

A Study on English Translation of Names of Scenic Spots in Wudang Mountain Scenery Area

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ABSTRACT

The names of the scenic spots in Wudang Mountain Scenic Area have profound cultural connotation, thus English translation of these names is crucial in international and intercultural communications. This paper deeply studies the strategies and techniques in the English translation of the scenic spot names in Wudang Mountain, exploring the usage conditions of literal translation and liberal translation in the mentioned field. The paper offers suggestions to solve the present problems existing in the English translation of the names of the scenic spots in Wudang Mountain Scenic Area, with the aim to improve the external publicity and intercultural communication of Wudang Culture.

Keywords: Wudang Mountain, English translation of the names of scenic spots, Translation strategies.

1. INTRODUCTION

Cross-cultural communication is becoming increasingly frequent. China's long and splendid traditional culture, and beautiful scenery, as well as complex and changeable geographical environment attract numerous foreign tourists.

Located within the territory of Shiyan City in the northwest of Hubei province, Wudang Mountain Taoist Architectural Complex is listed as one of the World Cultural Heritages by UNESCO. Known as "the ancient unparalleled scenery, the first immortal mountain", Wudang Mountain is China's national key scenic area, also China's famous Taoist holy land and the birthplace of Wudang martial arts. So the names of the landscape, or the names of the scenic spots in Wudang Mountain Scenic Area are the fame cards in the cultural output and cultural exchange of Wudang Mountain.

As a very important and intuitive work in cultural communication, the names of Wudang Mountain scenic spots often appear in the guideposts and introductions of Wudang Mountain Scenic Area. Some progress and development have been made in English translation of tourism text about Wudang Mountain Scenic Area in recent years. Yet there are still many problems in domestic translation studies about scenic spots, and the current tourism text translation in Wudang Mountain is far from satisfactory.

Mistranslation of tourism text can be found everywhere, and there is little professional research, which is not conducive to the cross-cultural communication function of tourism text translation of Wudang Mountain. Therefore, it is imperative to study the English translation of the names of scenic spots in Wudang Mountain.

This paper will study the English translation of the names of Wudang Mountain scenic spots, trying to find out

solutions to the problems in English translation of the names of Wudang Mountain scenic spots and make feasible suggestions for better translation of tourism texts.

2. STUDY OF ENGLISH TRANSLATION OF NAMES OF SCENIC SPOTS IN WUDANG MOUNTAIN

Translation strategies are the macro translation principle and methods used in translation, including literal translation and liberal translation at the technical level. Translation techniques are microscopic and concrete translation methods used in the process of translation. Amplification, omission, repetition, positive and negative translation, combined translation and conversion translation are translation techniques applicable in English translation of scenic spot names.

2.1. Application of Translation Strategies in English Translation of Scenic Spot Names

Translation strategies include literal translation and liberal translation at the technical level. The following part of the paper mainly discusses literal translation and liberal translation strategies in the English translation of scenic spots in Wudang Mountain.

2.1.1. Application of literal translation in English translation of scenic spot names

Literal translation is a translation strategy often used in the translation of tourism texts, especially in the translation of names of scenic spots that need no explanation or involve

no cultural conflicts. Literal translation strategy will appear in the following situations:

Literal Translation for Scenic Spot Names with High Visibility

Example 1: “武当山”.

“武当山” (Wudang Mountain) is a famous Taoist mountain in China, with profound cultural connotation and many allusions and legends. “武当山” (Wudang Mountain) is well known among most domestic and foreign tourists, so there is no need to explain the term too much. Thus the name can be directly translated as “Wudang Mountain” with literal translation. It is no longer necessary to add more words to supplement its meaning.

Example 2: “金顶”.

“金顶” is to be directly translated into English as “Golden Summit”. There is no need to add more words for explanation.

(2) Literal Translation for Scenic Spot Names without Allusion or Cultural Meanings

For the names of scenic spots without allusions or cultural connotations, literal translation can directly convey the information. For example, “武当山国家地质公园” is literally translated as “Wudang Mountain National Geopark”, and “武当山国际武术学院” as “Wudang International Martial Arts School”.

