

Original Paper

Research on English Translation of Tea from the Perspective of Reiss's Text Type Theory

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Abstract

Katharina Reiss's text type theory provides the principle of "content priority" for informative text translation. Guided by this theory, this study focuses on the English translation practice of tea informative texts. First of all, the author defines the tea text as a composite text dominated by informative transmission; secondly, analyzes its professional, objectivity and logical characteristics from the three aspects of vocabulary, grammar and syntax, and then puts forward strategies such as terminology standardization and division. The author verifies the effectiveness of the strategy through the "description-analysis-interpretation" of typical translation examples. Research shows that Reiss's theory has significant guiding value for the translation of intangible cultural heritage geographical indication products. The translation of this article can provide theoretical and practical reference for the translation of informative texts of similar intangible heritage geographical indication products.

Keywords

Reiss's text type theory, tea, informative text, translation strategies

1. Reiss's Text Type Theory

In 1934, Karl Bühler, a famous German functional linguist, summarized the three functions of language: expression, reproduction and expression (Bühler, 1990). In 1971, Katharina Reiss of the German functionalist school first proposed the theory of text types in the book *Translation Criticism: Potential and Constraints*, explaining text types and corresponding translation strategies. Reiss (2001) pointed out that analyzing the type of text is the main factor in determining the translator's translation strategy. According to the function of the text, the text can be divided into three types: informative type, expressive type and operative type. Among them, informative text aims to convey information and focuses on text content; while in expressive text, language has aesthetic characteristics and attaches importance to text author and text form; operational text aims to persuade and infect the recipient of information to act in a

certain way. Language form usually has conversational characteristics, and the three functions cannot be equal. The balance is reflected in each text. Some texts (or a part of the text) are mainly based on a certain function and have other functions (Reiss, 2001). Informative texts focus on the logic of content and language, present objective facts, and pay attention to the authenticity of information. News reports, patent descriptions, instructions for use and papers, etc. are all basic information-based texts (Li, 2016). Although many texts have multiple functions, they have both main and secondary. Reiss believes that the main function of the original text determines the translation method. In other words, the translation method should be different depending on the text type. (Reiss, 2001)

1.1 Core of Reiss's Text Type Theory

Translation is essentially an interlingual communicative activity, whose ultimate goal is to realize the intended function of the text in the target language context. For the first time, Reiss classified texts according to different functions, which laid the foundation for the theory of functional translation. It goes beyond the level of words and sentences, and strives to create appropriate functional effects to achieve the purpose of communication (Liu, 2009). The core view of Reiss's text type theory can be condensed as: text type determines the translation strategy, that is to say, translators should adopt different translation methods according to different text types, providing clear theoretical guidance for translation practice of different type texts (Dollerup, 2007).

1.2 Translation Strategies of Reiss's Text Type Theory

Readers often encounter texts with multiple functions. In other words, a single text may serve several functions simultaneously, a phenomenon referred to as the "composite type" by Katharina Reiss. (Li, 2008) that is, the same text may have a variety of functions including information, expression, operation, etc., but there must be a dominant function. Based on this, the core logic of its translation strategy is as follows: accurately identify the dominant function of the text, give priority to ensuring the realization of the dominant function, take into account the transmission of secondary functions, and balance the relationship between text content and form. For texts with informative transmission as the dominant function, the translators need to focus on the accuracy, integrity and readability of the information, and allow reasonable adjustment of language form to adapt to the expression habits of the target language.

2. Inspiration of Reiss's Text Type Theory for Tea Translation

As an important category of national intangible cultural heritage and national geographical indication protection products, a tea text serves as a typical composite text with informative transmission as the dominant function, whose relevant text covers a variety of types such as production technical specifications, quality inspection standards, origin certification instructions, etc. According to Reiss's text type theory, the core is "authenticity" in the "informative text" function of tea, so accurate information is the primary principle of such text in translation. However, when the informative function conflicts with the cultural communication function or operative function, this article sets the following processing priorities:

First priority (uncompromising): technical parameters, quality standards, legal provisions → absolute priority shall be given to accurate information, and no alterations shall be made for cultural or rhetorical purposes;

The second priority (can be adjusted appropriately): process flow, operation specifications → the translators focus on accurate information, taking into account the readability of English;

The third priority (flexible processing): cultural background, historical stories, tasting experience → On condition that the original information is fully preserved, translators may adopt foreignization or annotation.

