The Translation of Tourism Websites

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Abstract: The article focuses on the main features of the tourism-related Internet texts and tries to define the criteria for their translation evaluation. The multisemiotic interactive nature of Web texts is investigated together with general characteristics of tourism discourse. The pragmatics and communicative intention of the text is found to be a cornerstone of the target text creation process. Stylistic devices and their wide usage in the source tourist Internet text are examined as well as the means of their rendering into the target language.

Keywords: Tourism-related Internet text translation, Tourism discourse, Stylistic devices, Translation quality

Introduction

Recent years rise of international tourism role together with market globalization have caused the increased demand for tourism-related translation. Tourism-related promotional and commercial information has been transferred from the print media to electronic ones and the World Wide Web means of promoting information take the leading part in the field. Tourism-related authorities realized and opportune used the new mass media resources as means of reaching the recipient. Online hotel and airline tickets booking services, destination promoting sites, local tourism board pages easily immerse and quickly spread on the Internet. Hypertext is easy to create, edit or update, it is inexpensive, spreadable, and accessible around the globe. Owing to its interactive nature it combines both mass media and interpersonal communication features – as a text it is generally addressed but allows bilateral communication via e-mail, chat or newsletters. As a result, promoted tourist product easily reaches its addressee.

Tourism development has greatly influenced the need to render into different languages the information given on local tourist sites, regional promotional webpages or international commercial tourist organisations websites (e.g. airlines, cruise companies, tour operators etc). Considering the fact that the tourist web pages can be informative, promotional, and commercial or the combinations of above mentioned one can see that their main objective is to advertise the destination, site or product resulting in reaching the customer. But the goal is beyond the addresser’s reach if the message is badly understood or, worse, not understood at all. And here a translator becomes the leading man. The different transformation approaches are used in translation which gets us to the multimedia translation techniques (Gambier, 2001), embracing both translation as a science and media, semiotics, intercultural communication, studies of tourism and other economic fields.

International tourism as an economic sector reveals great opportunities for translators. And English as a language of international and intraglobal communication has been long used as the official tourism language. Tourist texts appear on the Internet in different languages simultaneously, theoretically revealing the same information. But detailed study shows that it is not as simple as it seems. Statistical data reveal the fact that out of 150 tourism-related web pages only 34% were more or less adequately translated.

Literature Review

investigated the specialized discourse in general and the language of tourism and its translation in particular. Recent researches show that the quality of tourism-related texts translation is very poor due to the fact that translation is made into translator’s foreign language. Alan Duff (1981) assumes it to be undesirable but still unavoidable considering peculiar features of international tourism industry. The aggressive growth of Internet-based tourism product sales has resulted in multilanguage tourist websites emergence, English pages of which are very often either non-professionally or mechanically translated. And still tourism texts are mainly promotional and commercial, so the quality of their translation is the cornerstone of their success with the audience. How can the situation be improved? In the first place the Internet text or hypertext should be regarded outside the usual text features evaluation. Text coherence plays the crucial role in the process of creating and translating hypertext since the readers create the beginning and the end of their own text. Not only verbal content should be considered but verbal together with the non-verbal elements are of primary importance. Therefore much is left to be done in terms of translation theory approaches together with the web tourism texts quality translation assessment criteria creation.

**Tourism-related web pages as a text**

Tourist product promotion and sales on the Internet can be viewed as the global process for it can be accessed worldwide. But if a tourist company or authority focuses on a certain country it has to adapt its product to suit the needs and tastes of a target recipient. Here we can regard the process of translation as the localization process for it gets beyond the limits of the common translation process notion since the tourism-related electronic text translator should carefully consider the region, country and people nature simultaneously with the language itself. Considering the aforementioned we can regard the process of tourist online texts translation as conversion from the source language to the target one. And meaning and communicative intentions here prevail over the form.

Web sites translation covers the translation of all web pages including linguistic and non-linguistic elements – vocabulary, texts, hyperlinks and associated documents. Furthermore, it includes the source text adaptation, i.e. dates, distances, measures, currencies etc conversion, content modification, non-relevant data removal, explanatory notes and/ or summary addition, written style adjustment etc.

