

A Study on the Chinese-Japanese Translation of Tourism Public Signs from the Perspective of Functional Translation Theory

GENG Wei-wei

(Dalian Vocational Technical College, Dalian, Liaoning 116035, China)

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Abstract: With the deepening of China's internationalization and more foreigners traveling to the country, the need of studying the tourism public signs translation are becoming more and more critical and urgent. Functional translation theory originated in Germany in the 1970s, it emphasizes that translation is a "purposeful behavior", "communicative activity" and "cross-cultural activity". Under the guidance of functional translation theory, the errors of Chinese-Japanese translation of tourism public signs are divided into two categories: "hard problem" and "soft problem". With the respect of their functions, they're further divided into five categories: indicative, suggestive, restrictive, mandatory and introductory. The essay also suggested some strategies and attention points while translating these signs with different functions and provided feasible solutions.

1. Introduction

As the promotion of China's economic strength and international status, more and more foreigners visit China or seek career opportunities here.

According to the statistics from the official website of China National Tourism Administration, Japan is China's second largest overseas tourist source country or region. Unfortunately the Japanese translation of the public signs in the tourism sites is not well treated enough and errs a lot. Therefore, it is of great practical significance to standardize the translation, to accurately and effectively serve the Japanese tourists. At the same time, it also has very important academic research value.

Tourism public signs refer to the text and graphics information tourist attraction sites offer the visitors, including the road signs, notices, service guides, tour instructions, tickets information, recreation facility price information and instruction for all the sightseeing sites and public facilities.

2. The theoretical basis of the study

Founded by K.Reiss, functional translation theory was originated in the 1970s in Germany. For the first time, the concept of functional type is introduced into the theory of translation, and a translation criticism model based on the functional relationship between source language and target language is established. She believes that the goal of translation is to achieve "in the aspects of ideological content, language form and communicative function, target language is equivalent to the source text" (Reiss 2004). Reiss's theory still insists that loyal to the original content is the most important and does not fully recognize the influence of cultural factors on translation.

The "teleology" proposed by Hans. J. Vermeer complements Reiss' theory, Vermeer suggests that the translation is "a coherent discourse generated from the social and cultural scene of the target language, it serves a certain purpose and certain audience", since it involves the function of the translation, the originator of the translation, the translator, the recipient of the translation, and many other aspects, the purpose of the translation determines the strategies and methods used in the translation (Vermeer 1987). To sum up, functional translation theory emphasizes that translation is a "purposeful behavior", a "communicative activity" and "cross-cultural activity".

3. The Classification and Causes of the Problems appeared in the Japanese translation of tourism public signs

Professor Ding Hengqi (2006) divided the errors in public signs translation into three categories: “hard”, “soft” and “hidden”. In accordance with Professor Ding's classification, the author divides the Japanese translation errors in public signs into two categories: “hard” and “soft”. Hard translation errors include text markup problem, paragraph format problem, punctuation problem, font problem, missing parts, inconsistent translation, etc. For example, “ましよう” is sometimes misprinted into “ましよう”; “ために” printed into “ために”; using Chinese characters “灰” and “化” instead of Japanese character “灰” and “化”; the Qing Taizong or "Huang Taiji" is translated into two different versions: “コウタイキュウ” and “ホンタイジ”. Soft translation errors include limited language knowledge, cultural difference, translator's lack of ability, improper tone, and so on.

The hard problems might be caused by the negligence of the translator, for not having double-checked the translation work carefully, or the production process of public signs is not supervised by authority, the result wasn't reviewed by Japanese language experts, or the relevant government departments did not see the significance in these work, therefore didn't provide guidance, management and supervision. These types of problems are relatively easier to solve.

Soft problems are perhaps due to the fact that the translator is lack of solid basic Japanese language skills, lack of good sense of cross-cultural communication, or did not apply effective translation strategy and method. These types of problems are harder to solve.

4. The Strategy of Translating Tourism Public Signs

By function, Professor Lyu Hefa (2004) divided public signs into four categories: indicative, suggestive, restrictive, and mandatory. After analyzing characteristics and functions of tourism public signs, the author suggests that besides the types Professor Lyu listed, there is another category that plays an explanatory and descriptive role, so hereby divide them into these five categories: indicative, suggestive, restrictive, mandatory and introductory.

