

A Study On The English Translation Of Pingyao Ancient City's External Promotional Texts From The Perspective Of Eco-Translatology

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Abstract

Since the end of the pandemic in 2022, the global economy has been recovering, with the tourism industry emerging as a vital pillar. China's cultural and tourism industry has also seen rapid recovery and development in the post-pandemic era. As one of China's five great historical cities, Shanxi's Pingyao Ancient City has attracted a large number of foreign tourists. However, few scholars have studied the English translation of external promotional texts for historical cities and other cultural heritages from the perspective of eco-translatology. This study takes the external promotional texts of Pingyao Ancient City as its corpus and is guided by the theory of eco-translatology. It discusses how to improve the quality of the English translation of Pingyao Ancient City's promotional materials by integrating the three dimensions of eco-translatology: the linguistic dimension, the cultural dimension, and the communicative dimension. The study also aims to provide practical insights for the translation of Chinese cultural and tourism external promotion.

Keywords: *Cultural Tourism; Eco-translatology; Pingyao Ancient City; External Promotion*

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I. Introduction

External promotional texts are created to disseminate specific information, promote particular viewpoints, or market certain products abroad, often involving politics, culture, economy, tourism, and more. These texts not only help nations or regions shape their image on the international stage, enhance international understanding and cooperation, and promote the development of international tourism and trade but also serve to promote culture, values, and technological achievements. Despite the significant role of external promotional texts in international communication and the irreplaceable function in international markets, the translation of these texts faces challenges from language, culture, and communication. From a linguistic perspective, grammatical structures, vocabulary expressions, and sentence habits between different languages can lead to difficulties in information transmission, requiring translators to maintain accuracy while ensuring natural fluency. Culturally, habits, beliefs, and value differences brought about by different cultural backgrounds may lead to paraphrasing and distortion in the translation process, with translators needing to balance conveying the original intent with the target audience's acceptance^[1]. In terms of communication, the translation of external promotional texts must consider the socio-cultural environment of the source and target languages, the identity

and status of the audience, and the context to ensure precise transmission and meet the needs of different audiences. These issues add complexity and difficulty to the translation of external promotional texts, requiring translators to possess high language skills and cross-cultural communication abilities.

Located in central China, Pingyao Ancient City, as one of China's five ancient cities and a national 5A-level tourist attraction, has a history dating back to the 14th century, over 700 years ago. On December 3, 1997, Pingyao Ancient City was inscribed on the UNESCO World Heritage List. The city preserves a large number of ancient buildings from the Ming and Qing dynasties, including city walls, gates, temples, alleys, etc., exuding a strong historical atmosphere. Pingyao Ancient City is not only an ancient city but also a representative of traditional Chinese culture, with its ancient architecture, temple fairs, traditional crafts, and folk operas effectively preserved and passed down. External promotional texts are an essential window for Pingyao Ancient City to showcase itself to the outside world, and the quality of translation directly affects the city's cultural dissemination and tourism appeal. Good external promotional texts can accurately and vividly convey the city's historical and cultural information, allowing visitors to better understand the city's value and charm. This not only helps attract more tourists and enhance the city's tourism reputation but also improves the tourist experience and increases visitor satisfaction. Moreover, through excellent external promotional text translation, the city can showcase its rich historical culture and modern development achievements to the international community, enhancing its international influence. This is of profound and significant importance for promoting the city's internationalization process and fostering cultural exchange and tourism cooperation.

Through preliminary research, the authors found that there is a relative lack of studies on the English translation of external promotional texts for the cultural scenic areas of Pingyao Ancient City. Therefore, this study adopts eco-translatology as a theoretical perspective to conduct an in-depth analysis of the language, culture, and communication aspects of Pingyao Ancient City's external promotional texts. Based on this analysis, the study will propose feasible suggestions for improving the translation quality of the ancient city's cultural scenic area promotional texts, enhancing its international image, and cultural appeal.

II. Eco-Translatology

Eco-translatology, a novel approach to translation, was proposed by the renowned professor Hu Gengshen from Tsinghua University. It has evolved from the theory of translational adaptation and selection, and is described as "an overall study of translation from an ecological perspective using ecological rationality." It represents an ecological paradigm and research field where translation is viewed as a process of adaptation and selection^[2]. This theory specifically elucidates the explanatory function of the "translation adaptation selection theory" for translation texts. The translation process is an alternating cyclical process of translator adaptation and translator selection. The principles of translation involve multidimensional selective adaptation and adaptive selection. The methods of translation are based on a "three-dimensional" conversion (linguistic dimension, communicative dimension, and cultural dimension). The evaluation criteria include the degree of multidimensional conversion, reader feedback, and the quality of the translator^[3].

