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Tourism discourse analysis: Comparing the vocabulary features used in the original and translation of Iranian tourism texts

The aim of this study is to examine the vocabulary features of Iranian tourism texts and their translations in order to find out the extent to which the source and target texts are in line with Durán Muñoz's (2011) suggestions for special tourist language and discourse in terms of vocabulary features. For so doing, the Persian texts and the English translations of 50 pages taken from Iranian official bilingual tourist websites were analyzed. The results indicated that neither the original Iranian tourism texts nor their English translations contained the vocabulary required for tourism discourse.

Key words: Tourism texts, translation, Durán Muñoz's (2011) framework, vocabulary features

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Introduction

There has been a growing interest in the tourism industry in many countries of the world. It is considered as a means to introduce a country's culture, and historical and natural sites to the world. Furthermore, apart from the significant cultural importance of this industry, attracting tourists can directly impact the economy. Nowadays, the tourism industry tries to fulfill its goal of attracting tourists by advertising via different means such as the internet, brochures, TV, and so on. Internet and online materials are considered as information sources worldwide which have a great influence on all aspects of people's lives. Thus, by providing informative online materials about the tourist attractions, the related organizations can give potential tourists information about different contexts.

Therefore, considering the importance of online materials in today's world, it is necessary that the officials in the tourism industry provide informative materials to encourage people to visit the places. Furthermore, they should pay attention to the linguistic aspects of the tourism texts to be sure that they are informative and at the same time persuasive. Considering the paucity of studies on tourism discourse and its requirements, the present study aims to examine the vocabulary features of the Iranian tourism websites and their translation based on Durán Muñoz's (2011) suggestions for the required characteristics of tourism texts.

Language and discourse of tourism text

Language has different genres that are used in different contexts. According to Reiss (1971/2000), there are four text types namely; informative, expressive, operatives, and audio-medial based on the function that the text accomplishes in its context (cited in Munday 2012). Newmark (1988) believes that the aims of vocative (operative) text is to address readership instead of readers.

Tourism texts are written in order to fulfill certain goals, specifically, these texts are expected to play a persuasive role in order to attract tourists. According to Sanning (2010), tourism texts “have to attract the tourists' attention, arouse their interest and give them an aesthetic impression, so that they may be persuaded to visit the tourist attraction” (p. 2).

Since the tourism industry in different parts of the world has the same goals, it is essential to choose a special language and discourse for such texts in order to achieve its goals. Generally, discourse is defined as understanding the meaning of a text beyond a word or isolated sentences. Steel (2002) defines discourse as “the meaningful combinations of language units which serve various purposes and perform various acts in various context” (cited in Sayfuldeen 2010, p. 27). As tourism texts’ audiences are mostly ordinary people who may not be familiar with the target culture, it would be difficult for them to understand the special language structure or discourse of the target language. Therefore, a tourism text should use a certain kind of discourse which not only includes tourism features, but is also understandable for the readers easily.

To accomplish this aim, there are some features which should be taken into consideration like the text type which should be almost operative. Newmark (1988) states that “The first factor in all vocative texts is the relationship between the writer and the readership. The second factor is that these texts must be written in a language that is immediately comprehensible to the readership” (p. 41), but creating such a language and discourse needs to be considered from different perspectives and angles.

More importantly, translation of tourist language should have its own criteria in order to maintain or add to the characteristics of tourist discourse. Many researchers (such as Dann, 1996; Kelly, 1997) conducted different studies in order to highlight different aspects of tourism texts and their translation. According to these studies, translators of these texts

should follow some specific rules. Furthermore, translation of tourism texts should be done by professional translators who have been trained in this regard (Durán Muñoz, 2012).

