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Translation Strategies for Red Tourism Texts from the Perspective of Translation Variation Theory—A Case Study of Huangshan City

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Abstract

In recent years, Huangshan City has been striving to stand as an eco-friendly, international, and world-class tourism destination. However, the publicity of its red tourism resources is severely wanting, which is rather disproportionate to the relatively mature publicity status of its natural, historical, and cultural landscapes. Taking the six national pilot villages for red tourism in the city as the research objects, this paper dives into the English translation strategies for red tourism texts in Huangshan City under the guidance of the translation variation theory. The paper aims to provide theoretical guidance and practical references for the publicity translation of red tourism in Huangshan City, enhance the international dissemination effect of its red culture, and push forward the development of its red tourism abroad. This research hopes to contribute to the broader efforts of integrating red tourism into the city's overall tourism development strategy, thus fostering a more balanced and comprehensive tourism industry that highlights all facets of Huangshan's unique cultural and historical identity.

Keywords

Red tourism; Publicity translation; Translation variation theory; Huangshan City

1. Introduction

Endowed with a diverse array of tourism resources in terms of natural landscapes, historical and cultural sites, and red tourism resources, Huangshan City has been seeking to emerge as an eco-friendly, international, and world-class tourism destination over recent years, drawing an increasing number of tourists both at home and abroad.

In 2021, the Organization Department of the CPC (Communist Party of China) Central Committee and the Ministry of Finance initiated a pilot project to revitalize red villages and develop beautiful red villages, aiming to help these villages explore their red resources. Six villages in Huangshan City, renowned for their rich revolutionary history, were included in this pilot project. These villages were Zhongdun Village in Tanjiaqiao Town, Huangshan District; Tianli Village in Wangcun Town, Xiuning County; Shigang Village in Yansi Town, Huizhou District; Kecun Village in Kecun Town, Yixian County; Yanyuan Village in Shangfeng Township, She County; and Yongsheng Village in Qihong Township, Qimen County.

These pilot villages feature prominently in Huangshan City's red tourism. They not only embody the revolutionary spirit but serve as a vivid miniature of the city's red historical resources, playing a leading role in the development of red tourism sites across the Anhui province and beyond. The spirit of perseverance, bravery, and selfless dedication manifested in these red villages makes them a promising destination for carrying forward red culture in the new era.

However, compared with the mature publicity of natural, historical, and cultural landscapes, these villages have serious deficiencies in English publicity materials. This gap hampers the dissemination of Huangshan's red culture, limits its international influence, and has an adverse impact on attracting international tourists to gain insights into the unique charm and profound essence of Chinese red culture.

Given this, this paper takes the six villages as research objects and dives into their translation practices and strategies with the guidance of the translation variation theory. The theory sets great store by the needs of specific readers under specific conditions. Adopting this theory ensures the translation aligns with the target readers' cognition and cultural background, enhancing readability and acceptance. It helps translators handle culture-loaded words, avoiding Chinglish and making red culture more accessible to international tourists. Additionally, it paves the way for translators to leverage tactics such as addition, deletion, narration, editing, condensing, altering, and combination to make the translation clear, concise, and suitable for different cultural contexts.

This paper applies translation variation theory to explore effective strategies for translating Huangshan City's red and beautiful villages into English, with the goal of boosting the international dissemination of the city's red culture and promoting its red tourism globally. The study offers practical guidance and references for publicity translation, highlighting the grandeur of China's revolutionary history and the unique charm of red culture.

2. Features of Red Tourism Texts and Translation Principles

The greatest charm of red tourism lies in its integration of green natural landscapes with red cultural ones, and the combination of tourism development with revolutionary traditional education and red cultural influence (Gao, 2019). Red tourism culture serves as a carrier of the historical memory and cultural value of China and has a deep national foundation (Wu & Wang, 2024). In red tourism, red represents the core content, tourism is the form of presentation, and culture is its soul. Red tourism texts, including brochures, tour guide words, and slogans, aim to attract international tourists, pique their interest, and publicize China's red culture, tourist attractions, and local customs. Effective translation enhances understanding of Chinese culture, spreads red culture globally, and tells compelling Chinese stories. Thus, emphasizing the text's informational function is crucial in translating red tourism texts.