Existing tourist web sites translation adaptation process differs in translation extent (full translation, partial translation, data removal or addition etc) or communication strategies (e.g. local monolingual tourist sites network, bilingual sites with English as the basic language or multilingual sites). As far as Europe is concerned, here mostly multilingual tourist sites are used. Recent years’ traditional Translation Studies research traditional texts linguistic aspects (Newmark, 2001) concurrently with multimedia texts multisemiotic aspects (Kress, 1988). The translation of Internet text as a type of multimedia texts requires thorough theoretical basis examination. When translating Internet discourse, we have to take into consideration the existing notions of electronic text, meaning and style. Giuliana Garzone (2002) states that the Web page as a text is a multisemiotic entity of various resources: written (sometimes spoken) language, pictorial, graphic and acoustic elements. Considering the above written we can regard the tourist web text as the combination of verbal and non-verbal signs pursuing the objective of informing, convincing and luring the target recipient i.e. notifying the addressee of some tourist product existence meaning to persuade them to use it (buy tickets, book a hotel room, visit a country, see a sight etc). So, the source text author should use imperative sentences, direct or hidden orders, leading and prompting questions.

Patrizia Pierini (2007) distinguishes between discursive and linguistic features of English tourism discourse, defining discursive features as features of virtual orality, personalization,
persuasive force and transactional dimension whereas linguistic features as light style, preference for a restricted range of morpho-syntactic forms, use of figures of speech, use of evaluative and superlative adjectives and restricted technical vocabulary.

Keeping in mind general characteristics of English tourism discourse and multisemiotic nature of web pages we have to identify the general approach to the tourism-related Internet sites translation. The tourist electronic texts translation should be regarded apart from the traditional notion of texts translation. The translators should keep in mind the tourism text pragmatics together with its communicative objective; they have to follow the rules of intercultural communication, consider textual characteristics and semiotics without leaving behind the general contextual features of the web texts.

It should be mentioned that the web tourist text pragmatic and communicative meanings prevail over semantic and cultural translation requirements for the source text communicative intention should be preserved in the process of transformation into the target text. Still, the target text as an independent tourist text should meet the following criteria: it should be adequate, readable, understandable and persuasive. It should follow all the linguistic requirements (style, genre, syntactic, morphological, lexical and usage norms) and be perceived as the native, non-translated text by the target audience. The tourist text authors and translators should keep in mind as well the specific nature of the Internet target readers – they read (or rather scan) the text slower than traditional text readers, they easily switch pages and leave the complex and difficult to read texts behind while surfing the Web.

Considering the before mentioned we can give the suggested target tourist Internet text characteristics – it is adequate, readable, written under target language and Internet style requirements with attractive non-verbal content.

**Stylistic devices and means of their translation**

Dynamic and interactive nature of Internet texts causes the wide usage of stylistic devices in the process of web-based texts creation. It specially refers to the tourist texts due to their emphatic and motivating components. So, the tourist electronic texts are expressive, vivid, persuasive and laconic at the same time.

Graham M.S. Dann (1996) states that the tourism discourse is defined by the wide usage of verbal means which persuade, attract, lure and seduce a lot of people by means of using adjectives, emphatic languaging, metaphors, epithets, hyperboles and other stylistic devices, imperative mood, rhetoric questions etc.

The thorough investigation of 150 tourist Web-pages showed that epithet and direct questions take 24% of general stylistic devices usage, metaphor occupies 10%, repetition – 9%, inversion, hyperbole, ellipsis and questions take 7% each, euphemism – 4%. Gradation occupies 3%, intertextuality – 2%, rhetoric questions, simile, periphrasis, aposiopesis – 1,5% each, antithesis, metonymy and parallel constructions – 1% correspondingly.

Juliane House (1997) regards genre, style, function, topic and lingual characteristic as the main points for consideration during translation. Hence, the electronic tourism text is the matter of detailed study. In the first place, the notion of tourism discourse is rather wide and embraces different narrow specialized types of discourse (art, architecture, culinary, ecology, medicine, history etc). Besides, high dynamism and evolutionability of the electronic text create extra obstacles to the Web tourist text investigation and translation.
The genres and styles combination, wide addressness (targeted global reader) of the electronic content, cultures, values and interests diversity add even more complexity to reaching the quality of the Internet tourism discourse translation.

Let us consider a few abstracts of target tourism-related web pages. The empirical studies embrace English-Ukrainian, English-Russian, Ukrainian-English, Russian-English translated tourist web target texts and English translated tourist pages of multilingual global sites. The research techniques and translation estimation criteria are based on the above given theoretical material.

