

From “Local” to “International”: Some Reflections on Translation Norms of Scenic Spot Introductions Under the Context of Cultural Self-Confidence in the New Era

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Abstract

The current research surveys scenic spot introduction texts and summarizes the genre’s linguistic norms, which provide guiding principles for similar style’s Chinese-English translation. By adopting the set of translation and linguistic norms in the re-translation work of a local park in the City of Yantai, the translators attempt to prove that domestication could be a proper strategy when translating scenic spot introduction discourse.

Key words: Translation norms; Scenic spot introductions; Cultural self-confidence; New era

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1. BACKGROUND INTRODUCTION -- CULTURAL CONFIDENCE IN THE NEW ERA AND TRANSLATOR’S MISSION

Chinese President Xi Jinping stated that “firm confidence in the path, theory, and system of Chinese socialism requires strengthening cultural self-confidence above all else,” and emphasized that “without full confidence in our culture, without a rich and prosperous culture, the Chinese nation will not be able to rejuvenate itself.” The proposal

of cultural self-confidence is a new proposition in Marxist theory; it is a fundamentally important issue in developing Chinese socialism which has written a new chapter in Marxist cultural thought (cf. Xu, 2018).

President Xi also underscored that the quality of cultural, literary and art works have constantly improved, and the development of philosophy and social sciences with Chinese characteristics has accelerated with remarkable achievements made. “A country, or a nation, cannot be devoid of soul” (Xi, 2019). Xi required philosophy and social sciences workers to conduct MORE field surveys and research to enhance cultural confidence. Xi also called for strengthened dissemination of historical research findings through an in-depth study of history. President Xi also urged further efforts to guide the people, especially young people, to better understand the origin and development history of Chinese civilization, and conduct international exchanges to let the rest of the world know MORE about Chinese civilization, history and national spirit. Thus it is every Chinese translator’s mission to hold high the GREAT banner of Xi Jinping Thought and enhance our cultural self-confidence through translation activities.

2. TRANSLATION NORMS AND THE CURRENT STUDY

Bilingual Chinese/English public signs are used extensively in scenic attractions of Greater China region in order to transmit information to speakers whose mother tongue is either Chinese or English (cf. Lü, 2005; Ko, 2010; Guo, 2012; Li et al, 2015). Hence scenic spot introductions are quite unique genre of public sign discourse. In translation process, translators often have to make a compromise between ST (source text) and TT (target text) by considering linguistic, cultural and stylistic differences/ constraints (cf. Bartsch, 1987; Toury, 1995; Hermans, 1999), which could be regarded as a set of norms

in translating process. Norms are believed to specify what is tolerated and allowed in a certain behavioral dimension, ensure the retention of social order and are acquired by each person during his or her socialization.

The current research focuses on linguistic norms (which are quite applicable) constraining translators' decision-making during translating process. The current research attempts to make a survey of the English introduction passages extracted from "The Most Beautiful Places in America's State and National Parks" (<https://www.theactivetimes.com/travel/state-national-parks-america-most-beautiful-places>) (Miller, 2020) by analyzing their stylistic features, especially typical formula sequences (namely, preliminary norms, initial norms and operational norms (cf. Toury, 1995) and provide an applicable set of linguistic norms (syntactic patterns, collocations and choice of words) for Chinese-English translation of scenic spots' introduction texts.

3. TRAINING DATA COLLECTION

The current study selects "The Most Beautiful Places in America's State and National Parks" (Miller 2020) as the English norm discourse for reference. As Miller (ibid) writes at the very beginning of the series of park introductions, "across all 50 states, there are many gorgeous national and state parks as well as national forests and tribal parks. But these 101 stunning landmarks within them are truly the best of the best and deserve a spot on your American bucket list." After processing the raw material with the software WordSmith 8.0, the current research extracts 17 typical constructions/collocations (as shown in Table 1) and 21 frequently used words (as shown in Table 2) from the 37000-word introduction, which might bring some linguistic norms for Chinese-English translation of scenic spot introduction texts.

Table 1
17 Typical Constructions & Collocations in Scenic Spot Introductions

Constructions & Collocations	Frequency
Most + adj	82
Be home to	38
Be + located	27
Making it	15
Known as	10
Hiking trails	6
Be famous for	5
Scenic spot	5
X-acres of	4
Beautiful spot	4
Above sea level	4
Which is	3
Make it	3
Springtime destination	2
Make up	2
Sound like	1

Table 2
21 Frequently Used Words in Scenic Spot Introductions

Words	Frequency
Visitors	37
Best	29
Hiking	25
Amazing	24
Highest	23
Tallest	18
Trails	17
Great	14
Stunning	13
Spectacular	12
Breathtaking	10
Unique	9
Secluded	6
Recreation	4
Wilderness	4
Must-see	3
Must-visit	2
Clearest	2
Classic	2
Bizarre	2
Overlooking	2