These texts are unique, covering multiple aspects such as politics, history, and culture. They mainly depict the revolutionary history and figures from the establishment of the CPC to the founding of the People's Republic of China and have the following four features.

The language is objective and diverse, often using rhetorical devices such as exaggeration, personification, and parallelism. The text emphasizes a serious and accurate writing style to enhance the objectivity of red culture. In this context, the translation should be concise and clear to convey emotions and meanings effectively.

The text has profound political meaning, as evidenced by abundant political vocabulary and content. As a medium for disseminating the spirit of the CPC, red tourism texts strive for accuracy, which is crucial for promoting red culture. Consequently, the English translation needs to accurately convey the original text's information to tourists.

There are many culture-loaded words. Red tourism texts feature a long time span and include extensive historical, biographical, and geographical information. Accurate understanding and translation of these cultural concepts are essential. For highly condensed culture-loaded words, it is advisable to add information to ensure the source text's meaning is fully conveyed.

The text is narrative, often depicting historical events in chronological order with frequent perspective shifts and large amounts of information. Thus, it is crucial to determine the perspective when translating and attach significance to additions and deletions to ensure that the text is meaningful and readable.

The above features of red tourism texts highly align with the translation variation theory. By means of the theory, translators can exert their creativity to produce sound translations tailored to readers, thus promoting cultural exchange and dissemination.

3. Translation Variation Theory

As a domestic theory, the translation variation theory was put forward by Huang Zhonglian in the 1990s. In his book *Translation Variation Theory*, he stated, "Translation variation refers to the translation activity where translators, according to the special needs of readers, employ flexible means such as addition, deletion, narration, editing, condensing, altering, and combination to capture the core content of the original work (2001)." The "variation" means a macro change, a conscious effort by translators to "change the content, form, and even style of the original work

according to the special needs of readers under specific conditions" (Huang, 2002). Additionally, Huang and Li (2014) further elaborated, "Compared to full translation, the core of translation variation lies in capturing the essence in variation and facilitates communication, thus achieving the purpose of cultural exchange." It is crystal clear that the core of the theory is "variation," that is, "adaptation," which requires translators to adjust according to the specific text and produce sound translations tailored to the audience's needs.

Since its inception over 20 years ago, the theory has gone through four stages: the budding period (1990-2000), during which Huang first proposed the concept, mainly focusing on exploring translation activities and discovering relevant patterns, conducting preliminary research on translation variation phenomena, and laying the foundation for its subsequent development; the construction period (2001-2008), when numerous scholars began to systematically construct the translation variation theory, clarifying its scope and research methods; the development period (2009-2017), during which the theory was widely applied in practice, with continuous research achievements enriching and perfecting the theoretical system; and the expansion period (2018-present), in which the theory continues to expand into new fields, integrating with other disciplines, showcasing broad development prospects, and providing more diversified perspectives and methods for translation practice and research.

Translation variation theory extracts general and universally meaningful insights from practice, integrating them into the real context of translation. It is distinct from full translation but complementary, not opposing. This theory expands the interpretative dimensions of translation studies, deepens the understanding of translation's nature, and develops new discourse types and expressions. Many scholars have also shared their views on this theory. Regarding the quality of translation, for instance, Ding (2013) proposed that the quality of translation variation texts should, to a certain extent, surpass that of full translation texts. Translation variation is a combination of "variation" and "translation", with a greater emphasis on the former. Liu (2019) further elaborated, "Translation variation represents the reconstruction and derivation of text meaning, achieving language and cultural integration in the form of 'creative treason'." Zhang (2024) espoused the belief that translation variation prioritizes the practicality and flexibility of translation and the reader-centered principle, aiming to make the translation more in line with the language habits and cultural background of target readers. Chang & Wang (2018) approached the perspective of tourism translation, arguing that translation variation is consciously adapted to meet the specific needs of readers, a feature that aligns with the purpose of tourism translation.

