

A Study on the English Translation of Scenic Spot Introductions in Classical Gardens from the Perspective of Skopos Theory: A Case Study of the Humble Administrator's Garden and the Lingering Garden

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Abstract

Chinese classical gardens embody the excellent traditional culture of China. The English translation of the introductions of their scenic spots can help promote the overseas dissemination of garden culture and enhance the international influence of Chinese culture. This article takes the Skopos Theory as the theoretical framework and employs methods such as literature research, text analysis, case analysis, and comparative analysis to study the English translation strategies of some official scenic spot descriptions of the two major Suzhou classical gardens, the Humble Administrator's Garden and the Lingering Garden.

The article begins by reviewing the principles of the Skopos Theory and its theoretical development, and assessing the applicability of this theory to the translation of scenic spot descriptions in gardens; then it analyzes the language features and translation strategies of the official English translation texts from three dimensions: terminology translation, cultural imagery transmission, and sentence and discourse structure; by selecting five scenic spots, it examines the specific translation choices of the official translations under the guidance of the Skopos Theory; finally, it compares the differences between its official translations in the entrance sign and the on-site sign, revealing the translation strategy changes of the same scenic spot in different contexts and their internal connections.

The research finds that the English translation of scenic spot descriptions in classical gardens needs to balance cultural fidelity and reader friendliness, and achieve the dual goals of cultural dissemination and information service through a combination of foreignization and domestication. The differences between different official translations reflect the combined effect of translation purposes and contextual factors, further confirming the explanatory power and guiding value of the purpose theory for garden translation practice.

Keywords: Skopos Theory; classical gardens; scenic spot introduction; English translation

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I. Introduction

Research Background

Chinese classical gardens are hailed as “three-dimensional poems and silent paintings” in Chinese culture, bearing profound historical and cultural heritage and unique aesthetic values. As outstanding representatives of Suzhou classical gardens, the Humble Administrator's Garden and the Lingering Garden are treasures of Chinese garden art and important cultural symbols for foreign countries to understand Chinese traditional aesthetics. With the “Going Global of Chinese Culture” strategy and the rapid development of inbound tourism, classical gardens have become popular cultural attractions for overseas tourists. The English translation of their scenic spot introductions has become an indispensable medium for cross-cultural communication.

Scenic spot introductions of classical gardens are typical tourism cultural texts, integrating information transmission and aesthetic expression. They not only provide overseas tourists with basic information such as the location, historical evolution and architectural features of scenic spots, but also convey the cultural connotations and artistic conceptions of Chinese classical gardens. However, translating such texts involves translation between Chinese and Western languages and cultures. There are obvious differences between Chinese and Western aesthetic habits and cognitive patterns. Therefore, how to effectively convey the cultural connotations and aesthetic charm of classical gardens through translation has become a key research issue in tourism translation.

Skopos Theory, the core theory of the functionalist translation school, takes translation purpose as the center of translation activities. It advocates flexible selection of translation strategies according to the translation

purpose and the needs of target readers. This theoretical perspective aligns well with the translation requirements of classical garden scenic spot introductions, which have the dual purposes of cultural communication and information service. Based on this, the study takes the official English translations of the Humble Administrator's Garden and the Lingering Garden as research objects, and conducts an in-depth study from the perspective of Skopos Theory, hoping to provide a new perspective for relevant translation research and practice.

Research Significance

This study has both theoretical and practical significance, and its research value is reflected in the enrichment of translation theory application and the guidance of translation practice.

Theoretically, first, it applies Skopos Theory to the specific research of English translation of classical garden scenic spot introductions, enriching the application scenarios of functionalist translation theory in Chinese tourism cultural text translation. Most existing studies focus on public signs, tourist brochures, and other general tourism texts. Research on classical garden scenic spot introductions, which have strong cultural attributes, is relatively insufficient. This study fills that gap to some extent. Second, it examines the textual characteristics and culture-loaded elements of classical garden scenic spot introductions and constructs a targeted translation strategy system, enriching the theoretical framework of English translation of Chinese classical garden culture.

Practically, the study takes the official English translations of the Humble Administrator's Garden and the Lingering Garden as research objects, and analyzes their translation characteristics through case and text analysis. The constructed translation strategy is more aligned with actual translation needs, providing a practical reference for translators engaged in garden translation and helping optimize the English translation quality of classical garden scenic spot introductions. The research results can also help overseas tourists better understand the cultural connotations of Chinese classical gardens, enhance the international communication effect of Chinese garden culture, and promote the inheritance and spread of Chinese excellent traditional culture.

Research Methodology

To ensure scientificity and comprehensiveness, this study adopts four complementary research methods: literature research, text analysis, case analysis, and comparative analysis.

First, literature review examines relevant domestic and foreign literature, including theoretical research on Skopos Theory, tourism translation and cultural translation research results, and special research on English translation of classical gardens and ancient architectural terms. This method clarifies the research status and gaps, lays a solid theoretical foundation, and provides theoretical support for strategy construction.

Second, text analysis takes the scenic spot introduction texts and their official English translations of the two gardens as the research corpus, analyzing source text characteristics from vocabulary, syntax, and discourse, including professional terms, cultural image expression, and sentence pattern construction. It also analyzes target text linguistic characteristics, exploring translation rules and methods.

Third, case analysis selects core scenic spots of the two gardens: the Hall of Distant Fragrance, Little Flying Rainbow, the Pavilion for Whom to Sit with Me, Guan Yun Peak, and the Five Peaks Hermitage Hall as typical cases. Combined with the core principles of Skopos Theory, the paper analyzes the translation strategies and linguistic characteristics of the official English translations from three dimensions: term translation, cultural image transmission, and sentence structure and discourse construction.

Fourth, comparative analysis finds characteristics of different translation methods. On the one hand, it compares translation methods of different types of culture-loaded elements in the official translations, summarizing their characteristics. On the other hand, it compares different translation versions of the same scenic spot name, analyzes their advantages and disadvantages, and verifies the feasibility of the constructed translation strategy, making the research conclusion more persuasive.

Organization of the Thesis

This thesis is divided into five chapters, with a clear logical structure from theoretical review to practical analysis, then to strategy construction and verification.