Finally, the translation's goals are achieved, including accurate information, professional standardization and cultural compatibility (Reiss, 2001).

3. Linguistic Characteristics of Tea Informative Text

Tea-related texts feature professional terminology, straightforward, objective and logical language, as well as a stable stylistic form (Yuan, 2005), which are different from the emotion of literary texts and the randomness of spoken texts. Their lexical, grammar and syntactic characteristics are all around the core function of “efficiently conveying authoritative information”, thus forming an organic and unified language system.

3.1 Lexical Characteristics

Text vocabulary shows the characteristics of “professionalism and culture”, which is manifested as the following aspects: There is a high density of professional terms, mainly covering geographical indication protection, tea production techniques and quality inspection. The connotation of the term is clear and unique in the industry, such as “special mark for geographical indication products”, “fresh leaf stall green”, “internal quality review”, “fixation”, etc. The chaotic translation is easy to lead to informative deviation.

Cultural and historical word bears distinct regional features. It consists of proper terms embodying the history of traditional Chinese tea culture, such as tribute tea, Lu Yu's *The Classic of Tea* and Gong Fu tea. etc. Such words are the carriers of tea culture, with irreplaceable cultural attributes that are easy to misunderstand and lose.

3.2 Grammatical Characteristics

Grammar application in such texts follows the principles of regularity, hierarchy and objectivity. Rigorous grammatical rules ensure the accuracy and logic of informative transmission, which are reflected in the following aspects:

Tenses are used with clear references. The simple present tense is adopted to describe current technical standards and inherent product attributes, reflecting the stability and universality of information. The simple past tense is applied to record historical honors and cultural origins, so as to define the temporal attributes of information.

High-frequency use of passive voice: focus on the bearer of the action, weaken the actor, and highlight the objectivity and authority of the information.

Modal verbs are employed in a hierarchical manner. Words are equivalent to “shall”, “need” and “must” correspond to technical requirements of different degrees, forming a hierarchical system ranging from advisory and normative to mandatory provisions, which clarify the enforce ability of relevant standards.

3.3 Syntactic Characteristics

Text syntax presents three characteristics: prevalent long sentences, predominant declarative sentences and explicit logical relations. The details are as follows:

Complex long sentences account for a high proportion: through definite clauses, adverbial clauses, side-by-side structures, etc., product attributes, production requirements, process parameters and other related information are integrated into a single sentence to realize the high-density transmission of information. The sentence style is mainly declarative sentences: the whole process adopts the tone of objective statement, and there are no emotional sentences such as exclamations, so as to maintain the neutrality and seriousness of the text.

Specifications for the use of logical conjunctions: connectives indicating addition, condition, cause and effect, such as “and”, “then” and “meanwhile”, clearly define the logical relations between contents and ensure rigorous internal logic of the texts.

Noun phrases dominate the expression: construct noun phrases with the core concept as the main body (such as “producing area environmental quality, plucking standards for fresh tea leaves and specifications for tea storage conditions”), rendering the language expression is concise and professional, and adapts to the communication needs of information-intensive texts.

4. Translation Strategies for Tea Informative Text

Combining the core views of Reiss’s text type theory and the linguistic characteristics of tea informative text, the author focuses on with the goal of “precise transmission of information, professional standard expression, clear and readable logic”, putting forward targeted translation strategies from the three levels of vocabulary, grammar and syntax.

4.1 Lexical Translation Strategies

Core goal: to achieve accurate correspondence between the connotation and denotation of vocabulary, the translators take into account professionalism and culture, and fit the vocabulary usage habits of English informative texts.

