

Study on the Translation of Public Signs in Zaozhuang Scenic Spots

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ABSTRACT

Zaozhuang, an emerging tourist destination in China, should strengthen the publicity of tourism culture, which contributes much to the development of tourism. The translation of public signs in Zaozhuang scenic spots are investigated in the paper and some common issues are proposed. Given existing research on public sign translation in China, this paper puts forward some suggestions on sign translation in Zaozhuang tourist attractions, so as to ensure its accuracy and elegancy, thus contributing to external publicity.

Keywords: Sign, Translation, Tourism, Zaozhuang.

1. INTRODUCTION

The rapid economic growth of China in recent years further deepens opening-up, which leads to the increase in the number of foreign visitors. Tourism resources abound in Shandong Province. Zaozhuang, a prefecture-level city in Shandong and an emerging tourist destination, is endowed with great expectations. The steady growth of tourism market and mounting foreign tourists highlight the importance of translation of public signs in scenic spots. To this end, the author visited several scenic spots in Zaozhuang, pooled a large number of translation of public signs in scenic spots. Quite a few issues are discovered. Among them, some with universal flaws are selected. Combining with the relevant documents and research results on the English translation of public signs of scenic spots in China, the author puts forward some specific suggestions on the optimization of the English sign translation of Zaozhuang scenic spots.

2. OVERVIEW OF SIGNS IN SCENIC SPOTS AND TRANSLATION PRINCIPLES

As more and more foreign friends come to visit and travel in China, cities are required to set up clearer and more accurate signs in English. The proper use of English signs helps foreign tourists to obtain the information needed in time, avoid the

confusion of being in a different place, and improve the image of a country.[1] On the contrary, incorrect or even confusing English signs will make foreigners confused, even question the social development of the country, thus damaging the image of the country. The above proves the necessity to standardize the application of English signs.

2.1 Overview of Signs

Signs are employed as a language tool for social management. In addition, signs are also artistic to a certain extent. It can fully utilize the charm of language and more mild and effective words can be adopted to achieve the purpose of persuasion and guidance. In other words, signs are mostly used in a specific context or situation.

The signs of scenic spots are mostly concise, which are supposed to achieve the most ideal effect with the simplest form. In scenic spots, signs are mostly set up in places such as entrance, public places, high-risk areas, etc., mainly to provide information and remind visitors. [2] In this way, abundant and effective information can be known in the shortest time. The translation of signs in scenic spots in Zaozhuang mainly serves foreign tourists, so that they can obtain the information they need. Clear, concise, and accurate signs contribute to a favorable experience. However, wrong, vague, and unclear signs mislead them, causing unnecessary confusion and waste of physical power. As a result, the

translation of signs directly sways foreign visitors' traveling experience. In addition to being convenient for foreign visitors, high-quality signs reflect the favorable image of a scenic spot, which is vital for external publicity. The connotation and value of the scenic spot can be revealed, thus attracting investment and drive the growth of regional economy.

2.2 Basic Principles on Translation of Signs in Scenic Spots

The translation that features accuracy, standardization, and conciseness is in a better position to convey clear information. Such translation follows the basic principles of English translation. Based on the basic principles of English translation, the author briefly introduces the translation of signs for scenic spots.

2.2.1 Principle of Accuracy

Signs are supposed to transmit information. When tourists pass through a scenic spot or do not know where they are, accurate and concise signs serve as life-saver. For example, the sign that writes "120 one touch is available" can be found in Taierzhuang City in Zaozhuang, which may confuse foreign visitors. They may immediately wonder the function of 120. For this reason, the author suggests that it is more appropriate to translate this sign as "for doctor call 120". Foreign tourists will know it immediately and if they need a doctor, they will dial 120 as soon as possible.

2.2.2 Principle of Simplicity

Unlike essay, signs are employed to convey information in a specific scenic environment and within a limited time. [3]Therefore, the translation needs to follow the basic principle of simplicity to meet the needs of tourists. In this regard, translators should find an approach to convey the content in a concise and clear way. Yiyun Stone Tribe performs well in this regard. In the parking lot, "No Parking" sign can be found. Signs that read "No Smoking" scatter everywhere in the public places inside the scenic area. Such logos are concise and clear.