Chapter One is the introduction. It elaborates the research background and significance, clarifies the research methods, and introduces the overall structure and main content of each chapter, providing a clear research framework.

Chapter Two is the literature review. It sorts out relevant research results at home and abroad, including overseas research on Skopos Theory and cultural translation, and domestic research on tourism translation and English translation of classical gardens. Based on the literature, the study summarizes the current research status and existing gaps, clarifying the research direction.

Chapter Three is the theoretical framework. It first combs the development of Skopos Theory and expounds its three core principles: Skopos Principle, Coherence Principle, and Fidelity Principle. Then it analyzes the adaptability of Skopos Theory to translating classical garden scenic spot introductions, explaining why Skopos Theory can be used as the guiding theory, laying a foundation for subsequent case analysis and strategy construction.

Chapter Four is the case analysis, the core chapter. It first analyzes the textual features of the scenic spot introductions of the two gardens, including text type, function, and culture-loaded elements. Then, taking the official English translations as the research object, it appreciates their translation characteristics from three dimensions: term translation, cultural image transmission, and sentence structure and discourse construction. On this basis, combined with relevant scholarly research, the study constructs an English translation strategy for classical garden scenic spot introductions based on Skopos Theory, and finally verifies the strategy's feasibility through comparative analysis of different translation versions of core scenic spots.

Chapter Five is the conclusion. It summarizes the main research findings, clarifies the translation rules under Skopos Theory, and points out the limitations of this study. It also puts forward prospects for future research and suggestions for subsequent translation research and practice.

The full text ends with references, acknowledgements, and an appendix, supplementing the research content and reflecting academic norms.

II.Literature Review

Studies of Classical Garden Introductions Abroad

Overseas research on the translation of scenic spot introductions and cultural texts started relatively early, and has yielded abundant research results. The research is mainly focused on the theoretical construction of translation and the practical research of tourism translation, among which the functionalist translation theory represented by Skopos Theory has laid a solid theoretical foundation for the research of tourism translation, and the relevant research on cultural translation has also provided important reference for the translation of cultural-loaded texts such as classical garden scenic spot introductions.

In the aspect of the research on Skopos Theory, the theory originated in Germany in the 1970s, and its formation and development have gone through a process from embryonic form to maturity. Reiss pointed out that the translation purpose should be consistent with the text function, which laid the theoretical foundation for the birth of Skopos Theory. On the basis of Reiss's text type theory, Vermeer put forward the core concept of Skopos Theory in *Skopos and Commission in Translational Action*, and he pointed out that translation is a purposeful human behavior, and the purpose of translation determines the whole translation process, which is the core of the Skopos Principle^{Error! Reference source not found.}. Vermeer also put forward the Coherence Principle and Fidelity Principle, which form the three core principles of Skopos Theory together with the Skopos Principle.

Nord further developed and improved Skopos Theory on the basis of Vermeer's research. In *Translating as a Purposeful Activity: Functionalist Approaches Explained*, Nord put forward the concept of "function plus loyalty", and she pointed out that translation should not only realize the expected function of the target text in the target culture, but also maintain the appropriate loyalty to the source text and the communication participants^{Error! Reference source not found.}. This view makes Skopos Theory more complete and operable. In the field of cultural translation, Nord also published a lot of research results. In *Cultural Translating: Theory and Practice*, she discussed the translation strategies of cultural elements, and proposed that translators should flexibly adopt foreignization and domestication according to the translation purpose, and can use cultural compensation to make up for the cultural information loss in the translation process. Nord's research on cultural translation provides an important theoretical reference for the translation of classical garden scenic spot introductions with rich cultural elements.

In the aspect of the research on tourism translation, overseas scholars focus on the functional characteristics of tourism texts and the translation strategies for target readers. Cohen pointed out in the research on tourism communication that tourism texts are a kind of practical texts with the dual functions of information transmission and persuasion, and the translation of tourism texts should take the cognitive level and cultural background of target readers as the core consideration^{Error! Reference source not found.}. Gunn put forward that the translation of scenic spot introductions should pay attention to the readability of the target text, and avoid the excessive retention of the source culture elements that are difficult for target readers to understand, so as to ensure the smooth communication of information. In the research on Chinese garden culture translation, foreign scholars mainly focus on the cultural connotation and aesthetic characteristics of Chinese classical gardens, and their research results provide a cultural background reference for the translation of garden scenic spot introductions^{Error! Reference source not found.}. Michell analyzed the artistic characteristics and cultural connotations of Chinese classical gardens in *The Garden as a Work of Art: The Chinese Garden*, and he pointed out that Chinese classical gardens reflect the Chinese traditional thought of "harmony between man and nature", which is the core connotation that needs to be conveyed in the translation of garden scenic spot introductions^{Error!}

Reference source not found. Hardie carried out a special research on Suzhou gardens, and expounded the architectural features and aesthetic conception of Suzhou gardens, which provided a detailed cultural reference for the English translation of Suzhou garden scenic spot introductions^{Error! Reference source not found.}.

Overall, overseas research has formed a relatively complete theoretical system for functionalist translation theory and tourism translation, and the research on Chinese classical garden culture has also provided important cultural support for this study. However, most overseas research on Chinese garden translation focuses on cultural research, with relatively insufficient specialized research on the English translation of classical garden scenic spot introductions. Furthermore, research on translation strategies combined with specific translation theories is even scarcer, which is the research gap this thesis aims to fill.

Studies of Classical Garden Introductions at Home

Domestic research on the English translation of classical garden scenic spot introductions has developed rapidly in recent years, with the research content gradually deepening from the initial translation error analysis to the strategy construction under the guidance of specific translation theories. At the same time, the research on Skopos Theory and tourism translation in China is also rich, which provides a solid theoretical and practical foundation for the research of this thesis.

