



A Study on the English Translation of Tourist Attraction Introductions from the Perspective of Eco-Translatology: A Case Study of Kulangsu

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**Abstract**

With the acceleration of globalization, tourism has become a vital bridge for international exchange, and the English translation of tourist attraction descriptions has become a pivotal window for foreign visitors to understand Chinese culture. The quality of English translations of tourist attraction introductions directly impacts foreign visitors' understanding and perception of Kulangsu, and, by extension, Chinese culture. From the theoretical perspective of Eco-translatology, this study focuses on the English translation of tourist attractions in Kulangsu and conducts an in-depth exploration. The research comprehensively uses case-analysis method to conduct a multi-dimensional analysis of the English-translated texts of tourist attractions in Kulangsu. Through analysis, it is found that under the guidance of Eco-translatology, translators need to make adaptive selections and transformations in the dimensions of language, culture, and communication to better achieve the translation purpose. This research is of great significance for tourism translation. It helps to improve the quality of tourism translation, promotes the effective transmission of tourism culture, and facilitates the international development of the tourism industry. At the same time, it also provides specific case support for the application of Eco-translatology in the field of tourism translation, enriching the theoretical and practical systems of Eco-translatology.

Keywords

Eco-translatology; Tourist attraction introductions; Kulangsu; Three-dimensional transformation

1. Introduction

With the rapid development of global tourism, the English translation of tourist attraction introductions has become a pivotal tool in enhancing destination international image and facilitating cross-cultural communication. Traditional translation studies, predominantly focusing on linguistic balance, overlooking the adaptability and functional realization of translations within target cultural ecology. Professor Hu Gengshen's Eco-Translatology reframes translation as an adaptive-selective activity undertaken by translators within a tri-dimensional ecological environment incorporating linguistic, cultural, and communicative dimensions, emphasizing three-dimensional transformation that is the synergistic interplay of linguistic, cultural, and communicative adaptation (Hu, 2025). This theoretical framework offers a systematic analytical model for the cross-linguistic spread of tourism texts.

In tourism texts, such as tourist attraction introductions, brochures, and guide narratives, these texts not only convey information but also fulfill functions of shaping visitor identity and publicizing regional culture. The study suggests that applying Eco-Translatology's three-dimensional transformation can achieve both semantic integrity and effective cultural connotation transmission, thereby enhancing translation reception and promotion efficacy (Wang, 2021). Integrating an ecological translation perspective into the English translation research of scenic spots thus serves as both a practical effect of translation theory and an innovative exploration of tourism promotion strategies.

This study takes Kulangsu as a case study for analysis. As a UNESCO World Cultural Heritage, Kulangsu has both profound historical cultural heritage and the distinctive characteristics of multi-ethnic habitation. The architectural style, music culture and community life fully demonstrate the unique charm of the integration of Chinese and Western civilizations. Based on the official tourist attraction introductions, this study uses the three-dimensional transformation analysis framework to systematically deconstruct the English translation process. At the theoretical level, promote the in-depth application and practical verification of ecological translation theory in the field of cross-cultural tourism translation. At the practical level, it provides a methodological reference for optimizing the cross-cultural communication strategy of cultural heritage in the context of global tourism development. In view of the international popularity of Kulangsu, the translation of its tourist attraction introduction needs to accurately convey historical value and cultural connotation. So the major target of this study is to explore the practical path of Eco-Translatology, providing new ideas and expanding related research.

2. Theoretical Framework

“Eco-Translatology focuses on the holistic nature of the translation ecosystem. From the perspective of Eco-Translatology and using its narrative approach, it provides new descriptions and explanations for the essence, processes, criteria, principles, and methods of translation, as well as translation phenomena” (Hu, 2008). In recent years, Eco-translatology has become an emerging translation theory with Chinese characteristics and adapted to the needs of the times (Wang, 2023). This innovative translation theory is inspired by ecological principles. Eco-translatology offers a fresh theoretical framework for translation studies, emphasizing the notions of adaptation and selection in the translation process. It puts forward multidimensional translation principles and a three-dimensional transformation approach, aiming to achieve ecological balance and harmony between the source text and the target text.

