

Research Article

## Speech Act Theory on the Translation of Baiyangdian Lake in Hebei Province, China

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**Abstract:** More scenic spots in China are becoming tourist destinations for overseas visitors and are providing more public materials as well as the English translation for them. This paper analyses the English translation of tourist material of Baiyangdian Lake in Hebei province China with the guidance of the speech act theory proposed and developed by Austin, Searle and other scholars. Baiyangdian Lake is a national 5A tourist spot in Xiong'an New Area to the south of Beijing. The analysis of the tourist site can offer some suggestions for improving the language quality. And it tries to conclude the misuses in the spot from three aspects based on the case analysis of the improper expressions of Baiyangdian Lake.

**Keywords:** Speech Act Theory; Baiyangdian Lake; Tourist Translation.

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## INTRODUCTION

The translation of the source language should keep the original information as much as possible. But as a matter of fact, when the translation is produced, the content should somehow be rendered to transfer the intention of the author of the source language (Hai-Rong, 2008). This is true in many practical uses, especially in the materials of the tourist attractions. Baiyangdian Lake is a national 5A tourist spot located in Xiong'an New Area which is a millennium plan in China. It is also a popular destination for foreign visitors in Hebei province. The improvement in public materials will generate invisible economic value to local tourism industry. The analysis can expose the misuses in public material to professional authorities. And this kind of research can offer some lessons for proper language usage (Tang, 2019).

Speech act theory is put forward by Austin (1962). He discussed that words are the actions. When the speaker says something, he or she has done an act, which includes the locutionary act, the illocutionary act, as well as the perlocutionary act. The speaker expresses the literal meaning through locutionary act, and the illocutionary behavior expresses the intention of the

speaker. If the hearer receives the illocutionary behavior and brings about the intent changes, it is the perlocutionary act (Hanna, Nader, Richards, & Deborah, 2019). The perlocutionary act is a kind of act that the speaker takes to change or affect the context or background information of the receiver. It happens at the same time when the speaker says an utterance. If any of the above three links go wrong, communication will fail.

In this paper, the source tourist materials are analyzed as the samples of different acts. Compared with these source tourist materials, the rendered material is analyzed by different categories. At each part, the detailed instructions for the rendered works will be analyzed. Some suggestions will also lay on the latter part of each section. And in the last part, the importance is emphasized on the refinement of the speech acts. If the intention of source language is not transformed, it may cause confusion to visitors. Therefore, the regulation of rendering the tourist materials ought to be improved.

## LOCUTIONARY ACT

Locutionary act is the act of expressing meaning by words, which is a kind of act of "saying something"(Tao & Jiang, 2013). The study of it is the study of meaningful language units. However, sometimes the improper use of spelling and grammar may cause wrong expression.

### From the perspective of spelling mistakes

The following cases are taken to illustrate the mistakes in spelling.

①叶大，边缘直立，花呈白色至堇紫色。  
*Big leaves with upright margin, floor is white to violet in color*

②除本地自销外，还销往北京、天津、保定及附近各县。  
*Beside local sales, it is also sold to Beijing, Tianjin, Baoding and other counties nearby.*

③此外咸鸭蛋中无机盐含量丰富 含钙量含铁量比鸡蛋、鲜鸭蛋都高。  
*In addition, the mineral salt, such as Calcium and Irony in the salted duck eggs is very rich, which is higher than chicken egg and fresh duck egg*

④保护区地处京津冀腹地，在缓洪滞沥、涵养水源、调节气候、维护生物多样性等方面发挥着重要作用，  
*The reserve is located in the back land of Beijing, Tianjin and Hebei playing an important role on relieving the blood and drain, water conservation, climate regulating and maintenance of biodiversity.*

Each of these cases contains a spelling mistake. Although some foreigners may guess the general meaning by experience, it can still be weird to see improper spelling. The spelling mistakes may also generate wrong information when the public materials are designed to attract tourists.