(1) Indicative public signs indicate that “this site offers thorough information, they have no restraining or forcing implication”, “they do not necessarily require the public to take any action, and their mere function is to inform this service” (2004: 38). Most of these signs are “stationary” information, for example the names of the place or the organization. They often have their correspondent expression, therefore they're usually directly “borrowed” from the Japanese language, for example, “お手洗い” (WC), “入り口” (Entrance), “案内所” (Information), etc.

(2) Suggestive public signs “have no specific meanings, only alert people” (2004: 38). These signs mostly contain dynamic information, they also often have correspondent version and take the “borrow” approach, for example, “売り切れ” (Sold Out), “使用中”(In Use), “転倒注意”(Watch Your Step), etc.

(3) Restrictive public signs “restrict or refrain certain public behaviors, they use straightforward expression, but won't make people feel tough, rude, or unreasonable” (2004: 38-39). In different countries, regions or cities, tourist attractions also have different restrictions on tourist behaviors. So if these restrictive signs already exist in Japanese, “borrow” them. If not, then refer to a similar expression, do an “imitation translation”, for example “関係者専用” (Staff Only), “一列に並んでお待ちください” (Stand in Line), etc.

Some of the restrictive public signs are obviously restrictive or binding, but also serve an instruction function. They also indicate stationary information, usually have correspondent expression suitable for “borrowing”, for example, “優先席” (Courtesy Seat), “身体障害者専用駐車場” (Handicapped Parking Only), etc.

(4) Mandatory public signs “require the public to take or not take any action, using straightforward and mandatory tone, with no room for negotiation” (2004: 39). When translating

mandatory public signs as with restrictive public signs, first take the “borrow” approach, If not, then do an “imitation translation”, for example, 喫煙禁止(No Smoking), 火気厳禁(No Fires), 撮影禁止(No Photos or Video Allowed), キャンプ禁止(No Camping), etc.

However, the target readers of tourism public signs are tourists, so if not paying attention to the feelings of the readers, the translation’s tone is too tough, it will give a bad experience to visitors. Therefore, mandatory public signs are often expressed by the following several types of sentences.

- ① お(ご)~ください。
 - キッズパーク内での飲食はご遠慮ください。
(Please refrain from eating and drinking in the kids park.)
- ② ~てください。
 - たたむときはこのボタンを押してください。
(Please press this button when folding.)
- ③ ~ないでください。
 - 芝生に入らないでください。
(Please do not enter the lawn.)
- ④ Negative form of potential conjugation.
 - ペットの入店はできません。
(Pets are not allowed.)
- ⑤ ~をお願いいたします/お願い申し上げます。
 - 展示物は大変精巧に作られているためお手を触れぬようお願い申し上げます。
(Please do not touch the exhibits that are elaborately made.)

(5) Introductory public signs refer to the description of a scenic spot. These signs contain strong Chinese culture, relate to the natural, geographical, humanities, history, traditional culture and other aspects. There are not corresponding or similar expression in Japanese for Introductory public signs, so we have to translate them into Japanese with creative translation. Translating should follow the principle that the target language is based, the source language is supplemented. The translation should be in accordance with the expression and the way of Japanese language, fully respect for Japanese culture and appropriately add Chinese culture. The name with Chinese characteristics can be used the way of annotations to explain. The Following points should be pay attention to translating.

- ① Use words correctly.
 - i. Attention to the Homomorphic Phenomenon of Chinese and Japanese Words.

Japanese scholar Yasunori Okochi defines Chinese and Japanese identities as“いずれがいずれを借用したかを問わず，双方同じ漢字で表記されるもの”(Regardless of which one borrowed, what is written with the same Chinese characters on both sides) (1997: 419), and not including Simplified Chinese characters, Traditional Chinese characters, Feed kana, Prefix, Suffix and other factors.

As we all know, Chinese characters are imported from China into Japan, but it is not meaning that Chinese characters of Japanese and Chinese are identical in glyph and meaning. In fact, many words are the same or similar in glyph, but the meaning are very different. For example, the same Chinese characters of “娘”, in the Chinese means “mother”, but in Japanese means “daughter”.