The core premise of Eco-translatology is the analogy between the translation ecosystem and natural ecosystems. Just as organisms must adapt to their environment to survive, translations must adapt to the target cultural and communicative environment to be effective and accepted (Hu, 2008). As the core subject of this process, translators need to continuously make adaptive choices based on the translation context. This perspective breaks the limitations of pure linguistic translation and examines translation activities from a broader socio-cultural perspective, highlighting the contextual embeddedness and sociocultural relevance of translation practice.

2.1 Three-dimensional transformation

Eco-translatology views translation as a process of adaptation and selection by translators within a diverse ecological environment, where the three-dimensional transformation serves

as the core method to achieve this goal. The three dimensions of translation are the linguistic dimension, cultural dimension, and communicative dimension. Translators must make adaptive choices along these three parallel dimensions to achieve the overall balance of the target text (Hu, 2013).

The linguistic dimension refers to the translator's ability to make adaptive choices and transformations in vocabulary, grammar, sentence structure, language style and other aspects according to the translation environment during the translation process. This is done in order to achieve a balance between the source text and the target text and ensure that the translated text accurately conveys the meaning of the source text. The cultural dimension concerns the cultural connotations, values, and social contexts behind language. Translators need to decode the symbolic system of the source culture and find equivalent or acceptable expressions in the target culture to ensure that the target text conveys the cultural implications of the original. This dimension is particularly crucial in tourism translation, where place names, historical figures, customs, and artistic expressions are deeply embedded in the local culture. Failure to adequately address cultural differences may result in significant misunderstandings and the loss of cultural significance. Strategies such as transliteration, annotation, cultural substitution, or explanatory translation are often employed to bridge cultural gaps. The communicative dimension emphasizes the communicative function and purpose of translation. Translators must consider the audience's cognitive needs, communicative situations, and the functional realization of information to ensure that the target text achieves the expected effect in practical communication (Wang & Tang, 2023). In tourism texts, the primary communicative purpose is often to inform, attract, and persuade potential visitors. Therefore, translations must be reader-friendly, engaging, and tailored to the expectations and background knowledge of the international tourist. This involves simplifying complex historical narratives, highlighting universally appealing features, or restructuring information for clarity and impact.

These three dimensions are not isolated, they are interconnected and overlap. A decision in one dimension inevitably affects the others. The ultimate goal of the three-dimensional transformation is to achieve a state of "ecological balance" where the translated text harmoniously integrates into the target language and cultural environment, fulfilling its intended communicative function while preserving the essential meaning and cultural spirit of the original (Luo, 2024).

2.2 The Significance of the Theory in the Translation

"Tourism translation is a communicative activity involving language, society, culture, and psychology" (Chen, 2004). The application of Eco-translatology in the context of tourist attractions is of great significance and value. It can not only enhance the internationalization level of tourist attractions, facilitating cross-cultural communication, but also improve the understanding and identification of target language readers with the original culture. Eco-translatology emphasizes the significance of preserving ecological balance and making adaptive choices in the translation process, prompting translators to thoroughly consider the cultural background, aesthetic preferences, and linguistic conventions of the target readers. Therefore, in the process of translating tourist attraction materials into English, Eco-translatology should be fully referenced and applied to achieve better translation and cultural communication effects.

The theory's significance extends beyond practical translation strategies. It provides a philosophical and methodological foundation for tourism translation. By framing translation as

an ecological process of adaptation and selection, it empowers translators to make informed, holistic decisions that balance to the source text with functionality in the target context. This is especially important in an era of globalized tourism, where the accurate and appealing representation of cultural heritage can have significant economic and soft-power implications. Eco-translatology as a theory developed in China, offers a new perspective in the field of translation studies.