*Have these benefits convinced you? If so, please take a further look by clicking on online booking. Or perhaps you have a suggestion as to how we might improve our service? If so, just send us an E-mail – we look forward to hearing from you!*

The abstract is taken from the Austrian airlines multilingual site which can be considered as an example of full translation for it has target text in 5 languages (English, German, French, Russian and Ukrainian) and almost all the information is translated adequately and in full, though German part of the site gives more details links.

From the stylistic point of view one can notice the wide usage of questions in narration on the Internet tourism web sites. And the following example is one more prove of it:

*Why should I book online? Here are just some of the benefits at a glance.*

Ilya Galperin (1981) states that a question in a monologue is the means of attracting the reader’s or listener’s attention to the statement following the question. In other words, such sentences are the means of emphatic communication.

But vivid stylistic devices used in the source text are often lost in translation or replaced by a stylistically neutral expression. In respect of the above given examples of questions in narration the former was replaced by a more neutral complex subordinate clause whereas the latter maintained its stylistic coloring in the target text.

Unfortunately, the practice of replacing or omitting stylistically colored lexis is widely used when translating tourist texts both on the Internet and in printed matter. For instance, only 50% of the intertextual stylistic devices under study were translated in the target text, the remainder was left without translation.

The following abstracts from the national tourism board sites are the examples of adequate translation despite the fact that the translators were following the different translation techniques.

*The rocky coast and vast archipelago of the west, with its characteristic barren and dramatic cliffs, islands and islets coloured in tones of grey and pink is a paradise for boaters who arrive from all over Northern Europe during the summer season. If you’re boatless, the magnificent west coast archipelago is available by ferries from Göteborg, Strömstad and other coastal towns. You can take a day trip or embark on a longer island-hopping excursion to enjoy simple, free pleasures such as salty dips from your very own rock, fresh winds and the smell of seaweed, and crab fishing from jetties or stony beaches. All along the coastline you’ll find a large number of charming fishing villages and coastal towns with cozy hotels, inns and restaurants, where you can savour fresh north Atlantic seafood delicacies.*

The abstract is taken from the official tourism board site of Sweden. The author uses diverse stylistic devices, the major part of which is adequately rendered into the target language. Some
A special delight are the wines – from quality to top quality specialty wines, predicate wines and sparkling wines. On the coast you should try Teran, Rumeni Muškat, Malvazija and Rebula. The speciality of the Posavje Region is Cviček, a Slovene wine with a light taste and low alcohol. Vine growing hills of the Podravje Region in the east boast excellent speciality wines such as Renski Rizling, Traminec, Sauvignon, Chardonnay, Ranina and many other top quality wines. Numerous wine cellars in Slovenia offer wine tasting and the inns and restaurants you can consult experienced sommeliers.

The abstract can be found on the pages of Slovenia tourism authority. We studied its English and Russian pages considering English though translated but source text and Russian as the target one. Vast usage of stylistic devices from the source text has found its presentation in the target text. Perlocutionary force of the original text is fully revealed in translation. But the translator has virtually created the new Russian target text having rendered the meaning without maintaining the form and style of the source text. Despite the fact that the Russian translation is readable and enjoyable, it can be called neither adequate nor faithful by means of existing translation conventions. Undoubtedly, creative approach helps to add some authenticity to the translation but excessive creativity sometimes interferes with the process of translation itself.

**Conclusion**

The present research of the tourist Internet texts has shown that 34% of investigated pages are not translated, 32% are translated using less emphatic and stylistically colored lexis, 31% have their adequate and faithful target text equivalent and 3% bear signs of excessive emphatization. We should stress that we researched only sites having both English and Russian/ Ukrainian pages.

Rapid Internet progress issues new challenges, reveals new problems and creates new obstacles. Web pages translation is indeed a complex task that embraces different analysis levels forcing translators to broaden their knowledge and acquire skills beyond their professional field scope. The electronic content translation is being commonly regarded as an independent specialized translation type including the international tourism online pages translation. As we can see, adequate translation prefers full translation with pragmatic adaptation whereas partial translation or summary bring down the translation efficiency level. The study shows that the general quality of tourism-related web-pages translation is considerably low due to the fact that the translation itself is often made by non-professional translators or non-specialized professional ones. So, much is left to be done in the field of Internet text translation in general and tourist texts on the Web in particular.

**References**


