

# A Study on Chinese-English Translation of Venue Operation Texts for International Sports Events from the Perspective of Skopos Theory

Zeyue Qin\*

Shanxi University, Taiyuan 030000, Shanxi, China

*\*Author to whom correspondence should be addressed.*

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**Abstract:** With the continuous development of international sports exchanges, the Chinese-English translation of venue operation texts has become increasingly important for event organization, information transmission, and cross-cultural communication. Guided by Skopos Theory, this thesis studies the Chinese-English translation of venue operation texts for international sports events. The thesis studies representative cases from the perspectives of the three rules of Skopos theory: the skopos rule, the coherence rule, and the fidelity rule. The case analysis shows that translators must identify the skopos of the target text to finish the translation and help the stakeholders to realize their purposes. The study concludes that Skopos theory provides effective guidance for translating venue operation texts. Its three rules help translators balance communicative purpose, readability, and faithfulness, thereby improving the accuracy, acceptability, and practical effectiveness of translations. This research may provide useful guidance for the Chinese-English translation of venue operation texts and support language services for future international sports events.

**Keywords:** Skopos theory; International sports event; Venue operation texts; Chinese-English translation

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## 1. Literature review

### 1.1. Research on Skopos theory

Skopos theory developed in four stages. Katharina Reiss first argued that translation should ideally reproduce the source text's content, form, and communicative function, while prioritizing its purpose when full equivalence is impossible<sup>[1]</sup>. Hans Vermeer then established translation as purposeful human action. Justa Holz-Mänttari extended this perspective by placing translation within its social and cultural context and emphasizing interactions among translators, initiators, and other participants. Christiane Nord later systematized German functionalist approaches and proposed three principles: the skopos, coherence, and fidelity rules. These require a translation to fulfill its intended purpose, remain comprehensible in the target context, and maintain an appropriate relationship with the source text.

Skopos theory was introduced into China through translations, reviews, and critical discussions. Gui Qianyuan first presented Vermeer's ideas in 1987, followed by introductions and evaluations by Zhang Nanfeng and Chen Xiaoyu in 1995. Its influence increased after Nord's and Reiss's major works became available to Chinese scholars in the early twenty-first century. Researchers such as Zhang Meifang, Zhou Hongmin, Xiao Jiannan, and Liu Nan subsequently examined its historical development and practical significance<sup>[2]</sup>.

Chinese scholarship has applied Skopos theory extensively to translation strategies, pedagogy, tourism signage, and audiovisual translation. Other studies have compared it with traditional Chinese principles, particularly Yan Fu's "faithfulness, expressiveness, and elegance"<sup>[3]</sup>. Nevertheless, domestic research generally treats Skopos theory as an abstract guiding framework while paying insufficient attention to the translation brief as a practical instrument for directing and evaluating the entire translation process.

## **1.2. Research on Chinese-English translation of venue operation texts for international sports events**

Research on Chinese-English translation for international sports events mainly concerns sports terminology, public signs, publicity materials, and language services. Sager (1990) argues that standardized terminology is essential to effective specialized communication. This is particularly relevant to venue operation texts, which contain technical terms relating to functional areas, staff categories, accreditation, and operational procedures. Chinese researchers have likewise emphasized using official glossaries and parallel texts to ensure terminological consistency.

However, existing studies generally examine terminology, signage, or event publicity separately. Few regard venue operation materials—including staffing plans, working procedures, internal instructions, and emergency plans—as an integrated textual category. Therefore, further research should combine Skopos theory with authentic venue materials to investigate how purpose, coherence, and fidelity can support accurate communication and efficient venue operation.

## **2. Theoretical framework**

### **2.1. Skopos theory**

The Skopos theory holds that translation is a cross-cultural communication with purposes, which has greatly widened the translation research field, as translation was restricted to the linguistic field before. Vermeer was quoted as saying that "linguistics alone won't help us. First, because translating is not merely not even primarily linguistic process. Secondly, linguistics has not yet formulated the right questions to tackle our problem"<sup>[4]</sup>. In the past, the translators and scholars put great emphasis on the role of the functions of the texts and ignored the translators' function. The skopos theory complements this because it takes into consideration the role of the translation's initiator, which stands beyond the traditional concept of the author, the translator and the receiver. It requires that the translator should choose appropriate strategies to realize the goal of the texts and is determined by the texts and the translators. In the 1970s, some German scholars, represented by Reiss, Vermeer and Nord, founded and developed the theory. According to Nord, the initiator is an individual, a group or an organisation that determines the process and the purposes of the translation. He said in his book that a translation brief should contain the following information, such as the receivers, the purposes, the ex-

pected functions and the timing and location of the translated texts and the media, over which it will be transmitted. Therefore, a translation brief is the guide for a translation and also the criterion to check its quality<sup>[4]</sup>.

## 2.2. Three rules

The three rules of the skopos theory are the skopos rule, coherence rule and fidelity rule. The fidelity rule is subordinate to the coherence rule, and both of the rules serve the skopos rule.