3. Case Analysis

3.1. Linguistic dimension

“In the expression of language, the forms is different. Language form mainly includes two aspects, one is whether the word is accurate, the other is whether the syntax is appropriate” (Shang, 2017). The linguistic dimension necessitates that translators make adaptive choices at the levels of vocabulary, syntax, and discourse to ensure the accuracy, fluency, and conformity of the target text to the conventions of the target language.

3.1.1 Translation of vocabulary

ST: 日光岩; 龙头山; 凌空屹立; 浑然天成

TT: Sunlight Rock; Loong Head Hill; Standing aloft; Natural masterpiece

In translating the names “日光岩” and “龙头山” from the source text, efforts were made to retain the cultural characteristics while ensuring comprehension for target language readers. “日光岩” was directly rendered as “Sunlight Rock” maintaining its literal meaning. In contrast, “龙头山” is an transliteration, translated as “Loong Head Hill,” where “Loong” serves as a phonetic translation of “long” (龙), conveying the imagery of Chinese culture. This choice of “Loong” over “Dragon” is deliberate, as “Dragon” in Western culture carries connotations of evil, whereas Loong in Chinese culture symbolizes auspiciousness. It not only preserves cultural elements but also facilitates cultural spread, reflecting cultural self-confidence and bringing the balance of the culture. This approach to translating culturally specific terms demonstrates a keen awareness of the cultural dimension even within the primary focus on linguistic form.

Expressions like “凌空屹立” and “浑然天成” in the source text regarding Sunlight Rock are rich in symbolic meanings, expressing people’s love and affection for it. In translation, “凌空屹立” was translated as “standing aloft”, incorporating a touch of personification, which adds a dynamic and majestic quality to the description. “浑然天成” was conveyed as “Natural masterpiece”, highlighting the uniqueness and natural grandeur of Sunlight Rock. This translation elevates the rock from a mere geological formation to a work of art, effectively communicating its perceived perfection and aesthetic value. In the process of translation, the translator needs to ensure the accuracy and fluency of the target text at the linguistic level. This embodies the preservation and transformation of cultural elements, while emphasizing on the accurate expression of the source text, achieving ecological balance, and restoring the original artistic conception. The choice of “masterpiece” is particularly effective as it resonates with artistic traditions, making the description more relatable to the target audience.

3.1.2 Translation of sentence

ST: “是宫非宫胜似宫，亦殿非殿赛过殿；不中不洋不寻常，中西结合更耐看。”

TT: “It surpasses the grandeur of a palace, but it is not a true palace. It transcends the glory of the hall, but it is not just a hall. It has a unique and incredible style, neither wholly Chinese nor entirely Western, and the blend of Chinese and Western elements gives it eternal charm.”

The example illustrates a complex syntactic adaptation. The source text is a parallel couplet, a common rhetorical structure in Chinese, characterized by symmetry, rhythm, and conciseness. Translating word for word is likely to result in stiff and incomprehensible English expressions. The translation adopts a sentence structure combining parallel and complex sentences, which not only maintains the sense of hierarchy and logic of information, but also facilitates readers’ understanding and acceptance. In Eco-translatology, the adaptability of this sentence structure allows it to flexibly convey the information of the source text while conforming to the reading habits and thinking patterns of target language readers. In addition, the description of architecture utilizes contrasting rhetorical devices, such as “surpasses... but is not” and “transcends...but is not”. By contrasting the grandeur of palaces to emphasize the extraordinary of villas, this approach accords with the linguistic aspect, enhancing the expressive force of language and making the information more vivid and specific.

This highlights the feature of the blend of Chinese and Western elements. It also applies the amplification to add information that is not present in the source text but can be inferred from the discourse, such as “eternal charm,” which captures the enduring appeal implied by “更耐看”. This strategic serves the communicative purpose of persuading and attracting visitors.