### From the perspective of grammatical mistakes

①生蛋黄中的脂肪由于与蛋白质结合在一起，看不出含有油脂，腌制时间久了，蛋白质会变性，并与脂肪分离，脂肪聚集在一起就成了蛋黄油，  
*Due to the combination of fat and protein in the raw egg yolk, the fat and oil cannot be seen. After long time salting, the protein will be denatured and separate with fat while the fat gathering together will become egg yolk oil.*

In English, "grease" is a scientific term which refers to fat and oil. Since the word exists to convey the meaning, there is no need to use "fat and oil" to finish the sentence.

②请勿采摘荷花荷叶  
*Don't pick up lotus flower and leaf.*

In this case, "pick up" means to lift something up. "pick" instead is more proper to describe the movement of taking the flower and leaf from the lotus.

③中株型，6月中旬始花，花重瓣，呈淡黄色。  
*Medium-plant type, initial flower in Mid June, double-lobe flower, faint yellow in color ;*

④6月16日始花半重瓣型，板淡至淡堇紫色。  
*Initial bloom on 16th June, poly-petal, extremely light to light purple*

The above two cases introduce the characters of the lotus in the Lotus Garden of Baiyangdian Lake. The Chinese characters are parataxis. English, on the other hand, is a hypotaxis language. Each sentence needs specific grammatical components to form a complete structure. This kind of grammatical rule is not embodied in the translation, because English words are piled up mechanically. English users may receive confused introductory information.

⑤水深危险注意安全  
*Dangerous ! Be Careful*

In the original Chinese context, it is a warning that drowning is possible because the Baiyangdian Lake is deep. In the translation, the source of danger is not clarified. It may be better with the translation of "Deep water! Be careful!"

In the introductions of large paragraphs, there are also many mistakes in grammar.

⑥鱼：白洋淀内水质肥沃，鱼虾蟹繁殖率高，生长快，产量多。有关资料记载，白洋淀水产年捕捞量约计一千万斤以上。

*The water quality in Baiyangdian Lake is rich and the reproductive rate of fish, shrimp and crab is high while the growth is fast and the output is large. According to some interrelated data, the annual fishing amount of Baiyangdian Lake is about 5 million kg.*

In English, "quality" is high instead of rich. "Interrelated" means the connection among the objectives. "有关资料" here means the data about the annual fishing. It can be directly translated into "respecting to relative records". Besides, we generally use the term of "volume" with yield instead of "amount".

⑦白洋淀的淀名各有来历。  
*Baiyangdian Lake has its own origin.*

In the source text, it means each lake name has its own origin. But the real condition is that there are many lakes. The following content in the context is only taking the specific lake Laowang Lake to make an example. Therefore, the suggested version can be: Each lake in Baiyangdian has its own origin.

⑧白洋淀湿地保护区物种资源十分丰富，鸟类资源198种，其中国家一级保护鸟类4种，为丹顶鹤、白鹤、大鸨、东方白鹳。国家二级重点保护鸟类26种，如大天鹅、小天鹅、灰鹤、白琵鹭、游隼等。保护区内分布有14种哺乳动物，隶属5目8科12属，均为国家保护的有益或有重要经济、科研价值的陆生野生动物。

*The species resources of Baiyangdian Wetland Nature Reserve are very rich, with 198 kinds of birds, including 4 kinds of birds with first-grade State protection, red-crowned crane, white crane, great bustard and east white stork, 26 kinds of birds with second-grade protection, such as whooper swan, cygnet, gray crane, white spoonbill, peregrine falcon, total 14 kinds of mammal, belonging to 5 sections, 8 families and 12 categories, which are all the terraneous wild animals with state protection and useful, or with important economic, scientific research value.*

English sentences usually emphasize on the clear structure with logical order. In this paragraph, there is only one period. Apparently that does not make sense in grammar. Another mistake is that "mammal" is a countable noun, but it is not changed into plural form in this paragraph.