Veermeer believes that a human activity is determined by its purpose, so a translation action also follows a purpose or multiple purposes. Different from the traditional view that a translation and the strategies used are determined by the original text, functionalists think that it is the “skopos” of the translated text that is essential in deciding how to present the ultimate text<sup>[5]</sup>. Based on such theory, Vermeer proposed the skopos theory that the end justifies the means, which means the skopos rule is the first and foremost rule that should be observed by all translators.

Apart from the skopos, translators should also follow two other important rules: the coherence rule and the fidelity rule during the creation because the two are influential in affecting the achievement or the result of the translating, the *translatum*. Coherence asks the translator to fully consider the cultural background and social environment of the target receiver and thus create a meaningful *translatum*, which means the *translatum* should have the greatest extent of readability and acceptability. The information produced by the translator must be applicable and explainable in a way that is connected with the target receiver. Nord proposed a “skopos + loyalty” theoretical framework. He believes that translators are responsible for the effects their work may have on either the target audience or even the translator as an individual. This responsibility is called loyalty<sup>[6]</sup>. The fidelity rule claims a certain relation between the source and translated texts. The level of fidelity can vary if the skopos changes and is decided by the skopos and the understanding of the translator<sup>[7]</sup>.

## 3. Translation under three rules

### 3.1. Translation under the Skopos rule

Every translation is undertaken for a particular purpose. Functionalist theorists therefore regard the skopos rule as the primary principle of translation. It covers the translator’s intention, the target text’s communicative function, and the objectives achieved through specific methods. Accordingly, the intended purpose determines the translation strategies adopted<sup>[6]</sup>.

#### 3.1.1. Example 1

ST: 演员候场室

TT1: Actors Lounge

TT2: Performers Lounge

Analysis: As for genders, English and Chinese have big differences in expressions. In this case, the phrase “演员” in Chinese can refer to both men and women, but in English, the word “actor” is only used when all people are men, and there is another word, “actress,” for women. Gender equality remains one of the most prominent subjects and aims of the Olympic Games because it is the driving force behind social peace and development. Especially during the Olympic and Paralympic Winter Games Beijing 2022, women account for up to 45.6% of all the athletes, a record high in the history of the Games. Not to mention that in real life, the majority of the artistic performers are women. According to the Beijing 2022 English Style

Book published by the International Relations Department of the Beijing Organizing Committee for the 2022 Olympic and Paralympic Games, it is important to use gender-neutral words as most jobs or roles can be performed by either men or women, and whenever possible, translators should avoid using male-specific words or the word “man” in compound words<sup>[8]</sup>. So based on the skopos rule, the author revised the translation to “Performers Lounge” to spare the venue and the country from sensitive gender issues and fully safeguard gender equality. “Lounge” is the most-used word for “休息室” as specified in the Playbook<sup>[9]</sup>.

### 3.1.2. Example 2

ST: 应当让各式各样的人参加到奥运会仪式的工作和表演中，以体现主办国的文化和社会特色。温哥华 2010 年冬奥会通过邀请原居住民族的参与践行了这一点。参与这一表演环节的演员都来自真正的部落，他们使用自己的服装、道具和化妆手法。

TT1: A wide variety of people should be involved in the work and performance of the Olympic ceremonies to reflect the cultural and social characteristics of the host country. The Vancouver 2010 Winter Olympics practiced this by inviting the participation of indigenous peoples. The performers who took part in this part of the show came from real tribes and used their own costumes, props and make-up techniques.

TT2: It is important to enable a diverse range of people to work and perform in the ceremonies and to reflect the culture and communities of the host nation. The Olympic Winter Games Vancouver 2010 exemplified this with the involvement of people from the indigenous ‘First Nations’. The cast for this dedicated segment came from the actual tribes, using their own costumes, props and make-up<sup>[8]</sup>.

Analysis: The example of Vancouver 2010 is used to inform the host countries that ceremonies should reflect their culture and national conditions, so it is important to convey this advice. “文化和社会特色” here only covers the meaning of “文化和社会”，which is culture and communities and “化妆手法” here means “化妆”，“make-up”，a general concept instead of a more detailed notion, so there is no meaning to translate “characteristics” (特点) and “techniques” (手法). The author omits some words based on the skopos rule.

## 3.2. Translation under the coherence rule

The coherence rule requires a translation to be understandable and appropriate within the target audience’s social, cultural, and cognitive context. Translators must therefore interpret the information in the source text and present it in a form that target readers can readily comprehend and accept<sup>[9]</sup>.

### 3.2.1. Example 3

ST: 归还轮椅时须保持设施完好，如因使用不当造成轮椅损坏，需照价赔偿。

TT1: Wheelchairs need to be returned in good condition. If any damage is caused by improper use, you will need to pay for the cost.

TT2: Please make sure it is intact when you return the wheelchair. If it is damaged due to improper use, you will need to pay for the full cost of the wheelchair.