The special language and discourse of tourism texts, and also the translation of these texts have attracted the attention of many researchers (Capelli, 2008; Carvalho Figueiredo & Alvares Pasquetti, 2016; Durán Muñoz, 2011, 2012; Feng, 2013; Gotti, 2006; Newmark 2001; Pierini, 2007; Snell-Hornby, 1999; Zhang, Lv, & Sulaiman, 2014). For example, Sulaiman (2014) analyzed the English version of Tourism Australia's consumer website as the source text (ST) and its Malay translation as target text (TT) to find out if translating stylistic features is effective. Furthermore, the author employs parallel text (PT) analysis to examine the effectiveness of the translated text with non-translated text of TT. The results indicated that the role of style is crucial for understanding during the process of translating, and the content of the TT should follow TT audiences' preferences. According to Pierini (2007) "The complexity of promotional tourist discourse is underestimated by clients and translators: it may appear to be deceptively easy to translate with its extensive use of general language; yet, it is a specialized discourse with specific linguistic/cultural features" (p. 99).

Moreover, Zhang, Lv, and Feng (2013) try to offer a way of translating tourism text which is completely applicable, since most of these texts are culturally-loaded. They believe that there should be a way that a reader of tourism text receives the same contextual effect, what Nida (1964) called 'equivalent effect'. Considering the relevance theory, Wilson (1994) states that human minds are relevance-oriented which we pay more attention to those new texts which are related to us. Therefore, the researchers reject either highly target-oriented or source-oriented strategies for rendering tourism text. They prefer what Venuti (2000) proposes as 'gloss translation' which is a note (in the margins or between lines) that contains the meaning of a word, phrase, or sentence of the original text that is probably hard to be understood by the readers, because of the cultural or historical issues.

Similarly, in order to determine a special kind of discourse and language with particular features for tourism, Figueiredo and Pasquetti (2016) investigated an experimental study to find some characteristics of tourism discourse by examining “Best in Travel 2015: Top 10 cities” from bilingual tourist website (English and Portuguese) called ‘Lonely Planet’ in terms of textual features and images. They employ Critical Discourse Analysis and a corpus-based tool as their framework. The results showed that in some cases translators of these texts applied some changes in text, images, and web layout.

Today, the internet is a popular source of information, Garzone (2002) states that the webpage as a text is a multi-semiotic entity of various resources such as written (and sometimes spoken) language, and pictorial, graphic, and acoustic elements. Therefore it can provide important data for researchers. Accordingly, we decided to use the related online materials as the corpus of this study in order to analyze the Iranian tourism texts and their translations. This study attempts to find out the extent to which the original and translation of Iranian tourism texts follow Durán Muñoz’s (2011) proposed framework in terms of vocabulary features of special tourism language and discourse.

Methodology

Data collection

To fulfill the goal of this study, the researchers identified three most important Iranian tourist bilingual websites which are: www.tourismiran.ir, www.isfahancht.ir, www.samita.com. The first website is supported by the Cultural Heritage, Handicrafts and Tourism Organization of Iran (ICHTO). As this organization is responsible for all tourism affairs of the country, it should be a popular information source for tourists who are planning to travel to Iran.

The second website is also supported by Isfahan's Cultural Heritage, Handicrafts and Tourism Organization which is a governmental organization, and Isfahan is considered as one of the most important tourist cities in Iran.

The last website belongs to a non-governmental agency, which has been working for a decade. This website introduces and offers different tourist places in Iran and also books tickets for its customers. Therefore, based on its considerable reputation, the researcher selected it as a source of data for the current study.

The websites were chosen among the other websites because they had at least one of the criteria that the researchers had assigned for the inclusion of the websites. Firstly, the websites should be legal and approved by related governmental organizations, secondly, they were well-known among foreign tourists, and finally, they have been operating for more than five years. A related point to consider is that these websites do not mention their translators' names and their background information. Thus, we did not have access to the necessary information about the translators of these texts. To this end, the researchers contacted the officials in charge of these websites but they were not inclined to answer this question. In this regard, we have only analyzed the content of the websites without having any information about their translators.

Procedure

The data collected from the websites were divided into two different parts. Firstly, STs are examined according to what Durán Muñoz (2011) proposed for special tourist discourse in terms of vocabulary features which were choice of key words and positive adjectives. Then, the TTs were analyzed in order to evaluate how translators rendered the vocabulary features.