Deng Zhiyan, Pan Chuangling, and Luo Menglin, among others, in their article "Analyzing the English Translation of 'The Peony Pavilion: A Dream of a Startled Dragon' from the Perspective of the Three-Dimensional Transformation Theory in Eco-translatology" applied the three-dimensional transformation theory of eco-translatology to analyze the English translation of "The Peony Pavilion: A Dream of a Startled Dragon" emphasizing the importance of cultural exchange in translation^[4]. Furthermore, eco-translatology advocates that translation should respect the ecological context of the original text while adapting to the target culture's level of acceptance and needs. Zhang Wan and Liu Xuesi, in their article "A Study on the English Translation of Culture-Loaded Words in Documentaries from the Perspective of Eco-translatology: Taking

'Four Springs' as an Example" explored how to balance the cultural characteristics of the original text with the target audience's acceptance in documentary translation, proposing corresponding translation strategies^[5].

Eco-translatology, as a translation theory, emphasizes the impact of the environment and cultural background of translation activities on the outcomes of translation. This perspective resonates with Wang Wengai's view, who believes that when translating Chinese traditional culture, it is essential to consider the ecological environment in which the original text is situated to ensure that the translated text can accurately convey the meaning and value of the original^[6].

Eco-translatology focuses on the influence of environmental factors on the translation process, including aspects of culture, history, society, and politics. This aligns with the research conclusions of Song Yan and Sun Yiyuan. They point out that when translating modern Chinese prose, translators need to deeply understand the cultural and historical background of the original text to preserve these elements in the translation. The theory posits that translation is not only a linguistic conversion but also involves communication and understanding between different cultures^[7]. Eco-translatology highlights the importance of cultural diversity and exchange, suggesting that translation should be a dialogue and understanding between cultures. Through the application of eco-translatology, the meaning and value of the original text can be better conveyed, promoting cross-cultural communication and understanding, thereby effectively enhancing the image and influence of Pingyao Ancient City on the international stage^[8].

III. Practice Of English Translation Of Pingyao Ancient City's External Promotional Texts From The Perspective Of Eco-Translatology

Eco-translatology emphasizes the impact of the environment and cultural background of translation activities on the outcomes of translation. The application of this theory is particularly crucial in the translation of external promotional texts for Pingyao Ancient City. To better convey the culture and history of Pingyao Ancient City to international tourists, it is necessary to follow the three-dimensional requirements of eco-translatology, which are the integration of the linguistic dimension, the cultural dimension, and the communicative dimension.

Firstly, the integration of the linguistic dimension requires the translator to accurately convey the linguistic information of the original text, ensuring the accuracy and fluency of the translation^[9]. In the external promotional texts of Pingyao Ancient City, translators need to pay attention to the authenticity and standardization of the language, avoiding grammatical errors and inaccurate expressions. At the same time, attention should be given to the style and rhetoric of the language to maintain the characteristics and aesthetic appeal of the original text.

Example 1: 老爷房/少爷房

Original Translation: The original translation as "father room/son room" is highly misleading. In the feudal social system of China, a clan family would have more than one father and son, and the term "老爷" in this context refers to the leader with absolute status within the family. Therefore, it should be translated as "lord's room/young lord's room" to accurately reflect the hierarchical relationship.

A similar issue arises with the translation of "嬷嬷". The term is often translated as "aunt", which, according to the Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English, is defined as "the sister of your father or mother, or the wife of your father's or mother's brother". This typically refers to the sisters of one's parents or the wives of their brothers. However, in the context provided, "嬷嬷" refers to a woman who cares for and breastfeeds children not her own, a role that is more accurately translated as "Wet-nurse" in English. This term better captures the historical and cultural significance of the role within the context of Chinese feudal society.

