

A Study of Ceramic Terminology Translation Strategies under the Guidance of Skopos Theory

Lun Wang^{1,a,*}, Jianghui Jian^{1,b}

¹Jingdezhen Ceramic University, Jingdezhen, Jiangxi, China

^a054001@jcu.edu.cn, ^b18827143970@163.com

*Corresponding author

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Abstract: With the advancement of globalization, Chinese ceramic culture is spreading more and more widely in the world. In this context, the translation of ceramic terms plays an important role in cultural communication and international exchange. Based on the theory of Skopos translation, this paper discusses the problems of strategy selection in the translation of ceramic terminology, and through the analysis of specific translation examples, it proposes several translation strategies that conform to both the expression habits and the comprehension habits of the target language readers, so as to realize the accurate transmission, dissemination and communication of Chinese ceramic culture. In addition, by analyzing domestic and international literature, this paper summarizes the main problems in ceramic terminology translation and proposes corresponding strategies. The research findings show that the translation strategies based on Skopos Theory can effectively improve the accuracy and cultural adaptability of ceramic terminology translation, as a result, it can help disseminate Chinese ceramic culture effectively and efficiently.

1. Introduction

Since the initiative of “Silk Road Economic Belt” and “21st Century Maritime Silk Road” have been put forward, higher standards and uniformity requirements have been put forward for the English translation of terms representing the image of China, including porcelain. In order to enhance the national cultural soft power, inheritance and innovation of excellent traditional Chinese culture and dissemination has been upgraded to a national strategy, and has been actively promoted. This brings great opportunities for the ceramic industry and the revival of ceramic culture. In the foreseeable future, China’s ceramic culture will be exchanged more frequently, and the dissemination of ceramic cultural discourse will become more and more important. However, the current situation of the English translation of ceramic culture at home and abroad is not satisfactory.

In the field of porcelain translation, Cui Fenghua of Beijing Foreign Studies University points out that the porcelain translations of major museums in China suffer from the problems of inconsistency in terminology and formatting, lack of content, and lack of in-depth introduction to Chinese history and culture. In this context, she used the translation strategy of cultural proprietary

items to summarize the common methods used in porcelain translation [1]. Wu Xiaojing of Nanchang University, on the other hand, based on the association theory, completed a report on the translation project of the book *Porcelain of the East India Company*, which provides valuable reference and experience for porcelain translation from an international perspective [2].

As the core of ceramic cultural discourse, the translation of ceramic cultural terminology bears the brunt of all kinds of translation errors occur frequently, and one of the reasons lies in the improper choice of translation strategies. Ceramic cultural terminology has obvious Chinese characteristics, accurate translation is the key to enhancing the effect of ceramic cultural discourse on foreign communication, and its translation is directly related to the understanding and acceptance of Chinese ceramic culture by foreign audiences. Therefore, it is of great theoretical and practical significance to study the translation strategy of ceramic terminology. In view of the above, this paper aims to study the translation of ceramic cultural terms from the perspective of the theory of Skopos, which provides a new perspective for ceramic terminology translation, and by clarifying the purpose and target audience of translation, translating strategies can be more effectively selected to enhance the cultural adaptability and functionality of translation.

2. Overview of Skopos Theory

2.1 Basic Concept of Skopos Theory

Skopos Theory is a far-reaching translation theory formally put forward by German translation scholar Hans Vermeer in the 1970s. The core idea of the theory is that translation is not only a conversion between languages, but also a cross-cultural communication behavior with a clear purpose. The translator should adjust and process the text on the basis of the original text according to the specific goal and intention of translation. Different from the traditional “equivalence” criterion, Skopos theory emphasizes the communicative function of the translated text, which provides a new perspective for translation research. It changes the source-text-centered view of translation, and enhances the status of the translator in translation [3]. The development of Skopos theory can be roughly divided into three stages:

In the first stage, the concept of “textual function” proposed by Katharina Reiss became a key criterion in translation criticism. She advocated that the function of the translated text should be fully considered in the translation process, providing the basis for subsequent translation theories [4].

In the second stage, Hans Vermeer, a student of Reiss, formally founded the Skopos Theory of Translation on the basis of his mentor’s research. The theory puts forward three important principles: first, the “purpose principle”, i.e., “the result determines the method”, which is the core principle of the Skopos theory; secondly, the “coherence principle”, which requires the translation to maintain semantic fluency and comprehensibility in the target language; and lastly, the “fidelity principle”, which means that the translation should be faithful to the original text on the basis of ensuring the coherence of the translation [5]. Vermeer’s theory of Skopos breaks through the traditional translation view centered on the original text, repositioning the role of the translator, and believes that the translator should translate flexibly according to the specific context and audience needs.