The webpages were randomly selected from the websites for analysis. The original texts of the websites were examined at the level of sentence to determine the extent to which the original text contains key words and positive adjectives. On the other hand, the English translation of the same webpages as the target texts (TT) was analyzed to find out whether translators have applied any linguistic changes into the target texts in order to make the final translation more persuasive than the source texts or not. To do so, 150 sentences which were randomly selected from 50 different webpages were analyzed. Parallel text (PT) technique was employed to compare the source texts with target texts in order to highlight those vocabulary features in the ST and the TT. Table 1 shows some examples for each of these vocabulary features.

Table 1: Special vocabulary features of tourism discourse

Special Vocabulary	choices of key words	positive adjectives
	Adventure, dream imagination, pleasure	1. outstanding, spectacular 2.superlatives adjective

key words are defined as the words which describe the concept of excitement and adventure (see table 1) which are mostly adjectives. Moreover, positive adjectives include positive contents such as superlatives adjectives.

Results

Data of this study were analyzed separately regarding ST and TT and are presented in different tables in the following sections. Each table indicates the number of the key words and positive adjectives in ST and TT in terms of special tourist discourse. Then, the results of the STs and TTs are compared and contrasted in order to come to the final conclusion to find out the extent to which these vocabulary features were changed in the process of translation.

Source texts

Selecting words which can be in harmony with setting, context, and situation is essential for achieving good communication in tourism texts, since this type of text is written to attract tourists' attention and persuade them to visit. Therefore, we analyzed the ST according to the features of the specific vocabulary of discourse which Durán Muñoz (2011) proposed for translating tourism text regarding vocabulary features. Table 2 indicates the exact number of the vocabulary features in ST.

Table 2: The frequency of key words and positive adjectives in ST

Positive adjectives	152
Key words	0
Total number of words in ST	2253

Table 2 shows the exact number of key words and positive adjectives compared to the whole number of words in ST. As indicated in the Table, the total number of words in the corpus is 2253, and the number of positive adjectives is 152 (%6.74). This means that in almost every 15 words there is one positive adjective. Interestingly, there are no key words in the whole ST corpus. Using no key words in tourism text means that there is no word which implies adventure, excitement, dream, and the like. Therefore, the text fails to fulfill the aims of an 'operative' text. In this respect, the results indicate that at least there is a deficiency in word choice by the writers.

Furthermore, according to Table 2, in terms of using key words in ST, the corpus contains no such words at all i.e. the number of key words in the ST corpus is zero (%0). In order to make the results more tangible, Table 3 contains sentences extracted from the corpus of the study.

Table 3: Example key words and positive adjectives used in ST and TT

ST	<p>یکی از زیباترین غارهای ایران است که شامل دو بخش آبی و خاکی است. دومین غار آبی در سطح کشور به شمار می رود.</p> <p>نور پردازی های آن در مسیر قایق سواری در غار ایجاد شده است که بر زیبایی غار افزوده است.</p>
TT	<p>This cave is one of the most beautiful caves of Iran which has two parts of water and soil coverages.</p> <p>There is lightening along boat passing-way which adds to the cave's beauty.</p>

Table 3 indicates two examples of the vocabulary features (positive adjective and key word) which were used in these sentences. These sentences were extracted from a webpage which describes one of the most beautiful caves in Iran. In order to make the ST vocabulary features more notable, the researchers made them bold. As it is shown in Table 3, there are just two positive adjectives in these sentences. Surprisingly, there are no key words not only in these two sentences but also in the whole ST corpus. Such results show that due attention has not been paid in preparing these texts in STs.

On the other hand, in terms of translating ST sentences, no significant changes can be observed. In this regard, translators chose to translate the text by employing 'word for word' strategy which is replacing each ST word with a TT word. In fact, the translators of the text replaced the words without considering the text type. This is in contrast with the 'Skopos theory' maintaining that the purpose of the translation determines the way a translator renders a text (Vermeer, 2000 cited in Munday, 2012).

Target Text analysis

As was mentioned earlier, the researchers did not limit the corpus of the present study to source text, and the English translation of the same webpages of tourism texts as the target texts was also considered as the second part of the corpus. A translator may change the TT

when the original text is not appropriate in the target language and discourse. To this end, the translators of these texts should be fully aware that one of the primary goals of tourism texts is to attract and persuade a tourist. Therefore, we analyzed TT in order to determine the number of key words and positive adjectives used in them.