Analysis: As part of the Notice on Possession Deposit Services, this sentence is used to remind the spectators of the related message. This sentence includes two clauses, both of which have a complete structure, but these two separate sentences are not logically connected. They are just saying the same thing from two different aspects. So, according to the coherence rule, the translator chooses to cut a single sentence into two

sentences so that the target receivers can understand and accept the text. Apart from this, TT2 and TT1 show huge differences in the expressions and tones. The polite words “please” and “will” are used in TT2, which gives the readers a sense of comfort and respect; thus, the readers are likely to follow the instructions and behave<sup>[10]</sup>.

### 3.2.2. Example 4

ST: 张家口颁奖广场承担着北京 2022 年冬奥会和冬残奥会张家口赛区竞赛项目的颁奖任务，每天在颁奖广场集中为获奖运动员颁发奖牌、升获奖运动员国家国旗、奏冠军国家国歌。同时，在颁奖仪式前后辅以庆祝演出活动，展示主办国文化，烘托现场气氛，庆祝获奖运动员取得荣誉，向他们致敬。

TT1: Zhangjiakou Medals Plaza (ZMP) is tasked with the awarding of the competition events for the Beijing 2022 Winter Olympics and Winter Paralympics in Zhangjiakou, with medals awarded to the winning athletes, the national flag of the winning athletes raised and the national anthem of the winning country played at the Plaza each day. At the same time, the ceremonies are complemented by celebratory performances before and after the ceremony, showcasing the culture of the host country, setting the scene and celebrating the honor of the winning athletes and paying tribute to them.

TT2: Zhangjiakou Medals Plaza (ZMP) is tasked to host the victory ceremonies of the competing sports at the Zhangjiakou Competition Zone during the Olympic and Paralympic Winter Games Beijing 2022. Aside from presenting medals to the medalists, raising their national flags, and playing the national anthem of the champion, it will have celebration activities before and after the ceremonies to show the culture of the host country, enhance the on-site atmosphere, celebrate the honor of the athletes, and pay tribute to them.

Analysis: This paragraph explains the tasks of Zhangjiakou Medals Plaza. “展示……”，“烘托……”，“庆祝……”和“向他们致敬” are all purposes and functions of the performances even though they are listed as parallel structures<sup>[10]</sup>. Adding the connective “to”, the translator tries to add logic in the translation to ensure fluency.

These two examples both apply the strategy of adding a new logical connective to ensure the fluency of the target sentences based on the coherence rule.

## 3.3. Translation under the fidelity rule

The fidelity rule, one of the three principles of Skopos Theory, requires the target text to maintain an appropriate relationship with the source text. Translators should convey the author’s intended meaning as faithfully as possible while adapting the translation to the target culture’s conventions, thereby ensuring readability and acceptability for target readers<sup>[11]</sup>.

### 3.3.1. Example 5

ST: 媒体流线：媒体从广场西北侧（媒体）安检入口进入后，沿着观众区边缘进入场馆媒体中心、混合采访区，通过舞台对侧的流线进入记者站席、摄影平台。

TT1: Media flow: After entering through the media security entrance on the north-west side of the plaza, the media will follow the edge of the spectator area into the venue’s media center, mixed zone, and enter the press standing and photography platform through the streamline on the opposite side of the stage.

TT2: Media flow: After entering from the media security screening point in the northwest of the plaza, the media enter the venue media center and mixed zone along the edge of the spectator area, and enter the journalist standing area and photography platform through the streamline on the opposite side of the stage.

Analysis: This sentence describes how the media personnel should enter the venue and get to the place designated for them. “广场” here refers to Zhangjiakou Medals Plaza, so the correct translation is plaza, not square, which is often misused by many people, even some staff. “观众” is among the most significant parts of the Olympic and Paralympic Winter Games, and there are many concepts and projects in this aspect. The word used all the time for the Games is “spectator” instead of audience or viewer. “场馆媒体中心” is translated as venue media center officially, where the media staff will all gather and work. “混合采访区” is the place where the journalists and the media will have face-to-face interviews with the athletes after the Games so as to collect important news materials. In English, it is called mixed zone. “站席” is the place where the journalists are supposed to stand and work. It may have different versions of English translation, but in the Chinese-English Terminology of Beijing 2022 Olympic and Paralympic Winter Games, it is listed as a terminology and translated as standing area. Therefore, guided by the fidelity rule, the author completes the above translation<sup>[12]</sup>.

## 4. Conclusion

Guided by Skopos theory, this study examines the Chinese-English translation of operational texts from the Zhangjiakou Medals Plaza for the Beijing 2022 Olympic and Paralympic Winter Games. These texts, including signage, staffing plans, operational guidelines, and explanatory materials, perform multiple functions, such as conveying information, guiding personnel, maintaining order, supporting venue services, and promoting the event’s image. Their translation should therefore consider the intended audience, communicative purpose, cultural context, and actual setting rather than mechanically reproduce the source language.

Future research should cover more venue types and operational materials, establish bilingual corpora, and develop a systematic translation framework. Translators should improve their linguistic, professional, intercultural, and critical-thinking abilities to integrate accurate communication, operational effectiveness, and cultural promotion.

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