3.1.3 Translation of discours

ST: 该建筑受到英国维多利亚时期绚丽红砖建筑的影响，也与闽南红砖红白相间的装饰色彩相似。建筑外立面的浮雕装饰中有来自中西文化的不同题材，非常丰富有趣，据说始建时还塑有女王头像。庭院内园林的设计与处理手法也体现出中西合璧的特征，其中有仿西式的院门、西侧院墙上的中式如意漏窗和按中国传统造园手法设置的假山，而假山的形式却与欧洲巴洛克园林中模仿自然溶洞的假山相似。

TT: This building is influenced by the magnificent red brick architecture of the Victorian era in England, and is also similar in color to the red and white decoration of Minnan red bricks. The relief decoration on the exterior facade of the building features different themes from Chinese and Western cultures, which are rich and interesting. It is said that when it was first built, there was also a sculpture of the queen’s portrait. The design and treatment of the garden within the courtyard also reflect a fusion of Chinese and Western styles, including a Western-style gate, Chinese-style Ruyi lattice windows on the west courtyard wall, and rockeries set according to traditional Chinese garden design techniques. Yet, the form of the rockeries is similar to those in European Baroque gardens that imitate natural caves.

At the discourse level, the translation successfully maintains the cohesive and coherent flow of the original description. The text integrates descriptions of architectural terms and styles in both Chinese and English, reflecting the diversity of language. The fusion of Chinese and Western cultures is applied through the use of terms such as “Victorian era” and “Minnan red bricks”, achieving a balance between Chinese and Western culture. The translator makes conscious choices to retain culturally specific terms like “Ruyi lattice windows” and “rockeries,” enabling that the context will provide sufficient clues for understanding, or that the exotic terms themselves add to the cultural appeal.

The text utilizes rhetorical devices such as contrast and analogy, which enhance the text appeal and persuasiveness. For instance, by contrasting the decorative colors of Victorian-era red

brick architecture in England with Minnan red brick buildings, the unique color application of the building is highlighted. And by analogizing the rockeries within the courtyard to those in European Baroque gardens, the clever blend of Chinese and Western garden design techniques is showcased. These rhetorical devices not only enrich the expression of the text but also allow readers to visually experience the cultural charm and artistic value of the architecture. The translation of the Chinese and Western architectural styles and garden designs is artfully blended, creating a harmonious linguistic ecology. This harmony is reflected in the respect and integration of Chinese and Western cultures, allowing the text to convey information while exhibiting a beauty of harmony. Through adaptive choices in vocabulary selection and rhetorical techniques, the balance of the text within the translation's ecological environment is maintained. The discourse paints a vivid picture for the reader, fulfilling the communicative function of helping them visualize and appreciate the unique architectural landscape of Kulangsu.

3.2. Cultural dimension

The cultural dimension is paramount in tourism translation, as it deals with the transmission of unique cultural elements that form the core of the tourist experience.

3.2.1 Translation of proper noun

ST: 郑成功巨型石雕、郑成功青铜群雕、郑成功碑廊、覆鼎古井、皇帝殿，合称“皓月雄风”。

TT: Stone Statue of Zheng Chenggong (a famous general and national hero in Chinese history), Zheng Chenggong's Bronze Sculptures, Zheng Chenggong's Tablet Gallery, Fuding Ancient Well and Emperor's shrine, collectively known as "Haoyue (symbolizing purity, nobility and patriotic) Spirit".

The sentence involves the translation of proper nouns. In order to achieve the balance of cultural dimension, the translator can choose to add the annotation to reflect the cultural connotation of the source text (Mu, 2022). This is a crucial strategy for bridging the cultural knowledge gap. For the "Stone Statue of Zheng Chenggong (a famous general and national hero in Chinese history)", the necessary cultural background information is provided for the target language readers through the annotation in parentheses. This reveals Zheng Chenggong, a figure of historical significance, enabling international visitors to appreciate the monument's significance. "Bronze Sculptures" directly conveys the material and artistic form of the sculptures, while "Tablet Gallery" accurately describes a place for displaying inscribed tablets. Meanwhile, "Zheng Chenggong's" clarifies the association between these sculptures and Zheng Chenggong.