(3) Literal Translation for Scenic Spot Names with Distinct Features

Wudang Mountain is a holy Taoist place that worships the Lofty God Heavenly Emperor Zhenwu. So there are a lot of scenic spots in Wudang Mountain embodies allusions or cultural connotations about Zhenwu. Yet, they are also distinct in features. Consequently, literal translation can be applied in English translation of such names.

Example 3: “五龙宫”.

Legend has it that “after years of painstaking cultivation in Wudang Mountain, Zhenwu was tempted by the master, and he jumped from the cliff to pay for his fault life for life. Then he was rescued by Dragon Kings of five Qi (coloured clouds) and was sent to the top of the Tianzhu Peak. After being sealed, Zhenwu built a temple for the Five Dragon to show his gratitude”. The term “五龙” referred to the “Five Dragons” that saved Zhenwu. Therefore, the name of “五龙宫” is to be literally translated as “Five Dragons Palace”.

Example 4: “甘露井”.

The water of “甘露井” (The Well of Sweet Dew) in Wudang Mountain Scenic Area is cool and sweet, just like the nectar. According to legend, “the water in the well can cure or prevent diseases”, so it is regarded as the “superb liquor” by Wudang Taoism. The name of “甘露井” is to be literally translated as “The Well of Sweet Dew”.

(4) Literal Translation for Scenic Spot Names Without Cultural Differences in English and Chinese

Some of the names of scenic spots in Wudang Mountain embodies allusions or cultural connotations about Zhenwu. Yet, the names are not culturally different in both Chinese and English. Accordingly, literal translation can be applied in English translation of this kind of scenic spot names.

Example 5: “乌鸦岭”.

In Taoism, “乌鸦” (crow) is regarded as a kind of auspicious bird. In many countries, crow is referred to as divine bird, including the United States, Japan, India, Egypt, Sri Lanka and so on. Hence, there is no need to explain the crow. Thus, “乌鸦岭” is to be directly translated as the “Crow’s Ridge”.

2.1.2 Application of liberal translation in English translation of scenic spot names

Many scenic spots in Wudang Mountain contain Taoist images. So liberal translation is often used in the translation of the scenic spot names with cultural meanings.

Example 6: “遇真宫”.

“遇真宫” (Sage Encounter Palace) is one of the Nine Palaces of Wudang Mountain. The word “遇” in Chinese means “to meet, to encounter” in English. The word “真” in Chinese is generally understood as “reality or truth”. Legend has it that Emperor Zhu Di came across Zhang Sanfeng on the way to turn to Zhang Sanfeng but he did not recognize Zhang. Master Zhang told the emperor about the key points of Wudang Taoism and left. Here, the term “遇真” tells the legend about “the encounter between Emperor Zhu Di and the eminent Taoist priest”. So the name of “遇真宫” is to be translated as “Sage Encounter Palace”.

Example 7: “玄岳门”.

The term “玄岳门” contains a word “玄”, which generally means “black”, and in addition, as a symbol of “Taoism”, as evidenced by the following text. Ge Hong wrote in the Inner Chapter of Bao Puzi: “the word ‘玄’ is the ancestor of nature, and stands for all of them.” In Tao Te Ching, Lao Tzu wrote that, “One is the child of the divine law. After one come two. After two come three. After three come all things. Everything has a bright and a dark side, co-existent in harmony”. Tao is unique in that it contains Yin and Yang and they intersect to form an appropriate state in which all things come into being. Therefore, the word “玄” also represents Taoism, and embodies “the beginning of all things”, “grand and lofty”. Therefore, the word “玄” can be translated as “lofty”. The word “岳” stands for “Mountain”. Hence, the name “玄岳门” is to be translated as “Lofty Mountain Archway”.

Example 8: “演易堂”.

The word “易” is also a symbol of Taoism. In the Book of Changes, it is written that: “Tai Chi begets Yin and Yang, two instruments gave birth to four conditions of Yin and Yang, then begets gave birth to eight diagrams, eight diagrams city, and all phenomena are contained in them.” “易” is all-embracing and explains the change of things with the change of Yin and Yang. “演易” is a process of predicting the future. Therefore, the name of “演易堂” is to be translated into English as “The Fortune-Telling Hall”.