In the third stage, Christiane Nord further developed the Skopos Theory on the basis of his predecessors. In her book *Purposeful Behavior*, she systematically organizes the theoretical views of the Skopos Theory school and proposes amendments to its criticized aspects. The proposed principle of “function plus fidelity” responds to the question of whether Skopos Theory ignores the original text and emphasizes the balance between function and fidelity in translation [6].

In general, the Skopos theory brings new insights to translation research, breaks down the single

translation standard, and promotes the development of “cultural turn” in translation theory. The theory advocates that the translation should fulfill its communicative function according to the target culture and context, which enhances the translator’s initiative and creativity in translation.

2.2 Application of Skopos Theory in Terminology Translation

Terminology translation involves specific vocabulary and concepts in specialized fields, and accuracy and consistency are the basic requirements for terminology translation. Skopos theory has an important application value in terminology translation, because it provides a translation framework from a functional perspective, which can help translators better understand and convey the meaning of terms. In the translation of ceramic terminology, the guiding role of Skopos theory is particularly prominent. Since ceramic terminology is not only specialized, but also carries rich cultural connotations, special attention needs to be paid to the cultural background and acceptance habits of the target language readers when translating. From the perspective of Skopos Theory, the translator can ensure that the message is conveyed on the basis of the most suitable translation strategy, so as to achieve the best translation effect.

In the translation of ceramic terminology, the application of the theory of Skopos is mainly reflected in the following aspects:

- 1) Define the purpose of translation: determine the translation strategy of ceramic terminology according to the needs of the target audience and the expected effect of translation. For example, for professional scholars and general readers, the depth and complexity of the translation should be different.

- 2) Choose appropriate translation strategies: based on the translation’s purpose, choose strategies such as literal translation, liberal translation, phonetic translation or creative translation to ensure the functionality and readability of the translation.

- 3) Focus on cultural communication: ceramic terminology often contains rich cultural connotations, the cultural background of the terminology should be taken into account in translation, to avoid simple language conversion.

3. Translation of Ceramic Terminology

3.1 The Characteristics of Ceramic Terminology Translation

Ceramic translation, as a branch of scientific and technological translation, contains a large number of specialized terminology, which requires the translator to have a thorough understanding of the relevant process of ceramic manufacturing and make adequate preparation of terminology to ensure that the translation is accurate and professional. Ceramic terminology involves materials, techniques, decorations and patterns, which endows the ceramic terminology translation unique characteristics. The process of making ceramics includes steps such as clay extracting, throwing, trimming, glazing, firing, etc. These process terms carry cultural and historical backgrounds. In contrast, ceramic decorative terminology often carries a stronger cultural atmosphere, such as “kylin pattern, fretwork, bluish white, openwork decoration” and so on. These decorative patterns, as symbols with specific meanings, are the cultural consensus and collective expression of the people in that era [7].

3.2 Analysis of the current situation of ceramic terminology translation

By combing through the literature of Chinese National Knowledge Infrastructure (CNKI) and other international academic databases in the past three years, it can be seen that the research of

scholars at home and abroad on ceramic terminology translation mainly focuses on the following aspects:

1) Principles and methods of terminology translation: scholars have explored the principles of ceramic terminology translation, such as the principle of fidelity, the principle of equivalence, cultural relativity, etc., and have analyzed the scope of application and the effect of translation methods, such as direct translation, Italian translation and phonetic translation.

2) The influence of cultural factors: ceramic terms often carry deep cultural connotations, and many studies focus on how to retain and convey these cultural messages in translation.

3) Translation strategies in cross-cultural communication: In the context of globalization, how to promote cross-cultural communication of ceramic culture through translation has become an important topic. Researchers have emphasized that the choice of translation strategies should conform to the principle of Skopos Theory in order to enhance the functionality and cultural adaptability of the translated text.