4.1.1 Terminology Standardization Strategy

Term translation: Terms are more accurate than ordinary words. The user of terms must comply with the discipline or industry norms (Meng, 2011) to ensure the uniformity and authority of term translation.

Example 1:

Original text: 地理标志产品专用标志

Translation: Special Mark for Geographical Indication Products

Analysis: “地理标志”, translated as Geographical Indication, is a legal term in Article 22 of the WTO Agreement on Trade-Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights (TRIPS Agreement). “专用标志”, translated as Special Mark, which is connected by the preposition for to form a Special Mark for X structure to avoid noun stacking. The author chooses Mark instead of Logo or Label on the ground that the authentication logo in the EU geographical indication database uses mark uniformly, and the Logo mostly points to the enterprise’s commercial graphic logo. The author chooses Special instead of Exclusive, because “专用” here means “exclusively for geographical indication products”, not “exclusive monopoly” in law. According to the parallel text, the English translation of the “Regulations on the Protection of Geographical Indication Products” of the State Intellectual Property Office of China and the Geographical Indication Guide of the U.S. Patent and Trademark Office both use special mark. The author achieves terminology accuracy, style adaptation and functional equivalence by this translation method

Example 2:

Original text: 杀青

Translation: Fixation

Analysis: “Fixation” is the core procedure in the primary processing of green tea. The international standard of ISO 20715:2023 “Tea Classification” clearly takes Fixation as the standard English translation of the process. At the same time, the standard also stipulates the secondary process terminology: 炒青 equivalently stir-fixation or pan-fixation, 蒸青 equivalently steam-fixation, 烘青 equivalently hot air fixation. The above terms constitute a unified system of craft vocabulary. The literal translation of “Killing the green” only retains the literal form and loses the essence of the process. Fixation can accurately transmit the process information of “high-temperature passivation enzyme activity and fixed quality”, which is in line with the principle of “content priority” of informative text.

4.1.2 “Transliteration on Plus Annotation” Strategy for Cultural and Historical Vocabulary

Strategic connotation: The translation method of “transliteration on plus concise annotation to supplement core information” is adopted for the proprietary words that carry regional tea culture to balance cultural uniqueness and audience readability, and avoid the loss of cultural connotation.

Example 1:

Original text: 功夫茶

Translation: Gongfu Tea (a traditional Chinese tea ceremony emphasizing elaborate brewing techniques and tea appreciation)

Analysis: Gongfu tea is a highly representative tea-drinking form in Chinese tea culture. Its core connotation includes fine brewing skills, tea set use and tasting etiquette. There is no directly corresponding English vocabulary. The transliteration of “Gongfu Tea” retains the exclusive name of the culture, realizes the transmission of cultural functions, annotates to supplement the core connotation, and ensures that the informative function is not missing. This treatment not only avoids the loss of cultural identity caused by the literal translation of “Skilled tea”, but also prevents the obscurity of information

brought about by pure transliteration. It is an ideal balancing strategy for information-dominated composite texts under the framework of Reiss.

Example 2:

Original text: 对已受冻的茶树，每年采取不同方法处理，受冻严重的进行深修剪或台刈。

Translation: The frozen tea trees are treated in a different way each year. The severely frozen ones are deeply pruned or Taiyi (a severe pruning method for tea shrubs to rejuvenate the plant from near the ground level).

Analysis: “Taiyi” is a proprietary process term for tea cultivation, and there is no corresponding translation in English. The transliteration of “Taiyi” is used to preserve the exclusive attributes of the process, and the annotation is clear about the core operation of “cutting the trunk and reshaping the tree crown”, taking into account the accuracy of information and cultural recognition, and meeting the requirements of “content priority” of informative text. This treatment effectively solves the difficulties of English translation of culturally loaded craft terms.

4.2 Grammar Translation Strategies

Core goal: adapt to English grammar expression habits, ensure the logical consistency of information at the grammatical level, and avoid informative misreading caused by grammatical differences.