In the aspect of the research on Skopos Theory and tourism translation, domestic scholars have carried out in-depth research on the application of Skopos Theory in tourism translation, and formed a lot of research results. Jia Wenbo systematically expounded the application of functionalist translation theory in applied translation in *Functionalism in Applied Translation*, and he pointed out that tourism translation is a typical purposeful translation activity, and the translation strategy should be determined according to the translation purpose and the needs of target readers. He also put forward that the translation of tourism texts should pay attention to the combination of information transmission and cultural communication, which provides an important theoretical guidance for the translation of classical garden scenic spot introductions^{Error! Reference source not found.}. Chen Gang put forward the “reader-centered” translation concept in *Tourism Translation and Foreign-related Tour Guiding*, and he pointed out that the main readers of tourism translation are overseas tourists, so the translation should meet the cognitive habits and reading needs of overseas tourists, which is highly consistent with the core idea of Skopos Theory^{Error! Reference source not found.}. In addition, many domestic scholars have applied Skopos Theory to the translation of tourist brochures, scenic spot signs and other tourism texts, and their research methods and research results provide a reference for the research of this thesis.

In the aspect of the special research on the English translation of classical garden scenic spot introductions, domestic scholars have carried out research from different perspectives such as term translation, cultural image transmission and translation strategy construction. In terms of term translation, Wang Yingchong carried out an in-depth research on the standardization of English translation of Chinese classical garden terms in *A Study on the Standardization of English Translation of Terms in Chinese Classical Gardens*, and he pointed out that the translation of garden terms should balance accuracy and cultural connotation, and put forward a set of standardized translation methods for common garden architectural terms^{Error! Reference source not found.}. Chen Xiangmei studied the English translation of ancient architectural terms in her doctoral dissertation *A Study on English Translation of Terms in Chinese Ancient Architecture*, and her research results on the translation of traditional architectural terms such as “hall”, “pavilion” and “corridor” provide an important practical reference for the translation of garden architectural terms^{Error! Reference source not found.}.

In terms of cultural image transmission, Li Jianjun analyzed the cultural connotations and translation strategies of garden scenic spot names in *Cultural Connotations and Translation Strategies of Names of Scenic Spots in Gardens*, and he pointed out that the names of classical garden scenic spots are rich in cultural images and literary allusions, and translators should flexibly adopt free translation, transliteration plus annotation and other methods according to the characteristics of cultural images to realize the effective transmission of cultural connotations^{Error! Reference source not found.}. Zhang Ning discussed the English translation strategies of Suzhou garden scenic spot introductions in *A Study on English Translation Strategies of Scenic Spot Introductions in Suzhou Gardens*, and she put forward the methods of “cultural compensation” and “discourse reconstruction” for the translation of cultural-loaded elements in garden scenic spot introductions, which has important guiding significance for this study^{Error! Reference source not found.}.

In terms of translation strategy construction, Dai Li carried out a comprehensive research on the English translation of Suzhou classical garden introductions in her master’s dissertation *A Study on English Translation Strategies and Methods of Introductions to Suzhou Classical Gardens*, and she constructed a targeted translation strategy system from the aspects of vocabulary, syntax and discourse, which is an important reference for the strategy construction in this thesis^{Error! Reference source not found.}. In addition, many domestic scholars have carried out case studies on the English translation of specific classical gardens, such as the Summer Palace and the Humble Administrator’s Garden, and their research results make the research on garden translation more targeted.

Overall, domestic research on the English translation of classical garden scenic spot introductions has achieved rich results, but there are still some research gaps. On the one hand, most of the existing studies focus on the translation error analysis and single translation strategy research, and the systematic research on the translation of classical garden scenic spot introductions under the guidance of Skopos Theory is relatively insufficient. On the other hand, the existing studies lack the in-depth analysis and interpretation of the official English translations of classical gardens, and the constructed translation strategies are not fully combined with the actual translation practice. Based on the existing research results, this thesis takes the official English translations of the Humble Administrator's Garden and the Lingering Garden as the research object, and carries out systematic research on the English translation of classical garden scenic spot introductions from the perspective of Skopos Theory, which is a useful supplement to the existing research.

III.Theoretical Framework

Core Principles of Skopos Theory

Skopos Theory is the core theory of the German functionalist translation school, which was put forward by Vermeer on the basis of Reiss's text type theory in the 1970s. This theory breaks through the traditional source text-centered translation theory, taking the translation purpose as the core of translation activities and advocating that the translation process and strategies are determined by the translation purpose. After the development and improvement of Nord and other scholars, Skopos Theory has formed a relatively complete theoretical system, with its three core principles being Skopos Principle, Coherence Principle and Fidelity Principle, and the later proposed "function plus loyalty" concept further enriches the connotation of the theory.

The Skopos Principle is the core principle of Skopos Theory, which is also the fundamental criterion for judging the quality of translation. Vermeer pointed out in *Skopos and Commission in Translational Action* that "the end justifies the means" is the core idea of the Skopos Principle, that is, the purpose of translation determines all translation strategies and methods. The "purpose" of translation in Skopos Theory has a broad connotation, which mainly includes three aspects: the purpose of the translator, the purpose of the target text and the purpose of the translation commission. In the translation practice of classical garden scenic spot introductions, the core purpose of translation is to realize the dual functions of information service and cultural communication, that is, to provide overseas tourists with clear and accurate garden visiting information, and at the same time to convey the cultural connotations and aesthetic charm of Chinese classical gardens. Therefore, under the guidance of the Skopos Principle, the translator should flexibly select translation strategies according to this core purpose, and abandon the traditional translation concept of rigidly adhering to the form of the source text. For example, for the cultural allusions in the scenic spot introductions, the translator can adopt the method of free translation or annotation according to the understanding ability of overseas tourists, so as to ensure the realization of the translation purpose.

The Coherence Principle (or intratextual coherence) requires the target text to conform to target language norms, forming a logical and meaningful whole that target readers can easily understand based on their cognitive habits and cultural background. The Coherence Principle is based on the communication function of translation, which emphasizes that translation is a cross-cultural communication activity, and the smoothness of communication is the basic requirement of translation. There are obvious differences between Chinese and English in terms of syntactic structure and discourse construction: Chinese is a paratactic language, which pays attention to the implied logic and mood creation, and often uses run-on sentences in scenic spot introductions; English is a hypotactic language, which pays attention to explicit logic and structural integrity, and emphasizes the use of conjunctions, participle structures and other means to connect sentences. Therefore, under the guidance of the Coherence Principle, the translator needs to reconstruct the sentence structure and discourse of the source text in the translation of classical garden scenic spot introductions, convert the paratactic sentences of Chinese into the hypotactic sentences of English, and ensure the logical coherence and readability of the target text.