Example 2: 请选择正规导游和电瓶车。

Original Translation: The initial translation provided was “Please choose the regular tour guide and electrical car”. However, the term “regular” typically implies something that occurs hourly, weekly, monthly, etc., with a consistent interval, routine, or ordinary nature. In this context, “正规” refers to something that is legally permitted and officially sanctioned. Therefore, translating “正规导游” as “regular guide” does not convey the intended meaning accurately. It should be revised to “authorized tour guide” to reflect the correct connotation of legality and official endorsement. The phrase “electrical car” might also be misleading; if referring to a vehicle powered by electricity, it would be more appropriate to use “electric cart” or “electric vehicle”. These examples illustrate how a lack of familiarity with the usage habits and rules of the target language can lead to misunderstandings among the target audience.

Secondly, the integration of the cultural dimension requires translators to pay attention to the cultural connotations of the original text and accurately convey cultural elements to the target audience^[10]. As an important representative of Chinese history and culture, Pingyao Ancient City encompasses a wealth of cultural information. Translators need to gain an in-depth understanding of the city’s traditional culture, historical background, and social customs, integrating these elements appropriately into the translation. At the same time, it is crucial to be mindful of cultural differences and sensitivities to prevent cultural conflicts and misunderstandings.

Example 3: 端砚深受文人墨客的喜爱，被誉为中国“四大名砚”之首，与宣纸、徽墨、湖笔并称为“文房四宝”。

Original Translation: The original translation reads, “The Duan Inkstone was loved by ancient Chinese scholars and regarded as the top of ‘the Four Famous Ink stone’ in China”. This version omits the crucial information that the Duan Inkstone, along with Xuan Paper, Hui Ink-stick, and Hu Writing Brush, is collectively known as “the Four Treasures of the Study”, which is a significant cultural reference in the context of Chinese calligraphy and painting.

Corrected Translation: To accurately convey the cultural significance and historical importance, the translation should be revised to: “The Duan Inkstone was loved by ancient Chinese scholars and regarded as the top of ‘the Four Famous Inkstones’ in China. The Duan Inkstone, together with the Xuan Paper, the Hui Ink-stick, and the Hu Writing Brush, is called ‘the Four Treasures of the Study’”. This corrected translation not only preserves the cultural context but also enhances the appeal of the Duan Inkstone to foreign visitors by highlighting its status as an artistic treasure and a key component of China’s unique calligraphic and painting tools.

Example 4: 古城墙是平遥古城的标志性建筑，它见证了平遥的历史和文化。

Original Translation: The original translation states, “The ancient city wall is a landmark of Pingyao, witnessing its history and culture.” This translation contains both an error and an area for improvement in terms of English expression.

Corrected Translation: To better fit English conventions and to emphasize the objective role of the city wall as a historical witness, the phrase “witnessing its history and culture” should be adjusted to “witnesses the city’s history and culture”. This change to the third person singular not only aligns with English grammar but also clarifies that this is a factual statement, highlighting the city wall's function as a historical testament. Additionally, the phrase “a landmark of Pingyao” can be improved to “a symbol of the ancient city of Pingyao” to better convey the significance and representativeness of the city wall within Pingyao Ancient City. The use of the term “symbol” enriches the expression and underscores the importance of the city wall. Therefore, the

revised translation is: “The ancient city wall, a symbol of the ancient city of Pingyao, witnesses the city's rich history and culture”. This refined translation more accurately captures the essence of the original statement and conveys the cultural and historical importance of the city wall in a manner that is both grammatically correct and contextually appropriate in English.

Example 5: 平遥牛肉是当地的特色美食，以其独特的制作工艺和口感而闻名。

Original Translation: The original translation reads, “Pingyao beef is a local specialty known for its unique production process and taste”. While this translation is largely correct, there is room for improvement in terms of English expression.

Refined Translation: To better align with English idiomatic expressions and to emphasize the fame and reputation of Pingyao beef, the phrase “known for its unique production process and taste” can be refined to “renowned for its unique production process and flavor”. The term “renowned” effectively conveys the prominence and acclaim of Pingyao beef. To enhance the fluidity and naturalness of the sentence, it is advisable to add “The famous” at the beginning of the sentence. Consequently, the final translation is: “The famous Pingyao beef, a local specialty, is renowned for its unique production process and delicious flavor”. This revised translation not only adheres to English linguistic conventions but also effectively highlights the distinctiveness and appeal of Pingyao beef.

Finally, the integration of the communicative dimension demands that translators pay attention to the communicative effect of the translation, ensuring that the translated text can effectively convey information and promote cross-cultural communication^[11]. In the external promotional texts of Pingyao Ancient City, translators need to consider the cultural background and acceptance level of the target audience, employing appropriate expressions and language styles. Additionally, it is important to focus on the key points and logic of the information to make the translation more comprehensible and acceptable.