3.3 The current problems of ceramic terminology translation

Despite a large number of studies, there are still some problems in ceramic terminology translation:

First, terminology translation is not uniform. Due to the lack of uniform translation standards and norms, different translators of the same term may have differences in translation, leading to confusion in the reader's understanding. For example, the word “Taoci” has the words “porcelain”, “ceramics”, “china”, “pottery”, “earthenware”, “clayware” and so on, which make the translation The difficulty of translation is greatly increased. Take the English translation of Jingdezhen’s “Four Famous Porcelains” as an example, the corresponding English translations are “blue and white porcelain” (Qing hua ci), “embedded glass” (Qing hua ling long ci), “Fengcai Ci” (pastel porcelain) and “color vitreous enamel” (color-glazed porcelain) [8]. It can be seen that the translation of the terminology of the four famous porcelains of Jingdezhen is not only a direct translation, but also an Italian translation. The four famous porcelain of Jingdezhen itself is a business card for tourists to show Jingdezhen ceramic technology and its culture, and its translation needs to be paid attention to.

Secondly, cultural connotation is missing. Some translations in the pursuit of formal fidelity, ignoring the cultural connotation of the term, resulting in foreign readers are difficult to fully understand the deeper meaning of ceramic terminology. Since ancient times, China has been highly revered the dragon totem, dragon decorations often appear in the decoration of ceramic products, ceramics in the name often contains the word “long”. However, many translations directly translate “long” as “dragon”, which hides the differences between Chinese and Western cultures and ignores the differences between the Chinese word “long” and the Western word “dragon”. This way of expression hides the differences between Chinese and Western cultures, ignoring the significant differences between the Chinese word “long” and the Western word “dragon” in terms of meaning, symbolism and religious background. The Chinese dragon is a totem symbolizing auspiciousness, while the Western dragon usually symbolizes evil. Therefore, these two words cannot be directly corresponded in translation, resulting in a lack of vocabulary. In this case, it may be more appropriate to use phonetic translation. The word “dragon” is translated as “Long”, which can avoid ambiguity with the word “long” in the English word. In order to avoid ambiguity with the pronunciation of “long” in English words, it can be translated as “Loong” to avoid cultural differences [9].

Third, improper choice of translation strategies. In some cases, translators fail to choose appropriate translation strategies according to the needs of the target audience, resulting in poor

readability and acceptance of the translated text. For example, some translations translate Yixing zisha teapot as “Yixing zisha teapot” or “purple clay pottery teapot in Yixing”, but in fact, Yixing zisha teapot has long been famous in the West and has its own specialized terminology. But Yixing zisha pots have long been known in the West, with a specialized term translated as “boccaro” [9]. The biggest problem is that many of the terms have their equivalents in the target language, but the translators still choose to translate them phonetically. This not only fails to effectively disseminate the national culture, but also may confuse the readers of the target language, making it difficult for them to deeply understand Chinese culture.

4. Translation Strategies of Ceramic Terminology Based on Skopos Theory

From the above problems in ceramic translation, it can be seen that the main reason for the errors in translation is not only the lack of professional knowledge, but also confusion in the choice of translation strategy. In the final analysis, this stems from the translator's failure to clarify the specific purpose of translation, the lack of comprehensive consideration of the translation context, the target reader and the macro-context, resulting in difficulty in improving the quality of translation. From the perspective of Skopos theory, this paper takes into full consideration the diversity of social and cultural contexts as well as the comprehensibility of translation contexts, and helps translators flexibly apply translation strategies according to different translation objectives, so as to improve the accuracy and appropriateness of translations.

4.1 Influencing Factors of Translation Strategy Selection

In the process of translating ceramic terms, translators should consider the following factors:

- 1) The cultural background and knowledge level of the target audience: scholars and general readers who have a certain understanding of ceramic culture have different needs, and the choice of translation strategies should be different.
- 2) Semantic characteristics of ceramic terms: different types of terms (such as techniques, vessel type, decorative patterns, etc.) have different characteristics in semantics, and the translation strategy should be adjusted according to the specific attributes of the terms.
- 3) The purpose and function of translation: according to the ultimate purpose of translation (such as academic research, cultural dissemination or commercial publicity), choose different translation strategies.

4.2 Translation Strategies

Based on the above factors, this paper proposes the following ceramic terminology translation strategies based on the theory of Skopos, as illustrated in Table 1.

- 1) Combination of literal translation and liberal translation: for ceramic terms with clear equivalents, literal translation is given priority to ensure the accuracy of terminology translation; for terms with heavy cultural load or without direct equivalents, liberal translation or explanatory translation is used to retain their cultural connotations.
- 2) Combination of transliteration and explanation: For terms with Chinese characteristics (such as “underglaze color”), the combination of transliteration and explanation can be adopted to retain the original sound of the terms and supplement their cultural background and meaning through explanation.
- 3) Creative translation: In some cases, creative translation strategies can be used, such as recombination or creation of new terms to better convey the special meaning and cultural connotation of ceramic terms.