The word "Shrine" in English typically refers to a sacred place for the worship of deities or saints. Here, it is used to translate "the emperor's hall" or "the emperor's ancestral temple", which may not correspond to all the meanings of "palace" or "ancestral temple" in Chinese, but in terms of cultural dimension, it conveys that the building is associated with the emperor and possesses a certain sanctity. This is an adaptive choice that finds a functional equivalent in the target culture. The translation of "Haoyue Spirit" effectively conveys the multiple cultural connotations of "Haoyue" in Chinese through the explanation provided in parentheses (symbolizing purity, nobility and patriotic). The transliteration method is used for "Haoyue", preserving its phonetic character. This method not only preserves the poetic and symbolic meaning of the source text but also helps target language readers better understand the cultural

implications contained in this compound noun through explanations. For the translation of proper nouns, the transmission of cultural information was enhanced by adding explanations in parentheses and using transliteration so that the understanding of the targeted readers. The translator serves as a cultural mediator, ensuring that deep cultural values are not lost in translation.

3.2.2 Translation of cultural-loaded words

ST: 四落大厝; 红砖厝; 风水理念; 功夫茶

TT: Four-Courtyard Complex; red brick houses; Fengshui principles(an ancient Chinese theory of environmental selection and architectural planning); Kung fu tea

Cultural-loaded words present a significant challenge because they contain concepts unique to the source culture. The word “厝” in Fujian local dialect refers to the meaning of “house”. “Four-Courtyard Complex” is a translation that combines phonetic and free translation, retaining the characteristic word “四落” while conveying the complexity and scale of the architectural group through “Complex”. This translation gives the structure a distinct identity compared to a general “house”. “Red Brick Houses” directly and clearly convey the main material and color characteristics of the buildings, in line with the principles of cultural adaptation in Eco-translatology, providing immediate recognizability. “Fengshui principles” uses a combination of phonetic translation and annotation, preserving the uniqueness of the Chinese term while explaining its cultural connotation through explanation in the parentheses. This translation strategy aids target language readers to further explore the cultural significance behind the concept after understanding the basics. It acknowledges that “Fengshui” has entered the global lexicon but still requires contextualization for full understanding. “Kung fu tea”, though phonetically translated, has become a widely accepted and used term in international tea culture to specifically refer to this tea art. The translation method not only conveys the essence of tea art but also promotes the exchange and transmission of tea culture between China and other countries. Through strategies such as deeply understanding cultural connotations, selecting appropriate translation strategies (phonetic translation, free translation, annotation), and maintaining cultural ecological balance, an ecological balance for culture-loaded words in the translation environment was achieved. The translator selectively integrates source culture terms into the target text, enriching it without compromising understanding.

3.3. Communicative dimension

The communicative dimension focuses on the intended effect of the translation on the target reader, ensuring the text fulfills its informative and persuasive functions.

3.3.1 Translation of four character words

ST: 一览无遗; 闻名遐迩; 中西合璧

TT: the scenery appear in its entirety, nothing is hidden from view; a wide reputation; a unique fusion of Chinese and Western aesthetics

As an important part of China’s excellent traditional culture, four-character phrases reflect the breadth, depth and rich cultural connotation of Chinese civilization. The translation of “the scenery appear in its entirety, nothing is hidden from view” effectively captures the essence and visual experience of the source text through descriptive language. Free translation

is utilized. It employs a complete sentence structure to convey poetic imagery and a sense of panoramic beauty, prioritizing clarity and descriptive power over conciseness. “A wide reputation” is a brief and direct translation that quickly conveys the core meaning, allowing target language readers to grasp the essential information promptly. The omission of the more florid connotations of “闻名遐迩” is applied to avoid rigidity and maintain readability. “A unique fusion of Chinese and Western aesthetics” aptly expresses the distinctive blending of Chinese and Western aesthetic ideals. The use of “fusion” underscores the integration of these two cultural elements, while “aesthetics” specifies that this fusion occurs at the level of artistic appreciation. This translation facilitates target readers’ understanding of the cultural influence and aesthetic value inherent in the source text. The translator prioritizes the communicative goal of clear understanding over a literal rendering of the four-character structure. In the context of communication, translating four-character words need focusing on its central meanings directly, to achieve the goal of clear cross-cultural communication. The aesthetic form is adapted to meet the functional and stylistic expectations of the target language.