By applying translation variation theory flexibly, we can enhance understanding of the original text and achieve effective transmission. This makes the translation more accessible to a broader audience and promotes cultural exchange. For red tourism texts, the theory helps highlight the essence of red culture, using concise language to bridge cultural gaps, engage target readers, and strengthen emotional resonance.

4. Translation Strategies for Red Tourism Texts

Having analyzed the applicability of the Translation variation theory to the translation of red tourism texts, this section presents a practical case study of applying this theory to guide actual translation practice.

4.1 Addition

Addition involves supplementing the original work with extra information through three methods: interpretation, commentary, and writing (Huang, 2001). The addition is not arbitrary but adopted as an essential supplement to enhance the target readers' comprehension of the original text's cultural and contextual nuances and amplify its emotional impact.

Example 1:
(Note: the source text can be found on page 1, line 1 of the Appendix.)

To supplement background information and clarify logic, translators can flexibly use addition to enhance coherence and highlight English hypotaxis. In this case, the addition of "Thanks to" accentuates the significance of support from the higher authorities, while "attention and support" indicates a sequence of actions. Phrases such as "Taking the construction of beautiful countryside as the starting point" and "and thus" clarify the logic and render the translation more coherent.

This approach not only accurately conveys the original information but also adjusts the text to meet target readers' needs and cultural context. It showcases the flexibility and practicality of translation variation theory, making the translation more natural and easier to understand.

4.2 Deletion

Deletion means removing information unnecessary for target readers from the original work. According to translation variation theory, it is manifested as the selection of the original work (Huang, 2001). Deletion is to omit some information to avoid redundancy or adapt to the expression habits of the target language, making the translation more concise.

Example 2:
(Note: the source text can be found on page 1, line 2 of the Appendix.)

Filtering out unnecessary words, sentences, and components while preserving the spirit of the original text renders the translation more concise and clear for target readers to understand. In this example, a line selected from Li Sao of Qu Yuan a well-renowned Chinese poet, is used to exalt the spirit of revolutionaries. The translation "arduous journey of revolutionaries, as they tirelessly seek truth and wisdom" captures the core meaning and simplifies the sentence for easier comprehension. As for some terms highlighting the strong resolve of revolutionaries, they are rendered as "resolute and undaunted, ever more determined with each setback, and always ready to strive harder" rather than a cumbersome literal translation, aligning with English characteristics by removing unnecessary embellishments. Likewise, a renowned saying from Chairman Mao Zedong expresses the magnificent passion and bold spirit of revolutionaries. Its translation, "magnificent passion of revolutionaries, who are throughout their life and poised to make great strides," omits some cultural imagery words that would otherwise complicate reader comprehension. This streamlined translation has clearer logic, avoiding confusion from excessive embellishments and allowing readers to quickly grasp the key points.

There are many differences between English and Chinese, with a significant one being that Chinese often repeats for emphasis, while English values conciseness. In tourism texts, Chinese is defined by various rhetorical devices for embellishment, whereas English prioritizes practical meaning. Therefore, deletion is essential for such texts. By removing unnecessary and redundant information, the translation highlights key points and facilitates reader comprehension.

4.3 Edition

Edition refers to the process of organizing the content of the original work to make it more refined (Huang, 2001). Edition involves reorganizing and integrating the information in the original text to adapt to the expression methods and logical structure of the target language, making it easier for readers to grasp the key information.

Example 3:
(Note: the source text can be found on page 1, line 3 of the Appendix.)

For complex and abundant information, employing edition can key points, clarify logic, and help readers grasp the main ideas. In this example, the core is to highlight the geographical advantages of the Shiwukeng area and its potential for revolutionary ideological functions. In this sense, the translation adjusts the original text to enable target readers to capture critical information at a glance. Moreover, the Direct translation of the comma-heavy original would be obscure and rigid. Therefore, the translation rearranges and integrates the short sentences using phrases "for one thing," and "for another" to clarify structure and "and thus" to enhance logic, making it easier for readers to understand.

Hu and Yu (2014) noted that the entire variation translation activity is reader-focused, meeting both aesthetic and spiritual needs. Edition renders translation more faithful and culturally aligned, enhancing smoothness, readability, and emotional resonance.