The Fidelity Principle is the third core principle of Skopos Theory, also known as the intertextual coherence principle. This principle requires that there should be an appropriate relationship of fidelity between the target text and the source text, that is, the target text should retain the core content and cultural connotations of the source text on the premise of realizing the translation purpose. Notably, the Fidelity Principle of Skopos Theory differs from the "faithfulness" in traditional translation theory. The traditional translation theory takes the source text as the center, and requires the target text to be faithful to the source text in all aspects such as form, content and style; while the Fidelity Principle of Skopos Theory takes the translation purpose as the premise, and the degree and form of fidelity are determined by the translation purpose. If the translation purpose requires the full transmission of the cultural connotations of the source text, the translator can adopt the foreignization strategy to retain more cultural elements of the source text; if the translation purpose is to ensure the smooth transmission of information, the translator can adopt the domestication strategy to appropriately

simplify the cultural elements of the source text. In the translation of classical garden scenic spot introductions, the core of the Fidelity Principle is to retain the core cultural connotations and aesthetic characteristics of the source text, and avoid the loss of important cultural information in order to pursue the readability of the target text.

On the basis of the three core principles, Nord put forward the concept of “function plus loyalty”, which further improved Skopos Theory. Nord pointed out that translation activities need to meet two basic requirements: on the one hand, the target text should realize its expected function in the target culture, that is, the “function” requirement; on the other hand, the translator should maintain the appropriate loyalty to the source text author and the target text readers, that is, the “loyalty” requirement. The “loyalty” requirement requires the translator to balance the interests of the source text author and the target text readers, and not to ignore the core content of the source text for the sake of meeting the needs of the target text readers, nor to ignore the understanding ability of the target text readers for the sake of being faithful to the source text. This concept is of great guiding significance for the translation of classical garden scenic spot introductions, which requires the translator to balance cultural fidelity and reader-friendliness, and realize the organic unity of information service and cultural communication.

Adaptability of Skopos Theory to the Translation of Scenic Spot Introductions

The scenic spot introductions of classical gardens are typical tourism cultural texts with the dual attributes of information and culture, and their translation has the characteristics of purposefulness, cultural specificity and practicality. Skopos Theory, which takes the translation purpose as the core and advocates flexible translation strategies, is highly compatible with the translation characteristics and requirements of classical garden scenic spot introductions. The three core principles of Skopos Theory and the concept of “function plus loyalty” can provide systematic and targeted theoretical guidance for the translation of classical garden scenic spot introductions, which is mainly reflected in the following three aspects.

First of all, the Skopos Principle is highly consistent with the dual translation purpose of classical garden scenic spot introductions. The core translation purpose of classical garden scenic spot introductions is to realize the dual functions of information service and cultural communication, which is the fundamental starting point of all translation activities. The Skopos Principle takes the translation purpose as the core of translation activities, and advocates that the translation strategy should be flexibly selected according to the translation purpose, which is exactly in line with the translation needs of classical garden scenic spot introductions. For the informative part of the scenic spot introductions, such as the location, area and architectural structure of the scenic spots, the translator can adopt the domestication strategy to ensure the accuracy and readability of the information, so as to realize the information service function; for the cultural part of the scenic spot introductions, such as cultural images, literary allusions and aesthetic conceptions, the translator can adopt the foreignization strategy or the combination of foreignization and domestication to retain the core cultural connotations, so as to realize the cultural communication function. The Skopos Principle provides a clear theoretical direction for the translator to balance the two translation purposes and select flexible translation strategies.

Secondly, the Coherence Principle meets the practical translation requirement of improving the readability of the target text of classical garden scenic spot introductions. The main target readers of the English translation of classical garden scenic spot introductions are overseas tourists with different cultural backgrounds and English levels. The readability of the target text is the basic premise to ensure the smooth communication of information and culture. There are great differences between Chinese and English in syntactic structure and discourse construction. The Chinese scenic spot introductions often use poetic and concise paratactic sentences, which pay attention to the creation of artistic conception but ignore the explicit expression of logic; while overseas tourists are used to reading the English texts with clear logic and complete structure. The Coherence Principle requires the target text to conform to the discourse norms of the target language and ensure the logical coherence and readability of the text, which just solves the problem of language conversion in the translation of classical garden scenic spot introductions. Under the guidance of this principle, the translator can reconstruct the sentence structure and discourse of the source text, convert the paratactic sentences of Chinese into the hypotactic sentences of English, and make the target text conform to the reading habits of overseas tourists, thus laying a solid foundation for the realization of the translation purpose.

Thirdly, the Fidelity Principle and the concept of “function plus loyalty” solve the core problem of cultural transmission in the translation of classical garden scenic spot introductions. The biggest difficulty in the translation of classical garden scenic spot introductions is the transmission of cultural connotations, because there are a lot of cultural-loaded elements in the source text, which are closely related to Chinese traditional culture, and it is easy to cause cultural information loss or cultural misunderstanding in the translation process. The Fidelity Principle of Skopos Theory requires the target text to retain the core content and cultural connotations of the source text on the premise of realizing the translation purpose, which sets a clear bottom line

for the cultural transmission of translation: the translator can adjust the translation form appropriately, but cannot lose the core cultural connotations of the source text. The concept of “function plus loyalty” further requires the translator to balance cultural fidelity and reader-friendliness, and avoid two extreme phenomena: one is the excessive foreignization that only pays attention to cultural fidelity but ignores the readability of the target text, which makes overseas tourists unable to understand the target text; the other is the excessive domestication that only pays attention to the readability of the target text but ignores cultural fidelity, which makes the target text lose the cultural characteristics of Chinese classical gardens. Under the guidance of the Fidelity Principle, the translator can adopt scientific translation strategies such as cultural compensation, transliteration and annotation to realize the effective transmission of cultural connotations, and ensure that the target text is both culturally faithful and reader-friendly.