4.2.1 Accurate Tense Correspondence Strategy

Connotation of the strategy: Informative attributes shall be strictly differentiated. The simple present tense applies to prevailing standards and inherent characteristics, while the simple past tense is adopted for historical incidents, guaranteeing perfect matching between tenses and informative implications

Example 1:

Original text: 白茶的特点是没有破碎的茶叶，茶叶外表呈白色毫，茶汤飘逸清亮，口感清淡甘醇，

Translation: White tea, with unbroken leaves and silvery tips on the surface, features clear and elegant tea liquor as well as a mellow and sweet taste.

Analysis: This sentence describes the inherent quality characteristics of white tea determined by its varietal traits and processing techniques. As it presents timeless objective facts, the simple present tense “features” is adopted in the translation. The author can clearly define the informative attributes and informs the audience that these characteristics are the common and current standards of white tea. If the past tense “featured” is misused, it will cause the time function to be misaligned, causing readers to misunderstand that the features have been invalidated, which violates the functional requirements of “authenticity and stability” of informative text.

Example 2:

Original text: 在冲泡后注意茶叶形状，就可以观察出茶叶是细嫩采、适中采，还是粗老采了。

Translation: If you pay attention to the shapes of tea leaves after they unfurled in hot water, you may observe whether they were picked as tender leaves, moderately tender leaves or thick and old leaves.

Analysis: This sentence involves a sequential logical relationship between actions: the plucking took place in the past, while the judgment is made in the present. In informative text, clear time logic is an

important condition for ensuring the accuracy of information. The author uses the general past tense were picked to strictly distinguish the action timing, so that the informative chain time is clear and the logic is rigorous, which meets Reiss's requirements for "objectivity, clarity and unambiguity" of informative text. Tense selection is not a grammatical habit, but serves the informative function to avoid professional misreading due to time blur.

4.2.2 Flexible Adaptation Strategy for Passive Voice

Strategic connotation: fit the expression habits of English informative text, flexibly convert the tone of voice, focus on core informative carriers such as "products, processes, standards", and highlight the objectivity and authority of information.

Example 1:

Original text: 产自太姥文化区的福建"马玉记白茶"在巴拿马万博览会中荣获金奖。

Translation: MaYuck kee white tea from Fujian, produced in the Taimu Mountain cultural area, was awarded a gold medal at the Panama-Pacific International Exposition.

Analysis: The original text is a factual statement, presented in active voice, but the English is converted to passive voice in order to fit the expression practice of English technology, standards and official texts: focus on products and events, hide people as the main body, and use the passive voice "was awarded" and implicitly passive "produce D in...", to improve the objectivity and authority of the text. Highlight the objective results of "white tea award" and the core relationship, which is in line with the expression habits of informative text focusing on the core facts.

Example 2:

Original text: 绿茶在制作时需要把鲜叶放在铁锅中连续翻炒杀青, 达到提香、定型、保绿的效果。

Translation: In the production of green tea, fresh leaves are continuously stir-fried in an iron wok for fixation, thereby enhancing aroma, shaping the leaves, and preserving their green color.

Analysis: The original text implies the operator's operation, and the core is to convey the information of the process combination of "fresh leaves" and "Fixation". The author uses the passive voice "are continuously stir-fried" to hide the tea maker, focusing on the change of the state of fresh leaves and the transformation of the process, making the process description more neutral and professional. If you keep the active voice "We stir-fry...", it will bring in a subjective perspective and weaken the authority and objectivity of the text.

4.2.3 Authoritative Matching Strategy for Modal Verbs

Strategic connotation: According to the constrain of the original modal verbs, accurately match the English modal verbs, and restore the "suggestion-normative-compulsory" hierarchical differences of technical requirements.

Example 1:

Original text: 绿茶的种植, 应选择酸性、疏松肥沃的土壤。

Translation: The planting of green tea shall be carried out in acidic, loose and fertile soil.

Analysis: “should” in the original text indicates normative technical requirements, that is, recommended but not mandatory planting conditions, so it matches the English modal verb “shall”. In official technical documents in English, “shall” is often used to express normative requirements, which is different from the mandatory nature of “must” and the suggestive nature of “should”. The author accurately restores the intensity of the tone of the original text and allows the audience to clarify the implementation level of the requirements.