2.2.3 Principle of Implicitness

The English translation of signs should be as tactfully and implicitly as possible. Meaning should be taken as a priority, and there is no need to be too direct. For example, we all know "old". However, the signs that read "elderly only" can be found near

public toilets in many scenic spots in Zaozhuang City, which follows the principle of implicitness. In this way, it can be understood by foreign tourists.

2.2.4 Principle of Politeness

Principle of politeness cannot be ignored in the translation of signs for scenic spots. China's pursuit for the construction of a harmonious society and the vision of world peace require the translation of signs in scenic spots to take into account politeness when conveying information. For this reason, when translating signs into English, translators should highlight politeness and friendliness, as well as accurate convey of information. For example, in many scenic spots in Zaozhuang, many facilities and equipment dedicated to the elderly, the weak, the sick and the disabled can be found. Instead of a literal translation, the translator translated it as "disabled only", which not only conveyed the information, but also maximized the humanistic care and cultural connotation of Qilu.

To sum up, the translation of signs in scenic spots should adhere to the principle of accuracy, concision, implicitness and politeness as far as possible to ensure standardization and humanization. The author thinks that most scenic spots in Zaozhuang City have done a better job in this respect and have followed the above principles. In addition, during the author's field investigation, several foreign tourists were randomly interviewed, and they all agreed that the sign was easy to understand without any ambiguity.

3. SOME FLAWS IN THE TRANSLATION OF SIGNS FOR SCENIC SPOTS IN ZAOZHUANG CITY

There are some flaws in the translation of signs in Zaozhuang scenic spot, such as inaccuracy, Chinglish, machine translation, etc. The above-mentioned issues lead to unfavorable travel experience, which damages the city image of Zaozhuang. The problems found and summarized through field investigation are listed as follows.

3.1 Inaccuracy

In the ancient town of Taierzhuang, Zaozhuang, there is a sign saying "120 one touch is available". This translation does not take into account the thinking and cultural environment of foreign tourists. In the United States, for example, 911 is an integrated telephone for fire, rescue and police. But the 120 in

this translation will leave visitors confused. For this reason, the author thinks that it is clearer to translate directly as "for doctor call 120". Foreign friends can understand it at first sight, which not only accurately and efficiently conveys the meaning of the sign, but also impresses foreign tourists. In addition, many scenic spots in Zaozhuang use WC to refer to public toilets. WC, with its full name "water closet," might not be too difficult for a native. However, foreign visitors are likely to have to guess what the abbreviation means, and some may even be confused. Therefore, the author believes that it is necessary to change these inaccurate and vulgar signs and use "Toilet" instead.

3.2 The Alphabet Is Replaced by Chinese Pinyin Too Often

The practice of replacing letters with Chinese pinyin is common in various scenic spots of Zaozhuang. This translation method is not wrong, and the author has also mentioned that pinyin translation method is sometimes necessary. But the frequent presence of pinyin can confuse foreign visitors.

For example, in the scenic spot of Taierzhuang Ancient City, 谢裕大茶楼, a famous scenic spot, is frequently translated as "Xieyu Da Chalou" and "Xieyu Teahouse". The former is pure pinyin, while the latter belongs to free translation. Xie Yu is a person's name, the retention of pinyin is understandable. But the translation of the teahouse is open to debate. Should we just keep the pinyin of Chalou or use "Teahouse"? Some people believe that teahouses are also a major feature of Chinese culture, and keeping pinyin is undoubtedly the most ideal translation method. Others argue that "Teahouse" has clearly translated its meaning and there is no need to keep the pinyin.

The author takes into account that foreign tourists grow up in an English-speaking environment. Frequent use of pinyin in signage of scenic spots is not conducive to tourists' understanding. Compared with "Xieyu Da Chalou", "Xieyu Teahouse" is more in line with the idioms and habits of foreign tourists, and there is no obstacle in understanding. Therefore, the author prefers the latter.