4. FEATURES OF LINGUISTIC NORMS

By classifying and analyzing syntactic patterns, collocations and lexical items presented in table 1 & 2, we might make a brief summary of the characteristics of linguistic norms of scenic spot introduction texts. 1) Subjectivity and superlative: 82 "most+adjective" patterns are found in the text, featuring subjectivity as well as exaggeration. Similar items are "best", "highest", and "tallest". 2) Sensation: sensory adjectives or patterns such as "breathtaking", "secluded", and "sound like" are frequently found in the scenic site introduction texts, creating some kind of sensational effect. 3) Brevity: the brief and concise constructions and patterns such as "be home to", "be located", and "known as" are often applied in such kind of genre, which underscores highlights and saves readers' mental processing effort. 4) Imperative: we also find compound nouns such as "must-visit" and "must-see" implicating some sort of imperative meaning. Potential tourists and visitors might get the corresponding psychological hints that those spots should not be missed.

5. CASE ANALYSIS

Back in the fall of 2019, we were asked to offer an English translation of the introduction text of *yu huang ding gong yuan* (Yu Hwang Ting Park) in the City of Yantai,

Shandong Province. We analyzed the source text and offered an English version by adopting free translation. The proofreading work was completed by Liles Damien Xavier from Baltimore, Maryland, and Miss Leyla Fung from New York City. Just one year later, the article “The Most Beautiful Places in America’s State and National Parks” (Miller

2020) was available online. As shown in data collection and linguistic norm analysis, four prominent features make the English scenic spot introduction discourse different from its Chinese counterparts or even translated versions. Therefore, we re-translated the text and provided the second version, which is more close to its English counterpart. Thus the ST, TT1 and TT2 are displayed in the following table.

Table 3
Contrast of ST (2019), TT1 (2019) & TT2 (2021)

ST (2019)	TT1 (2019)	TT2 (2021)
毓璜顶公园简介	A brief introduction to Yu Hwang Ting Park	Yu Hwang Ting Park
毓璜顶，原称玉皇顶，又名小蓬莱，因有元末始建的玉皇庙而得名。海拔72米，占地8.9万平方米。古时为烟台百姓进行神事活动的重要场所，每年初九庙会习俗，沿袭至今不衰。1982年被辟为公园，是烟台市区主要风景名胜之一。园内松柏掩映，殿阁俨然，徜徉其间，景象万千，有临蓬莱仙境之感，让人流连忘返。经过2002-2003年对古庙建筑和配套设施建设，使毓璜顶公园面貌一新，现正以一流的游览环境，一流的休憩设施，一流的景点服务，迎接八方游客的到来。	Yu Hwang Ting was originally known as Jade Emperor Peak with a nickname of Hsiao Peng Lai (literally “small fairyland”). Its etymology came from the Jade Emperor Temple constructed in the end of Yuan Dynasty. The park covers an area of approximately 22 acres with an altitude of 72 meters. Towering over the downtown of Chefoo, secluded Taoist Temple in ancient times. The Chinese New Year temple fair has also been held here until now. As a famous scenic spot in downtown area, the temple compound was transformed into a park in 1982. With a vast land of verdant pine trees and classic pavilions, visitors can enjoy the impressive landscape and scenes reminiscent of a fairyland tour. The ancient temple was renovated and upgraded with modern facilities from 2002 to 2003. Therefore, the brand-new park provides an excellent environment, premium leisure facilities, as well as excellent services for tourists.	Originally known as Jade Emperor Peak, Yu Hwang Ting has been nicknamed Hsiao Peng Lai (literally “small fairyland”). Its etymology comes from the Jade Emperor Temple constructed at the end of Yuan Dynasty. The 22-acre peak sits 236 feet above sea level. Overlooking the downtown of Chefoo, it was once a secluded Taoist Temple in ancient times. The Chinese New Year temple fair has also been held here until modern times. As a unique scenic spot in downtown area, the temple compound was transformed into a park in 1982. With an amazing land of verdant pine trees and classic pavilions, you can absolutely enjoy the breathtaking landscape and scenes reminiscent of a fairyland tour. From 2002 to 2003, the ancient temple was renovated and upgraded with modern facilities. Therefore, the park now provides absolutely stunning views of the surrounding landscape, premium leisure facilities as well as great recreation experience for visitors.

CONCLUSION

There are several considerations when we conducted the re-translation work. 1) Spelling: as for the spelling of Chinese names, we follow the Wade-Giles romanization system in order to keep consistency (e.g., Yu, Hsiao, and Chefoo, p.2) Brevity: we follow suit of the English linguistic norms and try to make the translated version brief and concise by adopting the constructions extracted from training data (e.g. “known as”, “X-acre”, “above sea level” and “overlooking”. Therefore, some measurement transformations (square meters vs. acre) are also quite necessary. Besides the title was also simplified into “Yu Hwang Ting Park” 3) Sensation and imperative: lexical items and patterns such as “secluded”, “unique”, “amazing”, “stunning” and “you can absolutely enjoy the breathtaking landscape and scenes reminiscent of a fairyland tour” are also transplanted into the second English version. We even replace the word “tourists” with “visitors” due to the high frequency of the word “visitors” in Miller’s (2020) introduction. By re-translating the source text, we hold the idea that localization is an organic part of globalization. Domestication strategy could facilitate foreign visitors mental processing of the translated version which features English linguistic norms extracted from similar discourses.

