virtually make the distance between tourists and Chinese culture closer, and deepen their mutual communication. Such as “太行山”could be translated as *Taihang Mountain*, “八达岭长城”could be translated as *Badaling Great Wall*, “天安门广场”could be translated as *Tian anmen Square*, with the first half of transliteration, and another half of free translation, these two could be combined well with each other, and the international tourists could understand by reading it. Of course, not all names of the attractions could be like this. For example, in the translation of some attractions, translation words should emphasize more live performance and atmosphere, so when dealing with some rich poetic of its heritage or cultural connotations attractions, it only needs to be simple, bright, expressive, to free translate where you could.
**Translation of the Folk Customs**

Focus on the understanding and translation of folk customs: for example, to translate the sentence “In rural areas, before the burial of the dead, people will ask geomancer to see the geomantic omen, and to tell the two opposing principles in nature”. “Two opposing principles in nature” and “geomancy” are both traditional cultural concepts with Chinese characteristics, similar to the western environmental geography, but in fact, their connotation and extension is of great difference with western so-called environmental geography, which is only a discipline that makes objective research of the comprehensive relationship between the environment and geography. However, in traditional Chinese culture, “two opposing principles in nature” and “geomancy” are not only related to geography, but also related to beliefs. When translating, alleged implication could be translated, and plus an appropriate comment. In this method, the translation text is longer, but it could make listeners and readers that have no traditional cultural background understand them clearer. It also expands the horizons of international visitors, and deepens their understanding and memory of Chinese traditional culture and memory.

**Cultural Borrowing**

The so-called cultural borrow, refers to borrow foreign culture more well-known characters or events to assist to explain some of the unique content of Chinese culture. The benefit of doing so is to allow international visitors to compare Chinese culture with western cultures, increase their impression, and help them better understand the specific content of Chinese culture. For example, once Premier Zhou Enlai was in the reception of foreign guests, when mentioning Liang Shanbo and Zhu Yingtai, he told the translator directly that this story could be translated similarly as the western Romeo and Juliet. Therefore, when hearing Romeo and Juliet, the tourists would have a positioning of an image in their minds, so they could understand the love story with Chinese characteristics.

**Teleological Application Awareness**

In the application of tourism English, the Chinese and Western culture difference is always inevitable. The theory of translation purpose is to emphasize the translation to base on the expected function of translated text, and determine their text translation strategies. In the translation teaching process of tourism English, we could enhance the awareness of students to apply this theory of purpose, and pay attention to the students’ traditional culture and cultivation, so that they could better master proper scale in tourism English translation, appropriately use various effective translation strategies, interpret properly Chinese unique culture, enhance the deep understanding of Chinese culture of international tourists, and spread actively and comprehensively Chinese characteristic culture, and promote the rapid development of China’s tourism industry.

**Conclusion**

It can be seen from the above analysis report that, for cultural difference in tourism English translation, in the development of Chinese tourism industry, its status has become increasingly important and gradually has been extended to the whole world. Therefore, the topic of paying attention to the development of the tourism industry will also be of gradually concern by people. As a result, tourism English translation will become increasingly important, after all, the first contact of international visitors are the current translation of written materials of each spot. Therefore, we should do our utmost to improve the level and efficiency of tourism English translation. In the process of translation, we must always keep in mind the several suggestion and hard principles derived from the above analysis, and improve the level of tourism English translation by using these method. After doing that, it is believed that our tourism English translation will be of a higher level.
References