Table 1: Examples of Application of Translation Strategies for Ceramic Terms

No.	Chinese Terms	English Translation	Translation Strategy	Description
1	Qinghuaci	Blue and White Porcelain	literal translation	Directly translate the color and material of the term
2	Fencai	Famille Rose	phonetic translation + liberal translation	Use phonetic translation and additional explanation of color characteristics
3	Youlihong	Underglaze Red	liberal translation + explanation	Directly translate the technique and process characteristics
4	Kehuadiaoke	Carved Decoration	liberal translation	Explain the specific methods of decorative techniques

4.3 Case Study on the Application of Translation Strategies

4.3.1 The Translation of Enamel Color Terms

Vitreous enamel color terms has an important position in ceramic terminology, which not only describes the physical properties of color, but also contains rich cultural connotations and historical background. Therefore, when translating enamel color terms, special attention needs to be paid to how to accurately convey the color while retaining its cultural meaning [9].

In the translation of color terms, based on the principle of teleology, the following strategies can be employed:

1) Literal translation strategy: for color terms that have a consistent understanding in Chinese and Western cultures, the method of literal translation can be used. Literal translation not only maintains the accuracy of the terminology, but also reduces the barriers to readers' understanding. For example, "vermilion" has a corresponding color concept in both Chinese and Western cultures, and can be directly translated as "vermilion"; "peacock green" can also be translated as "peacock green". This way of translation can accurately reflect the color characteristics of the original word, and at the same time provide readers with a clear visual impression.

2) Simplified translation strategy: for some terms are more specialized, if the complete translation will increase the difficulty of understanding, the translator can choose to simplify the translation, to translate the main color components only and omit the complex part to improve the readability of the translation. For example, "alum red" should not be translated into the phonetically "fan-hung" or literally translated as "alum red", because these translations will increase the difficulty of understanding and cannot accurately conveyed. On the contrary, the translator should simplify it as "red", making the color clear and avoiding unnecessary complexity, so it is easier for readers to understand.

3) Accurate translation strategy: for color words with special cultural background, accurate translation is needed to avoid misleading. For example, "snow blue" if translated literally as "light blue" will cause misunderstanding, because it actually refers to a kind of mauve, a more accurate translation should be "violet blue", which not only retains the accuracy of the color, but also conveys the cultural connotation of the term.

4) Cultural adaptation translation strategy: certain color terms in Chinese have specific cultural symbolism or historical background, which should be taken into account when translated. For example, the "sacrificial blue" is, also called "blue" or "clear blue", in Chinese is mainly used to describe the color of ceramics used for sacrificial vessels and furnishings. The common translation

“altar blue” focuses on the cultural use of glazed porcelain, but this translation may not be easily understood by the target language readers. In order to reduce the reading barrier, the translator can add notes to the translation, or choose the word “sapphire”, because “sapphire” in English represents sapphire color, which can create similarities to the color of “altar blue” in the reader’s mind, making the translation more vivid and intuitive, and helping the target readers to understand and accept the color and culture.

Through the analysis of the above strategies, it can be seen that in the process of translating porcelain enamel color terms, the translator should choose the appropriate translation method according to the specific context and the cultural background of the target readers, not only to maintain the accuracy of the color, but also to ensure that the cultural connotation is effectively conveyed, so as to achieve the best translation effect, as seen in Table 2.

Table 2: Schematic Diagram of Enamel Color Translation Strategy Based on Skopos Theory

Chinese Terms	English Translation	Translation Strategy	Description
Zhusha	vermilion	Literal translation	Maintain the accuracy of the color and reduce the reader’s understanding obstacles
Kongquelv	peacock green	Literal translation	Directly reflect the visual characteristics of the color
Fanhong	red	Simplified translation	Omit complex components and enhance readability
Xueqing	violet blue	Accurate translation	Avoid wrong translation and maintain the accuracy of the color
Jilan	sapphire	Culturally adapted translation	Use the translation strategy of cultural association to convey the color and cultural connotation more intuitively