Example 2:

Original text: 当茶叶中水分含量在 3%左右时, 可有效地延缓脂质的氧化变质。而茶叶中的水分含量超过 6%时, 陈化速度极具加速。

Translation: About 3% of the water content in the tea leaves can effectively delay their lipid oxidation while over 6% water content will sharply increase the aging speed.

Analysis: The original text expresses the objective law of moisture affecting the aging of tea, which is an informative text. The author uses “can” to emphasize that the water content of 3% has the objective effect of delaying oxidation, and uses “will” to highlight the inevitable effect of aging acceleration when it exceeds 6%. The two are combined to accurately distinguish the attributes of conditions, which is in line with the expression logic of informative text. This precise matching ensures the science and stability of information.

4.3 Syntactic Translation Strategies

Core goal: Optimize the sentence structure, adapt to the expression logic of English “core informative preposition, clear logic”, and improve the readability and informative transmission efficiency of the translation.

4.3.1 Division Translation Strategy

Strategic connotation: Divide complex long Chinese sentences containing multiple informative points into short English sentences focusing on a single core information to avoid comprehension barriers caused by sentence bloat, while retaining the logical relationship between information.

Example 1:

Original text: 普洱茶文化博大精深, 意蕴悠长, 与我们的生活融为一体, 具有善化人心、美化生活、雅化环境的辅助功能, 是中华民族优秀传统文化的一个组成部分。

Translation: As an indispensable part of the traditional culture of Chinese nation, Pu-erh tea culture boasts A long history and profound cultural heritage. It is integrated into every aspect of people’s life and can help people purify their minds and embrace a more elegant and beautiful life.

Analysis: Chinese emphasizes meaning and English emphasizes on form. If it is literally translated into a long English sentence, it will lead to bloated sentence structure and confusion of logical relationships, which will increase the difficulty of the audience’s understanding. The translation is divided into two short sentences. The first sentence focuses on “cultural status and historical background”, and the second sentence focuses on “life integration and spiritual function”. The logical level is clear, which is in line

with the expression habit of “short sentences conveying single information” in English, so that the audience can quickly capture the core content and improve the efficiency of informative transmission.

Example 2:

Original text: 一些多酚类化合物因发生氧化、聚合作用而含量减少, 结果茶叶的收敛性减弱, 滋味变淡而出现陈味, 同时干茶色泽由鲜变枯, 汤色、叶底也由亮变暗

Translation: Some polyphenols are oxidized and polymerized so they are little in content. As a result, the astringency of the tea is dwindled and the tea tastes dilute and stale. At the same time, the color of the dried tea changes from fresh to withered, and the color of the liquor and the infused tea dregs from bright to dark.

Analysis: The original text contains three related informative points: “changes in chemical composition, changes in sensory quality, and evolution of color and appearance”. The translation converts implicit cause and effect into explicit logic through broken sentences and logical conjunctions (leading to/as a result), so that the informative chain is clear and distinguishable, and avoids semantic ambiguity caused by too long sentence patterns. Among them, “astringency” is a standard term for the tea industry to express “convergence”, which ensures the accurate transmission of professional information.

4.3.2 Word Order Adjustment Strategy

Strategic connotation: Follow the expression logic of “core informative prefix” in English, adjust the order of sentence components, put the core subject and predicate in front, and adverb or definite words in the back, so that the audience can quickly capture the core information.

Example 1:

Original text: 云贵、广东和福建人, 为保健即治病, 多选用半发酵的高级包种茶、武夷岩茶或普洱茶等。

Translation: To cure diseases, people in Yunnan, Guangzhou and Fujian choose semi-fermented Pouzhong tea, Wuyi rock tea or Pu'er and so on.