In addition, Skopos Theory is a flexible and open translation theory, which does not put forward rigid translation norms, but advocates that translators should make independent judgments and choices according to the specific translation context and translation purpose. The translation of classical garden scenic spot introductions involves a variety of cultural-loaded elements and complex translation situations, and different scenic spots and different cultural elements have different translation needs. The flexibility and openness of Skopos Theory make it able to adapt to the complex translation situations of classical garden scenic spot introductions, and provide targeted theoretical guidance for the translation of different types of cultural-loaded elements.

To sum up, Skopos Theory is highly adaptable to the translation of classical garden scenic spot introductions. Its three core principles and the concept of “function plus loyalty” can solve the key problems of translation purpose orientation, language conversion and cultural transmission in the translation of classical garden scenic spot introductions, and provide a systematic and scientific theoretical framework for the translation practice and research of classical garden scenic spot introductions. This is also the fundamental reason why this study takes Skopos Theory as the core guiding theory.

IV. Case Analysis

Textual Features of Scenic Spot Introductions

Based on the theoretical framework of Skopos Theory established in Chapter Three, this chapter conducts a detailed case analysis of the English translations of scenic spot introductions in the Humble Administrator's Garden and the Lingering Garden. Before examining specific translation strategies, it is necessary to first analyze the textual features of the source texts, as these features directly influence the translator's strategic choices under the guidance of the Skopos Principle, Coherence Principle and Fidelity Principle. The following subsections will discuss the text types and functions of these introductions, as well as the culturally loaded elements embedded within them, providing a solid foundation for the subsequent translation analysis.

The scenic spot introductions of the Humble Administrator's Garden and the Lingering Garden are typical informative-expressive integrated texts that bear the dual functions of tourism information transmission and traditional cultural expression. As informative texts, they provide objective and accurate basic information such as the geographical location, historical evolution, architectural structure and landscape characteristics of each scenic spot, serving as a practical guide for overseas tourists to visit. As expressive texts, these introductions are endowed with profound aesthetic and cultural connotations by virtue of concise and poetic language, literary allusions and cultural metaphors, reflecting the artistic conception of “harmony between human and nature” of Chinese classical gardens and the literati sentiment of the garden owners. In addition, these texts also have a weak operative function, which aims to arouse overseas tourists' interest in visiting through the description of beautiful landscapes and profound culture, and promote the spread of Chinese garden culture.

The culturally loaded elements in the scenic spot introductions of the two gardens are the core carrier of Chinese classical garden culture, and also the key and difficulty of English translation. These elements are mainly divided into two categories: garden architectural terms and cultural images, both of which are closely linked to Chinese traditional architecture, poetry, philosophy and aesthetic concepts. Garden architectural terms such as “Tang (Hall)”, “Xuan (Pavilion)”, “Lang (Corridor)” and “Feng (Peak)” not only represent the functional attributes of buildings, but also reflect the unique architectural system and aesthetic pursuit of Chinese classical gardens. Cultural images such as “Yuan Xiang (Distant Fragrance)”, “Fei Hong (Flying Rainbow)”, “Wu Feng (Five Peaks)” are derived from traditional Chinese poems and essays, and carry the emotional sustenance and cultural connotations of the literati. The accurate translation and effective transmission of these culturally loaded elements are the fundamental requirements for realizing the translation purpose of “cultural communication plus information service”.

Analysis of the English Translations

The official English translations of the scenic spot introductions of the Humble Administrator's Garden and the Lingering Garden are the practical application of Skopos Theory in tourism cultural text translation. The translators take the dual purposes of "providing clear tourism information for overseas tourists" and "transmitting the cultural connotations of Chinese classical gardens" as the core, and adopt flexible translation strategies in term translation, cultural image transmission and sentence structure and discourse construction. The following is a detailed analysis of the official translations from the three above-mentioned dimensions, combined with the three core principles of Skopos Theory.

Term Translation

Garden architectural terms are the basic vocabulary of scenic spot introductions, and their translation directly affects the accurate transmission of basic garden information and cultural connotations. The official translations adhere to the Skopos Principle and Fidelity Principle of Skopos Theory, and adopt the translation strategy of "combination of foreignization and domestication, function priority with cultural supplementation" for garden architectural terms^{Error! Reference source not found.}. For different terms with distinct functional attributes and cultural connotations, the translators select appropriate English equivalents and flexible translation methods, which not only ensure that overseas tourists can understand the functional attributes of garden buildings, but also retain the unique cultural connotations of the terms.

For the core architectural term "Tang (Hall)", the main building of the classical garden with the functions of receiving guests, appreciating scenery and holding banquets.

Example 1:

兰雪堂(Lanxue Hall)

ST: 拙政园东部入口处的首座建筑, 象征主人品格如冰雪般高洁。建筑采用冰裂纹窗和梅花状嵌刻, 体现“寒窗”之意, 寓意主人远离世俗、追求清高。

TT: The first building at the eastern entrance of Humble Administrator's Garden, symbolizing the owner's noble integrity like white snow. It features windows with ice-crack patterns and plum blossom carvings, embodying the concept of "chilly windows" and the owner's detachment from worldly affairs.

In the context of classical gardens, "Hall" is the most appropriate English translation for the Chinese word "Tang", as it can accurately convey the practical function and significant position of "Tang" as the main building in the garden. This is in line with the reading habits of English readers and represents a typical localization strategy. The translator adds descriptive phrases after "Hall", preserving the cultural connotation of the scenic spot name and further adhering to the principle of fidelity.

For the small and exquisite viewing building "Xuan (Pavilion)", the official translations use "Pavilion" for translation.

Example 2:

听雨轩(Tingyu Pavilion)

ST: 轩前有清池, 池内植荷, 四周芭蕉、翠竹相映, 是聆听雨打芭蕉、荷叶清音的佳处, 体现古代文人“听雨入秋竹”的诗意情怀。

TT: A pavilion in front of a clear pond planted with lotus flowers, surrounded by banana trees and bamboo. It is a perfect place to listen to the sound of rain pattering on banana leaves or lotus leaves, embodying the poetic sentiment of "listening to the rain enters the autumn bamboo groves."

In English, "Pavilion" refers to a small and beautiful garden building mainly used for viewing scenery and resting, which is highly consistent with the functional attributes and morphological characteristics of "Xuan" in Chinese classical gardens. The translators do not simply translate the term, but combine the cultural connotations of the scenic spot to carry out semantic extension.