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APPENDIX 1

The MOST Beautiful Places in America's State and National Parks (Excerpts) (Miller 2020)

Antelope Canyon, Lake Powell Navajo Tribal Park (Arizona)

One of America's MOST striking natural wonders is Antelope Canyon, WHICH IS part of the Navajo Nation's Tribal Park in Arizona. This slot canyon's undulating rock formations and otherworldly light beams streaming down MAKE IT a MUST-VISIT American destination.

Ash Cave, Hocking Hills State Park (Ohio)

One of the MOST romantic adventures in the U.S. is Ash Cave in Hocking Hills State Park. The open-faced sandstone cave in Ohio is 100 feet deep and 700 feet wide with a waterfall that plummets over its rim.

Assateague Island, Assateague State Park (Maryland)

Maryland's only oceanfront park is LOCATED on Assateague Island, a barrier island in the Atlantic with calm, SECLUDED beaches for lounging and surfing as well as proximity to rugged nature. Though it's a beach town you may not have heard of, the island is perhaps MOST FAMOUS FOR its wild horses, which wander through the park's campsites and beaches.

Badwater Basin, Death Valley National Park (California)

When MOST people think of Death Valley, it's actually Badwater Basin, the lowest point in North America, that they're envisioning. An out-of-this-world landscape, Badwater Basin is a salt flat left behind by evaporated salt water, and it's a MUST-SEE when visiting Death Valley.

Bahia Honda Rail Bridge, Bahia Honda State Park (Florida)

Bahia Honda State Park is HOME TO some of the BEST beaches for swimming, with palm trees, clear waters and sugar sand. There's also a lot to see above the water at the Bahia Honda Rail Bridge, a former rail bridge and highway that's open to pedestrians to fish or take in the view from one of the HIGHEST points in the Florida Keys.

Beach, Cape Henlopen State Park (Delaware)

The beach in Cape Henlopen State Park is a paragon of Delaware's coastal beauty. LOCATED north of Rehoboth Beach and across the water from Cape May, the beach has a charming lighthouse and AMAZING views of the Atlantic Ocean.

Blackwater Falls, Blackwater Falls State Park (West Virginia)

There are some BREATHTAKING waterfalls around the world, and while the water of Blackwater Falls is MORE brown than black, that doesn't MAKE IT any less of an impressive sight. The MORE than 50-foot falls, which are colored by the acid from tree needles and hemlock sprigs that fall in the water, can be seen from several viewing platforms and are one of the MOST photographed natural sights in West Virginia.

The Big Room, Carlsbad Caverns National Park (New Mexico)

Also KNOWN AS the Hall of Giants, the Big Room is the largest chamber of the Carlsbad Caverns cave system in New Mexico. It is longer than six football fields with 250-foot-high ceilings. Entertainer Will Rogers once described it as "the Grand Canyon with a roof over it."

Brandywine Falls, Cuyahoga Valley National Park (Ohio)

The only national park in Ohio, Cuyahoga Valley National Park hosts one of the Buckeye State's MOST BEAUTIFUL SPOTS: Brandywine Falls. The 60-foot-tall waterfall can be seen from an observation boardwalk along the gorge, MAKING IT a GREAT spot for hikers and couples.

Bumpass Hell, Lassen Volcanic National Park (California)

It might not SOUND LIKE a BEAUTIFUL SPOT, but Bumpass Hell in California's Lassen Volcanic National Park draws intrepid explorers to this less-visited national park. This geothermal area around the active volcano Lassen Peak has MESMERIZING hot springs, fumaroles and boiling mud pots due to the volcanic heat beneath the surface. This is only one of many places you might not know that have an active volcano.

Cannon Beach, Ecola State Park (Oregon)

Cannon Beach and its iconic Haystack Rock have been featured in many Hollywood films set in the Pacific Northwest. The beach itself is part of Ecola State Park, whose cool climate, SECLUDED coves, TRAILS and abandoned lighthouse MAKE IT an Oregon gem.

Castle ruins, Ha Ha Tonka State Park (Missouri)

MORE than 3,000 acres and 17 miles of winding TRAILS around Missouri's Lake of the Ozarks MAKE UP Ha Ha Tonka State Park. But another part of what makes this park special is the large mansion nestled within it, or rather, the remains of a 1905 EUROPEAN-STYLE stone castle.