⑨白洋淀位于河北省安新县境内，地处京、津、石腹地；各距150公里左右，是华北地区最大的淡水湖泊。昔有“北地西湖”地之称，今有“华北明珠”之者车，诗赞“北国江南”，歌咏“鱼米之乡”。  
*Baiyangdian lake, located in anxin county, hebei province, the back land of beijing tianjin and shijiazhuang, about 150km from these three cities, it is the largest freshwater lake of north china, named as "the north west lake" in the past and "pearl of north china" now, praised as "south in the north" in the poem and praised as "a land of fish and rice" in the song.*

In this paragraph, the punctuation marks are improperly used. "North West Lake" should be changed to "The West Lake in the North". Because "north" refers to the direction and cannot be used as the geographical pronoun of "North".

## ILLOCUTIONARY ACT

Austin argues that words are not only for description, narration or demonstration. They can also be employed to commit an action. This kind of concept is developed by many linguistics like Sadock (2008). But Searle makes a further explanation to boost this concept. He (Searle, 1969) divides illocutionary acts into five categories: directive, expressive, declarative, representative and commissive acts. If the unintended effect occurs, it will be an invalid attempt or utterance. As the globalization deepens, more and more foreigners come to China to see the exotic scenery. The demands

of the information from the foreign visitors stimulate the translation of the promotional materials. However, this work is not an easy task (Reiter & Placencia, 2005). Since it is a communication between different cultures. A crucial problem is about transferring the intention of the source text of the promotional materials. Because the translations sometimes will not be same as what of the original intention from the source language.

The cases are from the title of flowers in the lotus garden. The Chinese is for declarative acts while the English versions are for expressive act:

### From declarative to expressive acts

#### ①卓越

*Brilliance*

“卓越”，name of a lotus as a declarative act, means brilliance in Chinese. While literal translation is adopted here, it may confuse the foreign tourists by this expressive act because tourists may not realize that it is the flower's name. As a proper name, it is suggested that transliteration goes before an annotation. Thus, “Zhuoyue (Brilliance)” might be a better solution.

### From expressive to directive acts

#### ②九曲通淀一曲同心

*Protect Baiyanadian together*

The Chinese version is an expressive act to call on people to protect the magnificent Baiyangdian Lake. It not only expresses appreciation of Baiyangdian's excellent water system and scientific structure, but also shows the power of calling on tourists to protect Baiyangdian's environment. While the translation only expresses its conative function without much information to show the unique scene of the spot.

### From expressive to declarative acts

#### ③抗日战争时期，在淀泊相连、苇壕纵横的白洋淀上，有一支神出鬼没、来无影去无踪的队伍。

*During the anti-Japanese war period, there's a force appearing and disappearing mysteriously on the Baiyangdian lake with lake and berth connecting and reed and moat freely.*

The Chinese of “神出鬼没” and “来无影去无踪” also belongs to the expressive act in Chinese. It shows the invincible ability of Yanling team and it represents people's admiration for this team. While the English version only adopts literal translation without any sentiment.

This kind of conversion can be made up by adding some expressive content to present the image to the visitors.

## PERLOCUTIONARY ACT

A perlocutionary act is the act performed by or resulting from saying something (Cooren, 2015). When

people express their meaning or act with words, the words will also generate some influence on the thoughts, feelings and behaviors of the receiver.

The following cases are taken to show that different cultural tradition and code of language will generate different experiences in feelings and thoughts.

①白洋淀鸭蛋是河北省传统的汉族名吃。壳呈青色，外观圆润光滑白洋淀当地又叫“青果”

*Baiyangdian duck egg is the traditional famous food of the Han nationality in Hebei Province. It has cyan shell, round and smooth appearance and is named as "Qing Guo" by the locals of Baiyangdian.*

"青果" in Chinese can not only show the color of eggshell, but also convey the freshness and high nutritional value of duck eggs like a kind of fruit. It is a metaphor and Chinese tourists can naturally associate the images of the two different categories. While "QingGuo" is a transliteration in English version. If English users are not familiar with Chinese, they may not get the meaning behind. The translation may be altered to: and is named as "Qing Guo", a kind of fruit with green color by the locals of Baiyangdian.