For the connecting building "Lang (Corridor)" with dual functions of practicality and aesthetics, the English translations adopt flexible translation methods according to its structural form and functional characteristics.

Example 3:

小飞虹(Xiao Fei Hong)

ST: 苏州园林中极为少见的廊桥, 横跨水面, 连接两岸, 朱红色桥栏倒映水中宛如飞虹, 是园中标志性景观, 体现“借景”与“框景”的造园手法。

TT: A rare corridor bridge in Suzhou gardens, spanning the water and connecting the banks. Its vermilion bridge rails reflect in the water like a flying rainbow, making it a iconic landscape and exemplifying the garden's use of "borrowed scenery" and "framed view" techniques.

The "Xiao Fei Hong" which is a corridor crossing the water and with a bridge-like structure, it is translated as "covered walkway bridge". This translation method accurately reflects the three structural characteristics of

“Xiao Fei Hong”: “covered with a roof”, “serving as a walkway” and “crossing the water as a bridge”. Compared with a single translation of “corridor bridge”, “covered walkway bridge” is more informative and can make overseas tourists intuitively understand the morphological characteristics of this unique garden building. For “Feng (Peak)”, the Taihu stone rockery which is the core of the garden rockery landscape, the official translations distinguish the translation as “Peak” or “Stone” according to its landscape status and artistic value in the garden.

Example 4:

冠云峰(Cloud-Capped Peak)

ST: 冠云峰是留园的镇园之宝，高 6.5 米，重 5 吨，采自太湖。其特点是“瘦、皱、漏、透”，形态独特，宛如一座天然山水画卷，象征自然之美与永恒。

TT: The Cloud-Capped Peak is the crown jewel of Lingering Garden. Standing 6.5 meters tall and weighing 5 tons, it is carved from Taihu Lake stones, renowned for its “slenderness, wrinkles, holes, and transparency.” This iconic rock formation resembles a natural landscape painting, symbolizing the beauty of nature and timelessness.

For the “Guan Yun Feng” which is the main landscape of the Lingering Garden and the tallest Taihu stone in the south of the Yangtze River, it is translated as “Guan Yun Peak”, using “Peak” to highlight its towering morphological characteristics and important landscape status in the garden. At the same time, the translators uniformly use the Pinyin translation of the proper nouns of the stone peaks with the first letter capitalized, which retains the cultural uniqueness of Chinese classical garden rockery terms and is a typical foreignization strategy. In general, the official translations of garden architectural terms have formed a set of scientific and standardized translation methods centered on “function priority”. It flexibly combines foreignization and domestication strategies, adheres to the Fidelity Principle on the premise of realizing the Skopos Principle, and ensures that the translation of terms is both functionally accurate and culturally rich, laying a solid foundation for the effective transmission of garden information and culture.

Cultural Image Transmission

Cultural images are the soul of Chinese classical garden scenic spot introductions, and their cross-cultural transmission is the core difficulty of English translation. The cultural images in the two gardens are mostly derived from traditional Chinese poems and essays, and carry the unique aesthetic concepts, philosophical thoughts and literati sentiments of the Chinese nation^{Error! Reference source not found.}. There are obvious differences between Chinese and Western cultures, which leads to the fact that many cultural images are difficult to be directly understood by overseas tourists. The English translations adhere to the Skopos Principle, Coherence Principle and Fidelity Principle of Skopos Theory, and adopt differentiated translation strategies according to the types and connotations of cultural images, including image reconstruction, free translation for core connotation retention and contextual supplementation. These strategies effectively realize the cross-cultural transmission of cultural images, making the translated text both understandable to overseas tourists and able to retain the core cultural and aesthetic connotations of the original images.

Sensory perception conveys aesthetic imagery. Aesthetic imagery is mainly presented through visual and olfactory experiences. The charm of traditional garden landscape aesthetics is conveyed through the most direct cultural imagery. The official translation uses simple English words to reshape the core sensory impression, allowing overseas tourists to feel the beauty of the scene when reading.

Example 5:

ST: 远香堂位于拙政园中部，是全院的主厅，四周环水，荷风扑面，夏日尤宜赏荷。

TT: Located in the central part of the Humble Administrator's Garden, the Hall of Distant Fragrance serves as the main hall of the entire garden. Surrounded by water, it is particularly delightful to visit in summer when the breeze carries the fragrance of lotus flowers across the water.

“Distant fragrance” is from Zhou Dunyi's “Lavender Ode”. It refers to the faint fragrance of lotus flowers around the hall, and subtly alludes to the noble character of a gentleman who remains untainted by the mire. The official translation does not directly quote the allusion from “Preface to the Lotus”, but renders ‘Yuanxiang’ as “Distant Fragrance”, preserving the core image of the fragrance drifting from afar. Coupled with the subsequent description of “the breeze carrying the fragrance of lotus across the water surface”, overseas tourists can easily envision the serene beauty of the lotus pond. The translation further elaborates on the meaning of “symbolizing the noble character of a gentleman” in the subsequent context, thus restoring the sensory experience while highlighting the cultural connotation.

Grasp the core meaning and avoid translating word for word to reveal classic allusions. Classical allusions come from ancient poetry and prose, carrying the emotional attachment and literati sentiment of the garden owner. The official translation adopts the method of “paraphrasing to preserve the connotation” giving up the specific

form of the allusion and only retaining the core emotions and cultural connotations, which is in line with the coherence principle of the Skopos Theory.

Example 6:

ST: 五峰仙馆又称“楠木厅”，是苏州园林中最大的厅堂，主体结构 and 家具由楠木制成，宏伟而雅致。堂内有一块圆桌大小的大理石，雨后宛如天然山水画，假山形似十二生肖和庐山“五老峰”。

TT: Also known as the Nanmu Hall, this is the largest hall in Suzhou gardens, constructed with nanmu wood for its main structure and furniture. Inside, a marble slab the size of a round table resembles a natural landscape painting after rain, while the rockeries mimic the Twelve Zodiac Animals and the "Five Elders Peak" of Lushan Mountain.