- ii. Distinguish Japanese synonyms.

Although many synonyms in Japanese that translate into Chinese of the same meaning, there are still pragmatic differences among them. For example, “浮雕尽头一对活泼可爱的孩子憧憬着大连走向世界，走向新世纪的美好未来。”(“At the end of the relief, a pair of lovely children are looking forward to Dalian will embrace the world towards the beautiful future.”)(Selected from “Dalian Centennial City carving profile”), the Chinese-Japanese Translation of “浮雕尽头”(at the end of the relief) translated into“彫刻の突き当たり”. “突き当たり” means the end can not go any further, but in fact, this scenic spot is surrounded by a very wide venue. It is clear that the

original “尽头”(the end) of tourism public signs translated into “突き当たり” is not accurate, Should translate into “終わり”.

② Use grammar and sentence correctly

Honorific of Japanese is well-developed, which is one important characteristics of Japanese. The use of honorifics meets certain occasions, circumstances and objects, so it is not available everywhere.

When translating, we should pay attention to avoid abusing honorific, the structure of the original sentence, the function of each component in the sentence, and active voice or passive voice.

③ Note an order in language

Japanese is a sticky language that an order in language is very flexible, but it has a long-term fixed order in language. In the above example, “一对活泼可爱的孩子” (a pair of lovely children) was translated into “二人の可愛い子供”. In fact, according to the expression in Japanese that should be translated into “可愛い二人の子供”.

④ Use decomposition translation method appropriately.

When the Chinese text is long and the content is complicated, in order to make the translation accurately, clearly, easily to be understood, it is recommended to use decomposed translation method.

Decomposition translation method is that a original sentence translated with two or more sentences. There are two methods: One is to change the original punctuation simply, extended sentence; the other is to extract a part of the content directly from the original, make it become a separate sentence, or put it into other sentence.

Chapter 4, The Way and Method of Solving the Problem on the Chinese-Japanese translation of tourism public signs

(1) Strengthen the administrative supervision of the government.

The relevant departments of the government may establish special departments to manage the translation of public signs, and develop a corresponding system of regulations for unified management. In the process of producing signage, send Japanese professional translators to production units for guidance and supervision, in order to ensure produced signage to the right and standardized.

(2) Strengthen the academic supervision of public sign translation.

Setting up Expert committee on the Chinese-Japanese translation of public signs, organizing related personnel to write “Liaoning Province the Chinese-Japanese translation norms of tourism public signs”, and reviewing of the translation rigorously. Members of the Committee should include Japanese language specialists, applied linguistics experts, scholars studying on the Chinese-Japanese translation, Japanese culture and other tourism management experts.

(3) Strengthen the construction of the translation team.

It is important for the translator to have an accurate understanding of the information contained in the original text, and master the skill and abilities of the two languages used to the translation.

If the translator's language level of the target language and the source language, cultural literacy and translation ability are not good, it will inevitably lead to a variety of errors in the public signs translation. Therefore, it is very necessary to strengthen the construction of the translation team , carry out targeted training for the translators and award certificates to allow qualified translators to work.

(4) Mobilize the public to correct the Chinese-Japanese translation of tourism public signs.

Setting up civil society organizations and moving the public who understand Japanese and the Japanese culture to pick out the errors on the Chinese-Japanese translation of tourism public signs. Receiving public comments and suggestions by letters, public telephone, e-mail and other ways. Commending and giving a certain reward to the people who makes a suggestion was adopted.

Scenic spots are facing the foreign tourists by the front line, so if the public signs translation is correct, that not only introduce the tourism characteristics of the region fully, but also reflect the good quality of the nation, play a very good role in cultural propaganda. If not, that not only will

bring inconvenience, resulting in undue problems to visitors, but also affect the region and even the country's image and international exchanges. In short, we should pay attention to the Chinese-Japanese translation of tourism public signs. By the way, appeal to relevant experts and scholars to intensify the study on the Chinese-Japanese translation of tourism public signs, so that tourism public signs have an important effect on guide, instructions, cultural communication.

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