Public notices within the scenic area should maintain a unified standard of translation. In the Pingyao Ancient City scenic area, there has been an inconsistency in translations. For instance, the phrase “禁止通行” has been translated in three different ways: “No throughfare”, “No passing”, and “No admittance”, all of which are incorrect. Firstly, “throughfare” and “admittance” may contain typographical or spelling errors; secondly, “passing” is an adjective used to describe “passing by” and should not be used as a noun. The most widely used and easily understood translation for “禁止通行” is “No entry”.

Suggestions for Optimizing the Quality of English Translation of Pingyao Ancient City's External Promotional Texts

Pingyao Ancient City, with its long-standing history and unique culture, is one of the gems of Chinese civilization. In the process of external promotion, accurately and vividly conveying the charm and characteristics of this ancient city to international tourists is a crucial task. To achieve this goal, the English translation of Pingyao Ancient City's external promotional texts is particularly important. During the translation process, it is necessary to strictly adhere to the original meaning and style, maintain consistency in professional terminology, and fully consider the cultural background and language habits of the target audience. In addition, review and repeated proofreading are essential steps to ensure the quality of the translation.

Strict Adherence to the Original Meaning and Style

When translating promotional texts for Pingyao Ancient City, translators must strictly adhere to the original meaning and style. Firstly, before commencing the translation, it is essential for translators to deeply study and understand the original text, grasping its semantics, emotions, and style thoroughly. Translators

should possess ample knowledge regarding the unique cultural and historical background, as well as the relevant terminology specific to Pingyao Ancient City. To ensure the accuracy and consistency of the translation, translators need to select appropriate strategies. This includes choosing between literal translation, free translation, or a method that lies somewhere in between, depending on the type and style of the text. Literal translation emphasizes the equivalence of words and sentence structures but may overlook cultural and contextual differences; free translation focuses more on conveying the meaning and effect of the original text, potentially adjusting sentence patterns and vocabulary. In practice, translators should make judgments based on the content and style of the original text and flexibly apply these strategies. Moreover, appropriate cultural adjustments are indispensable, helping to bridge cultural differences and making the translation more aligned with the cultural background and language habits of the target readers.

Maintaining consistency with the original style in the translation is an important goal in the translation process. This includes not only the unity of language style and rhetorical devices but also the conveyance of the overall tone and emotions of the text. In this way, the translation can more accurately reproduce the emotions and flavor of the original text, ensuring that readers can experience the unique charm of the original. Taking Pingyao Ancient City as an example, translators need to pay special attention to retaining the sense of history and cultural depth contained in the original text, thereby showcasing the unique elegance of this ancient city to international readers.

Maintaining Consistency in Technical Terminology

Ensuring the quality of the English translation of Pingyao Ancient City's external promotional texts hinges on the consistency of professional terminology. Translators must conduct in-depth research to find accurate English equivalents for unique cultural elements and terms specific to Pingyao Ancient City, such as the names of ancient buildings and traditional crafts. Establishing an English-Chinese glossary of professional terms for Pingyao Ancient City is an effective way to achieve this goal. Such a database allows translators to ensure the consistency and accuracy of terminology throughout the translation process. Additionally, when selecting term translations, special attention should be paid to avoiding ambiguity or confusion with similar terms. This requires translators to possess extensive professional knowledge and a deep understanding of the relevant fields. Only through rigorous term research and accurate translation can the cultural information of Pingyao Ancient City be conveyed precisely, promoting cross-cultural exchange and understanding.

Considering the Adaptability to the Target Culture

When translating the external promotional texts of Pingyao Ancient City, translators need to fully consider the adaptability to the target culture. Firstly, having a high degree of cultural sensitivity is crucial. Translators must understand the cultural background, values, and language habits of the target audience to ensure that the translation is acceptable and comprehensible to them. This helps to eliminate cultural barriers and increase the readability and acceptance of the translation. Secondly, making appropriate cultural adjustments based on the characteristics and needs of the target culture, while retaining the original meaning, is necessary. This includes using expressions that conform to English habits and explaining specific cultural elements. This helps to reduce reading barriers caused by cultural differences, making it easier for the target audience to understand and accept the cultural information of Pingyao Ancient City. Lastly, through translation, we should not only convey the cultural information of Pingyao Ancient City but also promote dialogue and understanding between different cultures. Therefore, the translation should respect the target culture while fully displaying the unique charm of the source culture. In this way, we can build a bridge for cultural exchange through translation, allowing more people to understand and appreciate the history and culture of Pingyao Ancient City.