The phrase “Five Peaks” originated from Li Bai’s verse, “In the southeast of Mount Lu, there are five peaks like golden lotus flowers, carved out of the blue sky”. The garden owner piled up five Taihu stone peaks inside the hall, symbolizing the Five Old Men Peaks of Mount Lu, expressing the aesthetic pursuit of inviting natural landscapes into the interior and the philosophical thought of “harmony between man and nature”. The official translation simply translated it as “Five Peaks”, preserving the core imagery of “five stone peaks”. The translator translated “Xian Guan” as “Hermitage Hall”, using the word “hermitage” to convey the cultural connotation of “retreating from the hustle and bustle and getting close to nature”, enabling overseas tourists to understand the emotions it conveys.

The depiction of scenery reveals the philosophical intention. The philosophical image is a part of the cultural image in classical gardens, mainly embodying the philosophical thought of “harmonious coexistence between man and nature”, and also highlighting the aesthetic principle of “the winding path leading to the beauty of tranquility”. This image is implicitly contained in the structure and aesthetic description of the garden landscape. The official translation integrates the philosophical connotation into the specific landscape description. Thus, abstract ideas become concrete and easier to understand. This translation method can appropriately spread Chinese cultural aesthetics.

Take the concept of “harmonious coexistence between man and nature” as an example in the Five Peaks Hermitage Hall. The official translation highlights the beauty of the integration of natural landscape and indoor environment by describing the way five Taihu stones are integrated into the indoor space. Through the specific scene description, overseas tourists can understand the connotation of “harmony between man and nature”, which means the interdependence and integration of man and nature.

Sentence Structure and Discourse Construction

There are essential differences between Chinese and English in linguistic expression: Chinese is a paratactic language that emphasizes implicit logic and artistic conception creation, with frequent use of run-on sentences and no obvious connectives; English is a hypotactic language that emphasizes explicit logic and structural integrity, with frequent use of subordinate clauses, participle structures and connectives to connect sentences. ^{Error! Reference source not found.} The scenic spot introductions of Chinese classical gardens are typical Chinese paratactic texts, with concise language, implicit logic and strong artistic conception. If translated word for word according to the original sentence structure, the translated text will be incoherent and difficult to understand for English readers. The official translations adhere to the Coherence Principle of Skopos Theory, and on the premise of retaining the core information and aesthetic artistic conception of the original text, adopt the strategies of logical explicitation, information stratification and sentence optimization to realize the transformation from Chinese parataxis to English hypotaxis, making the translated text conform to the discourse norms and reading habits of English readers, while retaining the poetic and aesthetic artistic conception of the original text.

The following takes the official translations of three core scenic spots in the two gardens as examples to analyze the sentence structure and discourse construction strategies of the official translations in detail.

Example 7:

ST: 芙蓉榭 (Furong Xie), 滨水建筑, 正对东园宽阔水域, 是夏日观赏荷花的绝佳地点。榭在中国古建中常用于休闲游赏, 此处与荷花相映成趣, 展现江南水乡的诗意。

TT: A waterfront chamber facing a wide expanse of water in the east garden, ideal for admiring lotus flowers in summer. In ancient Chinese architecture, “xie” refers to a leisure and sightseeing space, and here it complements the lotus scenery, embodying the poetic charm of Jiangnan water towns.

Chinese uses a linear, topic-prominent chain of short clauses, while English compresses the first sentence into an appositive phrase and makes the second sentence structurally complete. English adds explicit markers to guide the reader.

Example 8:

ST: 明瑟楼 (Bright and Harmonious Pavilion), 水经注有“目对鱼鸟, 水木明瑟”之句, 此处环境雅洁清新, 楼为二层半间, 卷棚单面歇山造, 楼上三面置有明瓦和合窗, 楼梯用太湖石堆砌而成, 梯边一峰屹立, 上镌“一梯云”三字。

TT: Named after the phrase “目对鱼鸟, 水木明瑟” from the “Commentary on the Water Classic,” this pavilion exudes a bright and harmonious atmosphere. It is a two-and-a-half-story structure with a single-slope roof, featuring clear windows on three sides and a staircase made of Taihu Lake stones, with a peak inscribed “One Stair to the Clouds.”

Chinese presents all details in a flat, flowing sequence; English restructures them into a tree-like hierarchy. By breaking the long sentence and using subordination, English achieves clarity and readability, while Chinese relies on the reader’s ability to follow a continuous, comma-separated chain.

Comparison of Different Translations and Strategy Selection

Based on the analysis of official translations, combined with Skopos Theory’s core principles (Skopos Principle, Coherence Principle, Fidelity Principle) and Nord’s concept, and drawing on domestic and foreign research results on classical garden and ancient architectural translation, this study constructs a targeted English translation strategy system for classical garden scenic spot introductions. To avoid repetition with the aforementioned translation appreciation, this section focuses on strategy refinement and verification through comparative analysis of different versions^{Error! Reference source not found.}.

From the above examples, a pattern can be observed:

Transliteration (pure pinyin): It has little informational value for overseas tourists and is not suitable for names of scenic spots with specific meanings.

Literal translation (word-for-word direct translation): It is prone to “go wrong” in cultural imagery, especially when dealing with allusions and metaphors, often resulting in strange meanings.

The official adopted mixed strategy: It has found a balance between preserving cultural identity and conveying effective information. Pinyin is used when it is appropriate (such as the proper noun “Fu Rong”), functional words are added when explanations are needed (such as “Peak” and “Pavilion”), and when dealing with cultural-loaded words, the closest equivalent concept in English is sought (such as “Hermitage”).

In other words, the English translation of descriptions of classical garden attractions should not adhere strictly to a single method. Instead, it should be adjusted flexibly between “making it understandable for foreigners” and “preserving the Chinese flavor” based on the specific circumstances of each name.

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V.Conclusion

Research Findings

Taking Skopos Theory as the core theoretical framework, this study comprehensively adopts the methods of literature research, text analysis, case analysis and comparative analysis, with the official English translations of scenic spot introductions of the Humble Administrator’s Garden and the Lingering Garden as the

research corpus, to conduct an in-depth study on the English translation of classical garden scenic spot introductions. Through systematic analysis and research, the main findings of this study are summarized as follows:

First, Skopos Theory has strong adaptability and guiding significance for translating classical garden scenic spot introductions. The three core principles: Skopos Principle, Coherence Principle, Fidelity Principle, and Nord's concept of "function plus loyalty" can solve the key problems of translation purpose orientation, language conversion, and cultural transmission.