2.2. Application of Amplification Technique in English Translation of Scenic Spot Names

The culture of Wudang Mountain is based on the cultivation of Emperor Zhenwu and the names of many scenic spots contain Chinese historical or Taoism mythological figures, so amplification method can be chosen to make supplementary explanation to facilitate the understanding of tourists.

Example 9: “太子坡”.

There goes the legend. Zhenwu was the prince of “静乐国” (which means “Pure Paradise” in English) before he practiced Taoism. Later, he went to Wudang Mountain for cultivation and lived on a slope. Therefore, this slope was called “太子坡”. The prince successfully ascended to heaven and became “the Lofty God Heavenly Emperor Xuan”. In the signage of Wudang Mountain, “太子坡” is translated as “Taizipo” in Chinese Pinyin, which could not embody the cultural meaning. Therefore, “太子坡” should be translated in the model of “Chinese Pinyin + English Translation” as “Tai-zi-po Crown Prince Slope”.

Example 10: “磨针井”.

“磨针井” can serve as another example. As the term “磨针” embodies a legend that Zhenwu intended to quit cultivating Taoism and then he saw an old woman grinding an iron stick. The old woman told him that the iron stick could be made into a needle with endurance. And Zhenwu was thus enlightened, so he continued his cultivation and successfully ascended to heaven. The name of “磨针井” is to be translated into English by the technique of amplification in the model of “Chinese Pinyin + English Translation” as “Mo-zhen-jing Needle Grinding Well”.

Example 11: “父母殿”.

The word “父母” in the name of “父母殿” does not refer to ordinary, mortal parents, but refers to the birth parents of Emperor Zhenwu. Emperor Zhenwu’s parents were honored as the Holy Father and Holy Mother in Wudang Taoism. So it should be translated into English as “Holly Parents Hall”, indicating this is the place showing respect for the birth parents of Emperor Zhenwu.

2.3. Application of Amplification Technique in English Translation of Slogans

Many slogans in Wudang Mountain involve Wudang culture, Chinese historical or Taoism mythological figures, so amplification method can be chosen to make supplementary explanation to facilitate the transmission of Wudang culture.

Example 12: “武当山 --- 灵”.

The translation of the word “灵” is important but difficult in this slogan. It is universally acknowledged that Wudang Mountain is famous for Taoism, therefore there must be numerous allusions and cultures about Taoism, initially. Subsequently, people have the notion that Wudang Mountain is an efficacious mountain, so they come to seek

fortune, pray for health and hope for better school, etc. Ultimately, Wudang Mountain is a famous national scenic area with beautiful landscape. Hence, the translation of the word “灵” should include the above three points. Therefore, the slogan “武当山 --- 灵” is to be translated as “Wudang Mountain -- Full of Mystery and Efficacy”.

A supplementary explanation of “灵” is made in this translation. On the one hand, the translation “Full of Mystery and Efficacy” reflects the numerous myths and allusions of Wudang Mountain, which are worth exploring like a riddle. On the other hand, it also shows the beautiful natural scenery of Wudang Mountain.

3. PROBLEMS IN ENGLISH TRANSLATION OF NAMES OF SCENIC SPOTS IN WUDANG MOUNTAIN

There are macro and micro problems in English translation of the names of scenic spots in Wudang Mountain Scenic Area.

3.1. Problems in English Translation of Names of Scenic Spots in Wudang Mountain

3.1.1. Lack of cultural connotation

Here are some examples. “关帝庙” and “灵官殿” are names of scenic spots containing historical allusions. The word “关帝” in the name of “关帝庙” refers to “Guan Yu”, who helped Emperor Zhenwu defeat the “Da Dao Monster” in the famous novel *Four Travels in Ming Dynasty*. The word “灵官” in the name of “灵官殿” is the Taoist god, who guards at the mountain gates. But the name of these spots in Wudang Mountain Scenic Area are now directly translated into “Temple of Guan Yu” and “Lingguan Temple”, which do not convey the Taoism culture carried in the names.