3.3.2 Translation of parallel phrases

ST: 园内看海，波浪拍岸，依栏远眺，极尽山海之致，复有岩洞之幽；鲜花满径，绿树成行，为难得之胜景。

TT: Looking out at the sea from inside the garden, one can see the waves lapping against the shore. Standing by the railing and gazing into the distance, one can fully enjoy the mountain and sea vistas, as well as the serenity of the caves. The garden is lined with paths full of flowers and rows of green trees, making it a rare and beautiful scenic spot.

The source text is a classic example of parallel structure in Chinese scenic description, creating a rhythmic and cumulative depiction of beauty. The series of short, vivid phrases paints a panoramic and sensory picture. A literal translation might read like a disjointed list. The translation skillfully adapts this structure into coherent, flowing English sentences. It breaks the sequence into logical syntactic units while preserving the original’s descriptive richness.

The expressions such as “the waves lapping against the shore” and “one can fully enjoy the mountain and sea vistas, as well as the serenity of the caves” not only accurately convey the natural scenery described in the source text but also preserve the emotional color and atmosphere through delicate description. It enables readers to experience similar emotions when reading the translation as they would in reading the original. The use of present participles (lapping, looking, standing) and descriptive clauses creates a sense of immediacy and immersion. Meanwhile, “The garden is lined with paths full of flowers and rows of green trees” successfully retains the cultural imagery found in the source text, allowing readers to comprehend and appreciate the beautiful connotations conveyed by this imagery. This preservation and transformation of cultural imagery facilitates communication and understanding between different cultures. The source text utilizes a series of parallel phrases to showcase a beautiful, serene, and vibrant natural landscape, evoking readers’ yearning and admiration for the scenery. In the translation, it achieves the communicative intention of the source text to attract and captivate the visitor through precise translation and appropriate language expression. The last sentence, “making it a rare and beautiful scenic spot,” explicitly states the evaluative conclusion, which is implicit in Chinese texts, thereby making the promotional purpose clear to the international reader. This communicative intention is a crucial indicator of achieving ecological balance between the original text and the translation

on the communicative dimension. The translation is not merely a semantic transfer but a re-creation of the reader's experience.

4. Conclusion

This paper studies the translation practice issues of tourist attraction introductions on Kulangsu, based on the three-dimensional transformation principle of Eco-translatology. It is found that the translation of tourist attraction introductions should adhere to the principles of adaptability and balance. This involves flexible strategies such as syntactic restructuring, the use of annotations, cultural substitution, and functional equivalence. The balance principle underlines the importance of an ecological balance between the source and translated texts across linguistic, cultural, and communicative dimensions during the translation process. And it is not a rigid equivalence but a dynamic one, where offsets in one dimension are made to achieve gains in another.

Tourism texts contain cultural background information, highlighting the importance of cultural adaptability. Translation strategies, including transliteration, free translation, and omission, can be flexibly employed to eliminate cultural barriers and ensure a more accurate conveyance of the original meaning. The case of Kulangsu demonstrates a successful translation. It allows the international visitor to not just “see” the sights but to “understand” and “appreciate” their cultural significance.

This study also demonstrates its practical utility, thereby enriching research on the translation of tourism texts and expanding the research field of Eco-translatology. To a certain extent, it also contributes to the spread of outstanding Chinese culture and promotes the development of the tourism industry. In the future studies, the research and application of the theory of Eco-translatology can be delved into more deeply, with a continuous improvement of its theoretical system and practice being undertaken in the field of tourism translation.

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Ethics Statement

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