

学校编码: 10384

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厦 门 大 学

硕 士 学 位 论 文

**On the Translation of Informative Texts from the
Perspective of Functional Translation Theory**

从功能翻译理论视角看信息文本的翻译

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论文提交日期: 2009 年 4 月

论文答辩时间: 2009 年 月

学位授予日期: 2009 年 月

答辩委员会主席: _____

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Abstract

Translation, ever since its appearance, has helped people to better communicate with one another, and in the meantime, it has facilitated the development of culture and civilization of all nations. We are living in an epoch in which science and technology are developing rapidly. Information is playing an increasingly important part in the economic development and cultural prosperity of all nations. In this information age, informative texts are pervasive in our society. They are used in almost every field of academic study and in every aspect of our life, for instance, science and technology, culture and media, trade and economy, to name but a few. Informative texts are in fact becoming the most commonly used texts. Therefore, the importance of informative texts can never be overemphasized. No nation can develop rapidly without communicating with or learning from other nations. Translation of informative texts, as a means to bridge cultural and information gaps between nations, has been playing a very important role in promoting global economic and cultural development, and China in particular benefits a great deal from the translation of informative texts.

Producers of informative texts aim to convey information to readers and inform them of facts and discoveries about our real world. Generally speaking, the language of informative texts is characterized by conciseness, accuracy, objectiveness, practicality, briefness and concreteness. It is therefore imperative that translators of informative texts retain these characteristics when they reproduce them in the target language.

Chinese translation theorists in the last century have formulated various theories and principles of translation, for example, the principles of “faithfulness, expressiveness, and elegance” by Yan Fu, the principle of “faithfulness over smoothness” by Lu Xun and the triple principle for translation by Liu Zhongde, etc. Yet, all these traditional theories focus only on literary translation and the transference of aesthetic values rather than the conveying of information and message. None of these Chinese translation theorists have paid attention to the special characteristics of informative texts mentioned above. Therefore, it is safe to say that the study of informative text translation is far from satisfactory, and the traditional theories seem

incapable of guiding translators of informative texts in their professional engagement, which means that a new comprehensive theory is needed for guiding this type of translation.

Functional translation theory, put forward in the 1970s by several German scholars, provides a theoretical basis for unconventional translation strategies. Under the rubric of functional translation theory come such conceptualizations as the *Skopos* theory of the German School, Newmark's text typology, Katharina Reiss' early work on text typology and language function, and Nida's functional equivalence. All these theorists study translation from the perspective of the function of languages and texts. Based on functional translation theory, this author stresses the importance of informative texts and discusses useful strategies for the translation of this type of text. In addition, a large number of sample translations of different types of informative texts, e.g. instructions, technical documents, news reports, etc. have been collected as data for discussions of the features and characteristics of typical informative texts.

Finally, this thesis presents a number of methods and strategies for the translation of commonly used informative texts according to functional translation theory from a completely new perspective.

Key words: functional translation theory; informative texts; translation strategy

摘要

翻译的出现帮助不同国家民族进行交流沟通，同时促进各国文明和文化的发展和进步。我们生活在一个科学和技术高度发展的信息时代中，信息对各国的经济发展和文化繁荣正起着越来越重要的作用。在这个信息时代中，信息文本无所不在。它们被广泛应用于学术和社会的各个领域，例如，科学和技术，文化和传媒，贸易和经济等。信息文本实际上是最常用的文件，因此它的重要性绝不容忽视。如果没有借鉴和参考其他国家的经验，任何一个国家都无法迅速发展。信息文本的翻译，作为一种提供信息和消除文化鸿沟的手段，一直在全球经济和文化发展发挥着非常重要的作用，中国从信息文本的翻译中更是受益匪浅。

信息文本作者的目的是将信息准确的发送给读者，所以，信息文本的语言以简洁、准确、客观、务实、具体为特点。信息文本的译者在目标语言中也必须保留这些特点。

上世纪的翻译理论家提出了不同的翻译理论，如严复的“信，达，雅”，鲁迅的“宁信而不顺”等，然而所有这些理论都是针对文学翻译提出的，它们注重研究翻译的艺术和审美价值，而不是信息的传递。这些中国的翻译理论并没有再现信息文本的翻译特点。因此，我们可以说，信息文本的翻译研究是远远不能令人满意，传统的翻译理论不足以用来指导信息文本文件的翻译，这就意味着需要一项全新的理论来指导这种类型的翻译。

在上世纪七十年代，德国的一些学者提出了功能翻译理论，提供了非传统翻译策略的理论依据。他们主要包括德国学派目的论，纽马克的文本类型说，赖斯的早期的文本和语言类型学的研究，奈达的功能对等理论等，这些理论家都从语言和文本的功能视角来研究翻译。基于功能翻译理论，本文强调的文本类型分类和翻译方法选择的重要性，同时也选用几种典型信息文本的翻译案例，如：技术文件、新闻、法律文件、商务文本和说明书等，进一步探讨信息文本的翻译特点和技巧。

最后，本文依据功能翻译理论提出了针对几种常用信息文本的翻译方法和策略。

关键词：功能翻译理论；信息文本；翻译策略

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Introduction

Ever since we entered the information age, we have witnessed incredible changes brought about by the rapid development of information technology. The value of information can never be overemphasized. No country can prosper without the exchange of valuable information with other countries. In various kinds of cross-cultural activities, translation has been an inevitable activity, which occurs more frequently than any other type of cross-cultural activity. In this era of information, translation of informative texts plays an even more important role. It is against this background that this author conducts a number of case studies with a view to exploring the nature of, and suggesting useful strategies for, the translation of informative texts.

According to functional translation theory put forward by several German scholars, there are three types of functional texts, namely informative, appellative and expressive texts. Among these texts, the informative text is the most important one. It is argued that translators should pay more attention to different purposes and functions of different types of source-language texts and try to make their translations serve those purposes and functions in the target culture.

The main function of informative texts is to inform the reader as to what has happened and is happening in our real world. The choice of linguistic and stylistic forms is subordinate to this function (Nord, 1997:37). Textbooks, technical reports, newspapers, magazines, technical documents, theses, conference notes, and agenda, all have such an informative function. The core of the informative function of language is external situation, the facts of a topic, and reality outside language, including reported ideas or theories (Newmark, 1988: 40), which makes it very different from literary or traditional translation. Therefore, new procedures, approaches and strategies for the translation of informative texts should be explored in order to cater for this type of translation.

The author of the thesis believes that the translation of informative texts should be focused on content rather than form, and should be target-language oriented and target-culture oriented.

Today's society abounds with numerous types of informative texts which need

to be translated. But so far, few research articles have been published to explore various strategies for the translation of informative texts. Since mistranslations are often seen in translation of informative texts, traditional translation theories seem inadequate for their practical or material function. In light of functional translation theory, the author analyzes the common problems in translation of informative texts and endeavors to explore some new translation strategies and approaches for these texts.

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