4.3.2 Flowchart of Translation Strategy Selection for Ceramic Terminology

In the process of translating ceramic terms, the selection of translation strategies based on the theory is crucial. The translation strategy not only needs to accurately convey the original meaning of the terminology, but also to be adjusted according to the readership, cultural differences and expression habits of the translated text. The flowchart (see Table 3) shows four different translation strategies, namely, literal translation strategy, simplified translation strategy, accurate translation strategy and culturally adapted translation strategy. Through literal translation, it can ensure that the terminology that has been agreed upon in both Chinese and Western cultures remains unchanged and maintains the accuracy of the terminology; the simplified translation strategy helps to simplify the complex terminology and enhances readability; the accurate translation strategy emphasizes the accurate conveyance of the terminology itself and avoids misinterpretation; and the culturally-adapted translation strategy focuses on conveying cultural connotations so that the translated text can better fit the target readers’ cognitive and cultural backgrounds. These strategies need to be utilized flexibly in practical application to ensure that the translation is both accurate and easy to understand.

Table 3 shows the process of selecting translation strategies for ceramic terminology. First of all, translators need to clarify the purpose and target audience of translation, and then choose appropriate translation strategies according to the characteristics and cultural connotations of the terminology.

Table 3: Flowchart for the Selection of Translation Strategies Based on Skopos Theory

Translation strategies	Chinese terms	English translation	Reasons for adopting the strategy	Explanation
Literal translation	Zhusha	vermilion	cultural consensus to maintain terminological accuracy	Vermilion is a widely accepted color of red in both Chinese and Western cultures
Literal translation	Kongquelv	Peacock green	cultural consensus to maintain terminological accuracy	Peacock green refers to the same green color in both Chinese and Western cultures
Simplified translation	Fanhong	red	enhance readability and reduce barriers to comprehension	Simplify the complex term “Fanhong” to the main color “red” to avoid comprehension difficulties
Accurate translation	Xueqing	blue violet	ensure color accuracy and avoid misinterpretation	Correctly conveys that the color characteristic of “Xueqing” is lavender, not light blue
Culturally adapted translation	Jilan	sapphire	emphasizes cultural connotations and facilitates foreign readers’ understanding	Choose more intuitive and culturally adapted translations to remind foreign readers of the color of sapphire and its symbols

4.3.3 Comparison Table of the Effectiveness of Translation Strategies

In the process of translating ceramic terminology, different translation strategies present different effects in terms of accuracy, cultural adaptability and audience acceptance. Literal translation strategy can ensure high accuracy of the terminology, but due to the lack of cultural adaptability, audience acceptance is moderate, Liberal translation focuses on finding the appropriate expression in the target language, which is excellent in cultural adaptability and audience acceptance, but the accuracy is slightly reduced; the method of phonetic translation with interpretation enhances cultural adaptability through interpretation while retaining the original phonetics, and audience acceptance is also high; creative translation enhances cultural adaptation through innovative expression, but terminological accuracy is weakened and audience acceptance is moderate. Each of these strategies has its own advantages and needs to be chosen according to the specific context and translation purpose in order to achieve the best translation effect, as explained in Table 4.

Table 4 shows a comparison of the effectiveness of different translation strategies in terms of accuracy, cultural adaptation and audience acceptance. It can be seen that the strategies of “liberal translation” and “transliteration + interpretation” perform better in terms of cultural adaptation and audience acceptance, while literal translation has an advantage in terms of accuracy.

Table 4: Comparison of the Effects of Different Translation Strategies

Translation Strategies	Accuracy	Cultural Adaptability	Audience Acceptance
Literal translation	High	Low	Medium
Liberal translation	Medium	High	High
Phonetic translation + interpretation	Medium	High	High
Creative translation	Low	High	Medium

5. Conclusion

Through the analysis of translation strategies for enamel color terms, it can be seen that translation strategies based on Skopos theory can effectively balance terminological accuracy and cultural communication. Especially when it comes to terminology with complex cultural backgrounds, these strategies can help translators cope with the challenges more flexibly in different translation scenarios. Future research can further explore the effects of different translation strategies on target readers in different cultural contexts and how multi-modal translation strategies can be utilized to enhance the cross-cultural communication of ceramic terminology in the new media environment.

Through these strategies, the translation of ceramic terminology not only helps foreign readers better understand Chinese ceramic culture, but also promotes the dissemination and acceptance of Chinese culture on a global scale. Future research should further explore how to effectively use these strategies in the actual translation process and optimize the translation methods according to different cultural backgrounds and readers' needs.

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