②这支令敌人闻风丧胆，令百姓欢欣鼓舞的队伍，就是活跃在白洋淀上的抗日武装——人称“水上飞将军”的雁翎队

*This force, making the enemy become terror-stricken at the news and the common people cry of inspiration, is just the Yanling force, the anti-Japanese force on Baiyangdian Lake, praised as "Flying General on Water".*

"Flying General" refers to Li Guang, a famous soldier in Western Han Dynasty. The sentence here praises the undeniable courage and braveness of Yanling team. Although English speakers may get the meaning that it refers to a great male with capitalized "Flying General", they can't fully appreciate the martial ability of Yanling force. Because they do not have the same historical background. Therefore, amplification may be a good way to complement the historical information. The translation can be: the anti-Japanese force on Baiyangdian Lake, praised as "Flying General on Water", a brave warrior in Western Han Dynasty.

③白洋淀气候宜人，风景绝美，四季竞秀，妙趣天成。春光降临，芦芽竞出满淀碧翠；每至盛夏，蒲绿荷红，岸柳如烟，时逢金秋，芦荡飞絮，稻谷飘香隆冬时节，坚冰似玉，坦荡无垠。

*Baiyangdian lake has a pleasant climate and is almost flamboyantly beautiful with four different seasons and natural environment when spring comes, reed buds sprout and the lake is full of green, when summer comes, it's full of green stem and red lotus flower, willows like smoking when autumn comes. There's flying catkins in reed marshes and the air is heavy with*

*the aroma of the paddy fields and when winter comes, the ice looks like jade and it's broad and level.*

The purpose of the promotional materials is to attract people. But some Chinese styled information with order against the cognition sequence of the Westerners may not be transported to them. If the promotional materials send the intended information according to the conventional expression, it will generate disordered information or cultural mistakes. Chinese would like to state more background information about a tourist spot, as well as more descriptions of the sceneries out of a subjective view. While Westerners prefer more of the overall understanding and the specific popular sites. Thus, the translation ought to be easy and clear for Westerners.

④其三，讲究当地原料入馔，以烹制鲜活见长，原料丰富，刀工细腻，口味清淡。菜品配以精美瓷器，别具风格

*Third, pays great attention to local raw materials into the delicious while being good at cooking fresh fish. The raw materials are rich, the cutting skills are exquisite. While the taste is light. The cuisines. Matching with delicate China has unique style.*

The original Chinese text is exquisite and rhythmic with four-character expressions. The translation can also inherit the rhythmic style in English and transfer the basic tune of the Chinese version. The suggested amendment can be: The raw materials are rich. The cutting skills are exquisite, while he tastes is light. The cuisines, with deliver China is unique.

## CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the locutionary act is done with completion of the sentence. The promotional material should be edited with standard spelling and grammar. As to illocutionary act, it can generate different effects. And translators should render the original text according to the illocutionary intention of the source language. Locutionary act and illocutionary act are two parts of the speech act theory which can be used to analyze the utterances. They lie on different layers from the perlocutionary act. The speaker uses utterances to express ideas. And behind the utterances, the speaker may have an intended meaning (Christison, 2018). At least, the speaker wants the receiver to get the hidden meaning or the explicit meaning (Chiaki Sakama, 2017). If the receiver copies the intention, he or she will perform an act. If not, he or she will take another reaction. As to perlocutionary act, it is the result of locutionary act and illocutionary act. Besides, it is important to regulate the translation system and the publicizing means to improve the cultural image as a responsible nation. We shall bear in mind that every word we say represents the speaking code of our civilization. The speech act theory is the guiding principle for us.

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