Review and Repeated Proofreading

To ensure the accuracy and quality of the English translation of Pingyao Ancient City's external promotional texts, review and repeated proofreading are indispensable steps. Firstly, translators need to conduct strict grammatical checks and word choice corrections in the translation to ensure it complies with English grammatical standards and uses accurate, idiomatic language. Any grammatical errors or inappropriate word choices should be corrected promptly to improve the accuracy of the translation. Secondly, translators need to pay attention to the logic and coherence of the translation. It is essential to check whether the translation clearly and systematically conveys the information and meaning of the original text, ensuring that readers can understand it smoothly during the reading process. Through proofreading and revision, the logical structure and language expression of the translation can be further optimized. Lastly, it is recommended to conduct multiple rounds of proofreading and revision to continuously optimize the quality and accuracy of the translation. In this process, other translators or professionals can be invited to participate in the review to obtain more comprehensive feedback and suggestions. By pooling ideas, potential issues can be discovered and the translation can be further improved. Review and repeated proofreading are crucial steps in ensuring translation quality, helping to enhance the accuracy and readability of the translation, and laying a solid foundation for the cross-cultural dissemination of Pingyao Ancient City.

Continuous Updating and Optimization

Ensuring the timeliness and accuracy of the English translation of Pingyao Ancient City's external promotional texts requires continuous updating and optimization. Firstly, translators need to keep abreast of the latest developments in Pingyao Ancient City, including new research findings and cultural activities. By staying informed of the most recent information, translators can promptly update relevant translations, ensuring that the content aligns with the actual situation. Secondly, translators must continually learn new knowledge and skills to enhance their professional competence and cultural sensitivity in the field of translation. As times evolve and cultures change, a deep understanding of the source culture and a keen perception of the target culture can assist translators in better comprehending and conveying the cultural connotations of Pingyao Ancient City. Lastly, translators should keep pace with the times, constantly adjusting and optimizing their translation strategies and methods. With the changing communication environment and audience demands, translators need to be flexible to meet new challenges and requirements. Through continuous updating and optimization, the cultural information of Pingyao Ancient City can be conveyed more accurately and promptly to the target audience, fostering cross-cultural exchange and understanding.

Considering the target culture's needs, it is essential to adjust the expression of translations flexibly according to the target culture's level of acceptance and demands. This means that translators need to adapt to the language habits, ways of thinking, and values of the target culture while preserving the meaning of the original text. Pingyao Ancient City possesses a wealth of historical and cultural value, and translators should particularly emphasize these aspects. Explaining the historical background and cultural traditions of the ancient city allows readers to understand its significance. Facilitating dialogue between different cultures through translation, translators need to balance the differences between the original text and the target culture, avoiding misunderstandings or cultural conflicts, to achieve better cross-cultural communication. Finally, attention must be paid to the sustainable development of translation activities, which includes efforts to minimize adverse environmental and social impacts during the translation process. This encompasses avoiding discriminatory language, respecting cultural diversity, and advocating for eco-friendly translation practices.

IV. Conclusion

As one of the gems of Chinese civilization, the English translation of Pingyao Ancient City's external promotional texts plays a significant role in promoting the unique charm and cultural connotations of the ancient city. However, the English translation of Pingyao Ancient City's external promotional texts still faces issues such as cultural differences, language barriers, and misinformation. These issues may lead to misunderstandings or insufficient awareness of the ancient city among the target audience. The author believes that by employing eco-translatology, strictly adhering to the original meaning and style, maintaining consistency in professional terminology, and fully considering the cultural background and language habits of the target audience, the integration of the linguistic, communicative, and cultural dimensions, along with rigorous review and proofreading by translators, can further enhance the accuracy and readability of the translations of Pingyao Ancient City's external promotional texts. This will make the cultural information of Pingyao Ancient City more ingrained in people's minds, thereby promoting cross-cultural exchange and cooperation. Additionally, the author suggests that the English translations of Pingyao Ancient City's promotions and public notices should be continuously updated and optimized to adapt to the development of the times and the ever-changing communication environment.

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