3.1.2. False translation

False translation is pretty common in the tourism translation of Wudang Mountain. A famous spot called “杜鹃溪” in Chinese. The name has nothing to do with the bird cuckoo, yet it is now translated on the sign as “CUCKOO RILL”. The spot is named after the wild flower --- azalea, so it should be translated as unreasonable to call it by “the Rill of Azalea”.

3.1.3. Inconsistent translation

The English translation of scenic spots is not uniformed. For example, the item “逍遥谷” has five versions of

translation, such as “Xiaoyao Valley”, “Ramble Valley”, “Free Valley” and so on. The name “逍遥谷” should be translated as “the Valley of Leisure”.

3.2. Causes of Problems in English Translation of Names of Scenic Spots in Wudang Mountain

3.2.1. Poor ability of translators

The ability of the translator directly affects the quality of the translation of the names of scenic spots. These problems show that the translator lacks the excavation of the culture of the source language before translating, and does not understand the background of the source language. After the translation, translators did not review and check the version. In addition, in the process of translation, the translators do not understand the true meaning of the source language, due to the limitation of their own cultural levels. Therefore, the translated text cannot convey the meaning and cultural connotation well.

3.2.2. Weak supervision of relevant local departments

The relevant tourism management departments fail to review the translator’s professional abilities when selecting the translator. Subsequently, when updating the tourism materials, the management departments do not verify the translations of the predecessors and the descendants, and directly set and place them in the scenic spots. In addition, the emergence of multi-translation indicates that the relevant tourism management departments pay insufficient attention to the cultural effects and images of the English translation of the names of the scenic spots.

4. SUGGESTIONS ON IMPROVING ENGLISH TRANSLATION OF NAMES OF SCENIC SPOTS IN WUDANG MOUNTAIN

Relevant national government departments, local tourism management departments and translators all play different important roles in translation activities. Therefore, strict management and requirements should be carried out from top to bottom in order to achieve better translation effects and purposes.

4.1. Improving Translators’ Translation Levels

As transmitters of information, the importance of translators is self-evident. In the field of tourism translation, translators should make good preparations before translation, actively collect relevant information and background knowledge, and should not make a hasty

translation of the text to be translated without preparation. Translators should learn to use reasonable translation strategies to choose appropriate translation techniques, looking for a balance in the translation of the form and the content to spread Chinese culture.

4.2. Improving Relevant Translation Standards

The relevant national departments should work out a set of perfect norms and standards of tourism translation, and appoint authoritative experts and scholars in the field of tourism translation. And the authorities should introduce relevant translation systems or policies to guarantee the qualification of translators.

4.3. Enhancing Relevant Supervision

Relevant authorities should strengthen self-supervision to ensure the consistency, accuracy and standardization of the translation, and should apply external supervision from the masses and tourists. Tourists can point out errors during or after the tour, help correct errors in the translation of the names of scenic spots or other aspects. Thus relevant authorities and the mass jointly maintain the image of the scenic spots.

5. CONCLUSION

Due to the lack of translation standards, translators might be somewhat arbitrary and random in selection and use of translation strategies and techniques in tourism translation, especially in the translation of the names of scenic spots. Apart from appreciation value, classic scenic spots often have unique cultural connotation and emotional colors, reflecting the local folk customs and historical cultures. The regional cultural characteristics of tourist attractions cannot be ignored in the translation of the names of scenic spots. Therefore, the translated texts should not only convey the accurate historical and cultural background to foreign tourists, but also reflect the local cultural characteristics and display the lifestyle, customs and ethics of the local people.

In short, it is strongly suggested that tourism administration departments should strengthen supervision to ensure the unification, accuracy and standardization of the translation of tourism texts. It is also strongly suggested that translators should make proper use of translation strategies to select appropriate translation skills while improving their own quality, to find a balance between the connotation and form of translation, to transform the source language information and disseminate Chinese culture in a balanced way.

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