3.3 Chinglish

Chinglish is common in Chinese English translation. When using English, domestic English learners are limited by their own thinking, behavior and cultural habits, as well as their unfavorable

English. [4]They often employ Chinese grammar habits to translate non-standard English. In the introduction sign in Taierzhuang Ancient City Scenic Area, there is such a paragraph: Emperor Qianlong went to the south of the Yangtze River six times in his life. When I passed Tai'erzhuang for the fourth time, I left the imperial pen of "the first village in the world. The translation is more grammatical in Chinese than English. Although foreign tourists can roughly understand according to the words and short sentences, it is not in line with the development of scenic spots and is not conducive to the construction of scenic culture. The author holds that it is better to translate this paragraph as "Emperor Qianlong travelled to the South of the Yangtze River six times in his life, passing through Tai'erzhuang. The fourth time I passed by Tai'erzhuang, I left behind "The best village in the world", which is more appropriate and conforms to the habits of foreign tourists.

3.4 Machine Translation

Field investigation shows that most of the slogan translations of scenic spots in Zaozhuang are machine translation. Many workers directly input Chinese text into translation machines without thinking about it, and the results they get are not only grammatical errors, but also illogical sentences, lack of related words and logic confusion. [5]For example, the sentence "Lunan shadow play, also known as shadow play, was listed in the first batch of intangible cultural heritage list of Shandong Province in 2007". Such machine translation only achieves word-to-word correspondence, completely ignoring the translation principles mentioned above by the author. The translation is illogical and impolite, so it is not well received by foreign tourists. Therefore, scenic spots in Zaozhuang should hire professional translators to be responsible for the translation of signs, rather than relying on machine translation.

3.5 Inappropriate Translation

Appropriate and proper translation is one of the most important criteria to evaluate the quality of translation. An inappropriate translation cannot serve as a signage. "Welcome you again," says a billboard on the main road leading into the scenic area of Yiyun Stone Tribe. A native Chinese will understand that this sign means that we look forward to your next visit and show the generosity and friendliness of the people of Zaozhuang.

But that's not what the English language says. To be specific, "welcome" means to welcome someone,

which is similar to "invite"; so "again" in this context actually means "a person" who has come to visit again, and the word that is similar to leaving is "come". Therefore, it is difficult for foreign tourists to clearly understand this sentence, which makes them feel baffled and at a loss what to do. Therefore, they cannot feel the enthusiasm of the people of Zaozhuang City. Therefore, the author thinks "please come again" is more appropriate to ensure that both local Chinese and foreign visitors understand.

4. SOME SUGGESTIONS ON THE TRANSLATION OF SIGNS IN ZAOZHUANG SCENIC SPOT

The above shows that there are several serious problems in the translation of signs in various scenic spots of Zaozhuang City. In order to address such problems, the author puts forward several effective suggestions combined with the actual situation.

4.1 Government Departments Should Strengthen the Standardized Management of the Use of Signs

The Zaozhuang municipal government should strengthen the management of the scenic spots in the city and pay special attention to the standardized development of sign translation in the scenic spots. To this end, the Zaozhuang government can give full play to its own functions, set up a number of activity groups which should be dispatched to each scenic spot. They shall be responsible for the supervision and examination of the translation of signs in scenic spots, and organize the correction and optimization of signs in scenic spots in an orderly manner. Each activity group should give full play to its own functions, and inspect the signs in the scenic spots of Zaozhuang in accordance with the relevant national regulations. The signage that does not conform to the standard should be corrected immediately, or reported to the supervision and review team for a second inspection. In addition, the government can also establish a set of evaluation and punishment system to standardize the development of signs in scenic spots.