4.4 Combination

Combination refers to the combination of parts in the original work that are of the same type or have a logical sequence. The related parts may be sentences, groups of sentences, paragraphs, chapters, or even books (Huang, 2001).

Example 4:
(Note: the source text can be found on page 1, line 4 of the Appendix.)

A direct translation of Chinese run-on sentences can result in disjointed and illogical sentences, making it difficult for readers to grasp the internal connections. Therefore, merging sentences to clarify the text's logic and aid

comprehension is necessary. In this example, using "be celebrated for" connects two short sentences and introduces the following features, rendering the translation smoother than translating each sentence individually. Additionally, using "making it" to connect the following sentence integrates the original three short sentences into a coherent one, which proves more concise and clear, averting repetition and verbosity.

By combining similar or overlapping meanings in the original text, the translation can avoid verbosity and align more closely with the target language's characteristics, facilitating reader understanding and enhancing the translation's dissemination effect.

4.5 Altering

Altering means making changes to the original work, translating into significant alterations to its content or form. This includes substitution (replacing the content or form of the original with content or form suitable for target readers), adaptation (rewriting the original in another genre based on its content), and transformation (revising the entire original work to meet new requirements) (Huang, 2001). Altering involves adjusting or rewriting the original text to fit the target language culture and aesthetic habits while retaining the original intent and information, thus enhancing the quality of the translation.

Example 5:
(Note: the source text can be found on page 2, line 1 of the Appendix.)

A literal translation of culture-loaded words threatens to result in an abstract text that fails to effectively convey information. Employing altering, by contrast, can address this issue and facilitate reader comprehension. For instance, the use of "through trials and tribulations" and "to be specific" enriches the background, connects the content, and makes the translation more coherent and easier to understand. The word "inseparable" is more concrete than the direct translation "integrated" and precisely defines the close connection between the Red Army and the people. Expressions such as "beacon of hope" and "unwavering faith, strict discipline, and deep love for the people" convey the qualities and spirit of the Red Army, while removing cultural barriers that direct translation might pose, making it easier for target readers to understand.

The phrase "a beacon of hope for the people" is chosen instead of being directly rendered as "build/foster a splendid image in the heart of the general public." Compared to the latter, the former is more concrete, and the "splendid image" is visualized as the beacon of hope for the people. Beyond that, the phrases are not translated literally but are modified according to English collocations. For instance, "strict discipline" is employed to combine two original phrases, making the translation more concise without losing the original meaning. Through expressions such as "kin," "own flesh and blood" and "soul-stirring," the deep bond between the Red Army and the people is vividly depicted, striking a chord with target readers.

The English translation of red tourism texts should be reader-centered, with a focus on cultural adaptability and emotional resonance. Through altering, cultural imagery words are flexibly handled, capturing the essence of the original text and making the translation more fluent and vivid through vocabulary selection and structural adjustment.

Wu (2004) argued that translators, based on the original work, use flexible methods to create variations that, while differing from the original, benefit tourism information recipients. This approach caters to readers' interests, provides convenience, and frees them from cultural conflicts.

The translation variation theory prioritizes the flexible processing of the original text predicated upon different translation purposes and cultural backgrounds to produce desirable translations. Under the guidance of this theory, the translation promises to be compatible with the cognitive habits of target readers, meeting their preferences and enhancing cultural exchange and dissemination.

5. Conclusion

The translator's goal is to make readers feel comfortable, guiding them into the state set by the original text, thus achieving successful persuasion (Zhang, 2022). In tourism translation, translation variation theory enables translators to creatively adapt texts to meet target readers' needs, thereby attracting them to Chinese culture and achieving successful persuasion. This study focuses on the English translation strategies for red tourism texts in Huangshan City. Guided by the translation variation theory, it conducts an in-depth exploration of English translation strategies of the six national pilot villages for red tourism in the city. The research results indicate that the theory provides an effective framework for translating red tourism texts. By flexibly applying this theory, translators can take into account the

cultural context, cognitive abilities, and reading preferences of the target audience, adapting the source text to enhance its accessibility for international readers.