Analysis: The core message of the original text is that “Yungui, Guangdong and Fujian people often choose... tea”, and the purpose adverb “for health care is to cure the disease”. The author retains this word order structure, prefixing the object adverb “To cure diseases” and the core subject “people in Yunnan...” Postposition with the predicate “choose” is in line with the expression habit of “adverb prefix and core informative postposition” in English, so that the audience can quickly clarify the core point of the sentence and avoid the delay in understanding caused by improper word order.

Example 2:

Original text: 与人们对其他美好饮食的记忆不同, 普洱茶的”心理仓储”, 空间幽深、曲巷繁密、风味精微。

Translation: Pu-erh tea’s “mind store”, which is different from memories of other delicious delicacy, has deep and serene space, dense and winding alley, subtle and delicate taste.

Analysis: The author uses the word order method to break the Chinese sentence pattern of “adverb preposition and subject sentence post”, and puts the core subject Pu-erh tea’s “mind store” at the

beginning of the sentence, so that readers can quickly identify the subject of the description and grasp the core information. In the future, the comparative information is supplemented with the subsequent of the which definite clause, which not only fits the expression logic of “core first” in English, but also avoids the heavy head and light foot of the sentence.

4.3.3 Addition Logical Conjunctions

Hu Zhuanglin pointed out that the connection shows the semantics between sentences through conjunctions, allowing logical inferences to the meaning of subsequent sentences. As a means of grammatical connection, the connection relies on transitional words or phrases to clarify the logical connection, makes the implicit logical relationship explicit, and strengthens the logical rigor of the text.

Example 1:

Original text: 茶叶的杀青温度过高, 会导致茶叶焦边; 温度过低, 会导致茶叶红梗。

Translation: If the fixation temperature of tea is too high, it will cause the tea leaves to be scorched at the edges; if the temperature is too low, it will cause the tea stems to turn red.

Analysis: The original text connects two clauses by semicolons, which implies the logical relationship of “hypothesis-result”. Chinese readers can judge by themselves through semantics. But English, as a “morphological” language, needs clear logical conjunctions. The author adds two “if” to make the implicit hypothesis logic explicit, so that the sentence structure is clear and rigorous, which is in line with the logical expression habits of English informative text, and avoids the misjudgment of logical relationships by overseas audiences.

Example 2:

Original text: 把盘: 经筛、摇、收, 茶样无碎杂物, 中段茶多, 身骨重者为好, 老叶茶切条均匀为宜。

Translation: Tray Assessment: Sieve, shake and collect the tea sample until free of broken debris. The sample is considered good if it contains a high proportion of middle-grade leaves and has a dense texture; for old-leaf tea, evenly cut strips are preferred.

Analysis: The original text is a Chinese flowing sentence, which relies on the semantics of “operation-judgment-special requirements” three-layer implicit logic, without conjunctions. As a morphological language, English needs explicit logical support. The author uses until to clarify the relationship between the purpose of “screening and shaking” and “no debris”, uses If to construct the relationship between the characteristics of tea samples and the conditions for quality judgment, and uses with to define the qualified form of old leaf tea, which accurately fits the English informative text expression norms, and eliminates except for the deviation of understanding.

5. Conclusion

The core view of Reiss’s text type theory that “text type determines the translation strategy” provides scientific theoretical guidelines for the translation of tea informative texts (Reiss, 2001). As a composite text with the main function of informative transmission, the professionalism of its vocabulary, the rigor

of grammar, and the logic of syntax all serve the core goal of “accurately conveying authoritative information”. For the first time, this article constructs a three-dimensional characteristic analysis model of “vocabulary-grammar-syntactic” of tea informative text; and independently analyzes each case to explain the inherent logic of strategy application. Research shows that for the translation of information-based text, it is necessary for translators to take “accurate transmission of information” as the core. The translator takes into account professionalism and culture, and achieves “informative accuracy, professional standardization and clear logic” of the translation through terminology standardization, grammar adaptation, sentence optimization and other strategies.

Future researches can further focus on the specific application scenarios of tea informative text (such as international exhibition propaganda texts and overseas e-commerce product descriptions), combine the needs of the target audience, refine the practical details of the translation strategy, and improve the accuracy and effectiveness of cross-cultural informative transmission.

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