4.2 Raising the Awareness of Public

Various means of publicity should be used to strengthen the attention of Zaozhuang people to the sign of scenic spots and further understand the inseparable relationship between the translation of sign and the construction of Zaozhuang scenic spots and the development of city image. In this way,

citizens can consciously record and report the non-standard and incorrect signs inside the scenic spot so that the government departments can correct and deal with them in time. In addition, all the staff responsible for the translation of signs in the scenic spot should be equipped with favorable English quality and cultural standards. They should consider the differences in cultural background and thinking, and make a more accurate and appropriate translation according to the content of the sign. This is a job that tests the creativity and analytical ability of translators. It requires them to strengthen their cultural observation ability and language accumulation in daily life. At the same time, it also requires full support from the major scenic spots of Zaozhuang City.

4.3 Enhancing the Monitoring of Network Media

Media is an important way of social supervision, even if it is used in the development of scenic spots.[6] In this regard, the major media of Zaozhuang City should pay attention to the translation of signs in the scenic spots, expose improper, non-standard or wrong signs, and give encouragement and praise to some excellent translations. This method can be used to ensure the standard, accurate and decent translation of signs in various scenic spots of Zaozhuang City. Moreover, media staff can also edit public advertisements to publicize the importance of signs in the scenic spot, so that the public of Zaozhuang City can have a deep understanding of the importance of signs in the cultural publicity and external output of the scenic spot, and participate in the construction of the scenic spot in a more positive attitude.

4.4 Countermeasures for English Translation of Signs in Zaozhuang Scenic Spot

In addition to the above suggestions on the translation of signs in scenic spots of Zaozhuang City, the author also puts forward the following countermeasures on the standardized development of scenic spot translation based on experience and research findings:

- The translation of signs of scenic spots should follow the way of combining the name of scenic spots with the general name, so as to achieve a unified standard. The use of pinyin should be careful, accurate and not too frequent.[7]

- When translating the contents involving local ideology, culture and folklore, we should first clarify the basic meaning of the original text, and then appropriately translate and modify them according to the meaning to be expressed. While fully understanding the meaning of the original text, the translation should be objective and clear. For example, the word "Jingshe", considering the language habits of foreign tourists, the author suggests that the translation is more accurate and clear as "Vihara".
- In the translation of scenic spot signs, translators can give play to their creativity and talent. However, such practice should be controlled within a reasonable range, and "word-making" and "Chinglish" should be prohibited to avoid translation errors caused by translators being too self-centered.[8]
- The internationally popular mature translation should be adopted for the world's common signage which does not involve culture, thinking or custom. If the mature translation cannot clearly explain the meaning of the signage, it can be simply paraphrase on the basis of referring to English relevant information, so as to match it with the scenic spot. However, it cannot deviate from the usage of foreign tourists to prevent ambiguity. For example, the word "warm tips", which is common in various scenic spots, is suggested to be translated directly into "Tips", which is concise and clear in meaning, and there is no need for English to correspond with Chinese.
- Moreover, Zaozhuang, located in the land of Qilu, has many symbols of public welfare with rich cultural connotations. The translation of such signs should follow the basic principles of transmitting information, and then pursue the goal of "faithfulness, expressiveness and elegance". It is not necessary to play tricks in order to achieve excellent translation, which may be self-defeating. For the translation of public signs, tone is a problem worth paying attention to, and it is appropriate to adopt a natural, peaceful and persuasive tone.
- In the construction of the translation team of Zaozhuang scenic spots, talents with high sense of responsibility, excellent cultural quality and language quality should be included in the team to pursue the high quality of translation of scenic spots. The practice of machine translation, which is detrimental to the cultural connotation of scenic spots in order to save money, should be banned.

5. CONCLUSION

The rapid development of tourism in Zaozhuang City will attract more and more foreign friends to experience the time-honoured ancient culture. The guidance and instructions for foreign tourists will undoubtedly play an extremely important role in promoting the development of local scenic spots and building a good city image, so that they can have a good tourism experience. The English translation of signs in various scenic spots is undoubtedly an important manifestation of humanistic feelings in the development of Zaozhuang's tourism industry.

AUTHOR'S CONTRIBUTIONS

This paper is independently completed by Li Wan.

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