Table 4: The number of key words and positive adjectives in TT

Positive adjectives	120
Key words	0
Total number in TT	2108

Table 4 indicates that the total number of the words used in the TT (2108) is less than those used in the ST (2253). Some parts of the STs were not translated in TTs by the translators, and this was one reason for this decrease.

120 positive adjectives with the relative frequency of 5.6% were used in the TTs. But there is no significant difference between ST and TT in the use of positive adjectives as some parts of STs were not translated into TTs. On the other hand, the number of key words in TTs is zero which is the same as STs. This contradicts the assertion of Wolf (2000) who believes that translators are not just mediators between ST and TT, but their roles are beyond that (cited in Munday 2016, p. 212). The translators of the texts in this study have taken a 'mediating role' in these texts i.e. they worked like a dictionary to find equivalence to each word.

Discussion and Conclusion

Many countries in the world have tried to improve their tourism industry, since it can remarkably affect their economic growth. Accordingly, they have tried to provide the potential tourists with online and offline information about the touristy places in their country. Considering the persuasive nature of the tourism texts, some changes should be essential in translating these texts.

The results of this study imply some important points for the original texts and their translations in Iran. According to TTCI (Travel & Tourism Competitiveness Index) in 2015, Iran ranks 97th out of 141 countries. Certainly, there might be many reasons beyond the scope of the current study for this ranking, but the study has identified some reasons which could be relevant.

The first reason is the lack of proper advertisement in order to introduce the attractions for the interested audience. Advertisements in tourism industry mean the way of introducing a place to someone who may not have any knowledge about that place. Therefore, using a persuasive discourse in advertisements by choosing appropriate words is highly needed.

The second reason is the lack of professional and expert writers' and translators' involvement in preparing tourism web pages. Writers and translators of the tourism web pages need special training about the tourism genre and its characteristics. As it was shown in Table 2, the usage of key words in STs was zero percent. Positive adjectives formed just 6 percent of the whole corpus i.e. one positive adjective in almost every 15 words.

Apart from knowing about the tourism genre, it is believed that the translator of tourism text should be familiar with the culture of ST and TT. As Wolf (2000) believes, translators should go beyond the linguistic features to consider the cultural aspects for conveying the meaning of a text (cited in Munday 2016). Therefore, a good translator of tourism text should be familiar with the culture of his or her audience to communicate with them accurately.

Tourism text is more operative than informative (Reiss 1971 cited in Munday 2012, Sanning, 2010), but in the present study, by not using appropriate vocabulary features, translators made the texts more informative than operative. Tourists' decisions may be influenced by such deficiencies in the tourism texts and the English translations.

Translating without changes means that the translators were faithful to the ST, although this faithfulness may not result in achieving the aims of translation. Such an emphasis on the source texts implies at least two significant points. Firstly, in the case of operative texts, when translators are faithful to the source text, it implies that they are novice and unskilled. Based on ‘Skopos theory’, the strategy which translators take for rendering should be in line with the goal of the text. According to this theory, a text should be translated based on its purpose, and translators are supposed to be fully aware of the aims of the text (Vermeer 1989/2012 cited in Munday, 2016). Secondly, being faithful to the source text in the translation of tourism texts also indicates that the translator has no creativity for rendering the ST.

The results of this study showed a low degree of using positive adjectives and the lack of using key words in the translation of tourism texts on Iran. To solve the problem, more rigorous rules in terms of writing and translating tourism texts should be applied. In other words, by looking at the results of the present study, it is very obvious that the Iranian tourism websites are informative instead of being operative. To avoid the shortcomings, professional translators should be employed to render the tourism texts for the tourism websites. Professional and expert translators who know about the tourism genre should examine the translation of the texts linguistically and culturally before they are uploaded to the website.

The present study has examined the vocabulary features of the tourism texts in Iranian context. The scope of textual analysis was confined to analyzing the vocabulary features to make the study more manageable, therefore it is suggested that other studies investigate the other discursive features of the tourism texts. Considering the important role of online materials in providing information about the tourist places and the linguistic and cultural

features that these texts should possess to be more informative and persuasive, it is hoped that this line of research continues to shed more lights on the features of the tourism discourse.

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