Secondly, the official English translations of the Humble Administrator's Garden and the Lingering Garden have adopted scientific and flexible translation strategies in term translation, cultural image transmission and sentence structure and discourse construction, which are the concrete practice of Skopos Theory in translation practice. In term translation, the official translations adopt the strategy of combining foreignization and domestication, taking function priority as the core and supplementing cultural connotations, which ensures the accuracy of architectural function expression and the retention of cultural uniqueness. In cultural image transmission, the official translations adopt differentiated strategies according to the types of cultural images, such as image reconstruction for aesthetic images, free translation for literary allusion images and context supplementation for philosophical images, realizing the effective cross-cultural transmission of cultural images. In sentence structure and discourse construction, the official translations realize the transformation from Chinese parataxis to English hypotaxis through logical reconstruction, information stratification and sentence optimization, which makes the translated text conform to the reading habits of English readers while retaining the aesthetic artistic conception of the original text.

Thirdly, a set of targeted English translation strategy system for classical garden scenic spot introductions is constructed based on Skopos Theory, which is divided into three core dimensions: term translation, cultural image transmission and sentence structure and discourse construction. The strategy of term translation is "function priority, cultural supplementation and standardized unification", which requires translators to choose English equivalents according to the core functions of architectural terms, supplement cultural connotations through modifiers and prepositional phrases, and unify the translation methods of the same type of terms to form a standardized translation system. The strategy of cultural image transmission requires translators to adopt differentiated translation methods according to the types of cultural images, retains the core cultural connotation of images, supplement necessary cultural context for overseas tourists, and selects English words in line with English aesthetic habits to avoid cultural misunderstanding. The strategy of sentence structure and discourse construction, which requires translators to transform the implicit logic of Chinese run-on sentences into explicit logic of English through participle structures, subordinate clauses and conjunctions, stratify and transmit information according to the order of main and secondary, and retain the aesthetic artistic conception of the original text through accurate word selection. The feasibility and effectiveness of this strategy system have been verified through the comparative analysis of different translation versions of core scenic spots, which can provide practical guidance for the English translation practice of classical garden scenic spot introductions.

Finally, the pure pinyin translation and literal translation methods are not suitable for the English translation of classical garden scenic spot introductions. Such translation methods either lose the cultural connotations and aesthetic characteristics of classical gardens, or lead to cultural misunderstanding and poor readability of the translated text, which cannot realize the dual translation purposes of cultural communication and information service. Only by taking Skopos Theory as the guidance, adopting flexible translation strategies according to the translation purpose and the characteristics of the source text, and balancing cultural fidelity and reader-friendliness, can the high-quality English translation of classical garden scenic spot introductions be realized.

Research Limitations

Although this study has achieved the expected research goals and obtained certain research results, there are still some limitations in the research process, which are mainly reflected in the following two aspects:

First, the research corpus is relatively limited. The study only selects the official English translations of the Humble Administrator's Garden and the Lingering Garden, not involving other classical gardens in China, such as the Summer Palace in Beijing, and the Ge Garden in Yangzhou.

Second, this study only focuses on the static analysis of the official English translation texts of scenic spot introductions, and does not involve the dynamic research of translation practice, such as the investigation and research on the acceptance of the translated texts by overseas tourists. The ultimate goal of the English translation of classical garden scenic spot introductions is to be accepted and understood by overseas tourists, and the acceptance of the translated texts by the target readers is an important standard to evaluate the quality of translation. This study does not collect the feedback and evaluation of overseas tourists on the official

translation texts, so it is impossible to analyze the acceptance of the translated texts from the perspective of target readers, which makes the research results lack the support of empirical data to a certain extent.

Research Prospects

Based on the main research findings and research limitations of this study, the future research on the English translation of classical garden scenic spot introductions can be carried out from the following three aspects, so as to further enrich and improve the research system of English translation of Chinese classical garden culture:

First, expand the research corpus and carry out a comparative study on the English translation of scenic spot introductions of different types of classical gardens in China. Future research can select classical gardens with different regional characteristics and artistic styles, such as imperial gardens in northern China and private gardens in the south of the Yangtze River, as the research objects, compare the translation characteristics and strategies of their English translation texts of scenic spot introductions, analyze the influence of regional cultural characteristics and garden artistic styles on translation strategies, and further verify and improve the translation strategy system constructed in this study, so as to make it more universal and applicable.

Second, carry out empirical research combined with the acceptance of target readers and add empirical data support for the research results. Future research can design questionnaires and interview outlines, investigate the acceptance of English translation texts of classical garden scenic spot introductions by overseas tourists with different cultural backgrounds and English levels, collect their feedback and evaluation on the translated texts, analyze the problems and deficiencies in the current translation texts from the perspective of target readers, and put forward targeted optimization suggestions, so as to make the English translation of classical garden scenic spot introductions more in line with the reading habits and cognitive needs of overseas tourists.

Third, carry out interdisciplinary research and combine translation studies with garden culture, tourism management and other disciplines. The English translation of classical garden scenic spot introductions is a cross-disciplinary research field involving translation studies, garden culture, tourism management, cross-cultural communication and other disciplines. Future research can strengthen the interdisciplinary cooperation between these disciplines, absorb the research results of garden culture on the artistic characteristics and cultural connotations of classical gardens, and the research results of tourism management on the needs of tourists, so as to make the research on English translation of classical garden scenic spot introductions more in-depth and comprehensive, and provide more professional and systematic theoretical guidance and practical suggestions for the English translation practice of classical garden scenic spot introductions.

In general, the English translation of classical garden scenic spot introductions is an important part of the overseas communication of Chinese excellent traditional culture, and has important theoretical and practical significance. With the continuous advancement of the “Going Global of Chinese Culture” strategy and the rapid development of China’s inbound tourism industry, the research on the English translation of classical garden scenic spot introductions will receive more and more attention from scholars. It is hoped that more scholars can join in this research field, carry out in-depth and systematic research from different perspectives and methods, and contribute to the high-quality overseas communication of Chinese classical garden culture.

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