Theoretically, this study expands the application of translation variation theory to the translation of specialized text types. It further confirms the theory's practicality and efficacy in addressing translation issues in red tourism texts, contributing to the advancement of translation studies.

Practically, this research provides practical strategies and methods for translating Huangshan City's red tourism promotional content. It aims to elevate the quality of translations, strengthen the global communication of red culture, and attract a broader international audience. High-quality translations can boost the development of Huangshan City's red tourism in international markets, facilitating cultural exchange and driving economic growth.

However, this study also has certain limitations. The research scope is confined to the six pilot villages in Huangshan City. Future research is expected to expand the scope to include more cases of red tourism text translation, enriching the research system for translation strategies in this field.

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Appendix (Source Text and Target Text)

Serial Number	Source Text	Target Text
1	近年来，汪村镇在上级重视支持下，充分发挥石屋坑村红色旅游资源优势，发扬“不畏艰险，无私奉献”的精神，着力把牢红色文化根基，以美丽乡村建设为抓手，基础设施进一步完善。以培育乡村文明为抓手，促进美丽乡村建设，实现红色文化与美丽乡村建设的同步振兴。	Thanks to the attention and support of the higher authorities over recent years, Wangcun Town has leveraged the red tourism resources of Shiwukeng Village. It has kept alive the spirit of fearlessness and selfless dedication and focused on cementing the foundation of red culture. Taking the building of beautiful countryside as the starting point, it has further improved the infrastructure. By fostering rural civilization, it has pushed forward the building of beautiful countryside and thus achieved the simultaneous revitalization of red culture and the progress of beautiful countryside.
2	在这里，我们体会到革命者路漫漫其修远兮，吾将上下而求索的艰辛。在这里，我们感受到革命者吾志所向，一往无前，愈挫愈奋，再接再厉的勇气。在这里，我们领略到革命者自信人生二百年，会当击水三千里的豪迈激情。	Here, we experience the arduous journey of revolutionaries, as they tirelessly seek truth and wisdom; we feel the courage of revolutionaries, who are resolute and undaunted, ever more determined with each setback, and always ready to strive harder; we witness the magnificent passion of revolutionaries, who are confident throughout their life and poised to make great strides.
3	他们在田里村三益桥开会，认为石屋坑一带，地处皖浙赣三省交界，山高林密，敌人力量比较薄弱，群众条件也好，容易接受革命思想，工作开展起来可以影响三个省。	The Shiwukeng area was deemed desirable at the meeting held at Sanyi Bridge in Tianli Village. For one thing, situated at the junction of Anhui, Zhejiang, and Jiangxi provinces, with its high mountains and dense forests, the area was seen as strategically advantageous due to its relatively weak enemy presence. For another, the area was marked by people who tended to embrace revolutionary ideas, and thus made it easier to launch work here, which could exert influences across the three provinces.
4	茶油是一种优质的食用油，其具有清香味、营养丰富等特点，是国内外消费者青睐的健康食品。	Tea-seed oil is a premium edible oil celebrated for its fragrant aroma and nutritional benefit, making it a favored wholesome food among customers both domestically and internationally.

5	铁骑铸军魂，军民血相融：三年革命战争，皖浙赣省委机关红军以“崇高坚定的信仰，守纪如铁的作风，严于律己的风范，亲民爱民的情怀”在群众中树立了光辉形象，在居民村民心中，省委首长是最亲的亲人，红军是自家的部队，石屋坑人民和党、和红军血乳相融，生死相依，谱写了感天动地的革命战歌。	Through trials and tribulations, the Red Army’s iron will was tempered into an unbreakable spirit and the bond between soldiers and residents grew inseparable. To be specific, during the three-year revolutionary struggle, the Red Army of the Anhui-Zhejiang-Jiangxi Provincial Committee rose as a beacon of hope for the people. Marked by their unwavering faith, strict discipline, and deep love for the people, they were more than just soldiers—they became family. To the local residents, the provincial leaders were like kin, and the Red Army was their own flesh and blood. In Shiwukeng, the bond between the people and the Red Army was as strong as steel, and their unity was unshakable. Together, they composed a soul-stirring revolutionary war song.