A Survey on Foreign Tourists’ English Translation of Guangdong Tourism Images

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Metaphor, constituting culture as well as inheriting one, is a way that human beings perceive the world. The study of cognitive metaphor theory in translation illustrates the process how the people construct psychological images from one culture to another, from one language to another. A survey on Chinese to English translation has been conducted among foreigners to see their intuitive understandings of some Guangdong tourism images. The results found out three different familiarity levels of these tourism images and the English translations from the viewpoint of the foreigners. Translation can be done without understanding the actual meanings, and understanding can occur without being able to translate.

Keyword: foreign tourists, Guangdong tourism images, metaphor, translation

Introduction

In trans-cultural communication, understanding each other refers to understanding different cultures and their experiences. It is important to realize and respect the differences among backgrounds, cultures, values, and so on. We live in a world of metaphor. Metaphorical imagination is a crucial skill when creating tacit agreements and communicating non-shared experiences (Lakoff & Johnson, 2015, p. 202). Metaphor is a linguistic phenomenon, but more importantly, a thinking mode. When doing translations from one culture to another, the factor of cognition should be considered (Chen, 2019, pp. 26-27, 35).

Cognitive Metaphor and Translation

Metaphor translation converts the literal meanings from one language to another. Moreover, it renders the implicit meanings from one culture to another. Cognitive metaphor, originated from experience, reflects the metaphorical image from one domain to another through psychological experience (Chen, 2017, pp. 143-146). It is an imaginative way of describing something by referring to something else which is the same in a particular way, according to the definition from Collins Dictionary. Translation is a process of decoding the
source language and encoding the target language. In Lakoff’s cognitive metaphorical theory, translation process is a way of mapping between two different conceptual domains: the source domain where the concept is to create the metaphorical construction and the target domain where the concept is translated (Chen, 2016, pp. 293-299).

In another way, metaphorical translation of tourism images might refer to the translation of culture-loaded words. From Liao’s perspective (2006, p. 236), there are three principles when doing the translation. The reproduction of lexical meaning in the source language is superior to that of formal meaning. Context of the lexical in the source language must be considered when choosing proper words. Important implicit meaning of the source language should be translated into explicit meaning of the target language. In a word, cognition in translation needs to be carefully thought over.

Tourism cognition implies the projection of the tourists’ unique travel experience, emotion, mind, and other factors. Tourism images involving tourism destination sceneries, historical relics, constructions, foods, and others form comprehensive perception for visitors to understand the tourist destination and culture. It is well-known to Chinese that Guangzhou is the paradise for gourmets, the political and cultural center of Lingnan region. Some famous tourism images representing Guangzhou culture imply that Guangzhou people pursue leisure and sophisticated way in life, being down to earth. However, these metaphorical images might not be familiar to foreigners. Thus, a survey was conducted to find out the familiarity level of Canton tourism images known by foreigners and the English translated by them.

The Survey

Aim of the Survey

The aim of the survey was to observe the familiarity level of Guangdong tourism images and the English translation of that from a foreigner’s perspective.

Method

Subject. 74 subjects were recruited from classes of Chinese language course for foreigners in a Guangdong university. Most of these subjects had been in Guangdong for less than one year, knowing a little Chinese and they were taking a short-term Chinese class. They should have no problems in reading Chinese pinyin and have already been to some places of interests in Guangdong.

Design and material. 28 popular tourism images chosen from newspaper (Yang, 2017) and tourist brochure by Tourism Administration of Guangdong Province with both Chinese and English were used to let the subjects decide whether they knew them or not; and English translations were required to be written down. These images included famous key words of Cantonese foods, tourist attractions, living style, and so on. A picture, Chinese, and pinyin of each tourism image were provided to the subjects.

Results and Analysis

49 subjects finished most of the contents and 25 left most of the contents in blank. Thus, only 49 questionnaires were analyzed. Among these 49 subjects, 20 were males. 5 subjects ranged in age from 15 to 19, 21 from age 20 to 24, 13 from age 25 to 29, 5 from age 30 to 34, 1 from age 35-39, and 2 were above 40. The average time they have been living in Guangzhou was 8.6 months.
Table 1 showed the origin Chinese and English used in the newspaper and the brochure for each tourism image, and the percentage in knowing each image according to the subjects’ understandings. As can be seen from the table, tourism images can be divided into three types, the most familiar type (percentage above 60), the intermediate level of familiarity type (percentage between 50 and 60), and the least familiar one (percentage below 50). Ranking from the most familiar to the least one, in the most familiar type, tourism images were Shrimp Dumplings, Canton Tower, Beijing Road, Baiyun Mountain, Canton Fair, Barbecue-Pork-Filled Bun, Sampan Porridge, Party Pier Beer Culture & Art Zone, and Steamed Vermicelli Roll; in the intermediate level of familiarity type, tourism images were Cantonese Opera, Rams City, Shangxiajiu Pedestrian Street, Claypot, Huacheng Square, Shishi Sacred Heart Cathedral, and Chen Clan Academy; in the least familiar type, tourism images were Yum Cha, Shameen, Ersha Island, Flower Fairs, Finger Kowtow, Guangxiao Temple, Ancient Xiguan House, Dongshan Mansions, Southern Yue King’s Tomb, the Green Water of Luhu Lake, One Pot Two Pieces, and Huangpu Military Academy.

| No. | Chinese              | English                                      | Percentage | Chinese              | English                                      | Percentage |
|-----|----------------------|----------------------------------------------|------------|----------------------|----------------------------------------------|------------|
| 1   | 艇仔粥               | Sampan Porridge                              | 78%        | 虾饺                 | Shrimp Dumplings                            | 100%       |
| 2   | 艇仔饭               | Claypot                                     | 55%        | 肠粉                 | Steamed Vermicelli Roll                      | 61%        |
| 3   | 肠粉                 | Barbecue-Pork-Filled Bun                     | 78%        | 叉烧包               | Barbecue-Pork-Filled Bun                     | 78%        |
| 4   | 粤剧                 | Party Pier Beer Culture & Art Zone           | 65%        | 白云山               | Baiyun Mountain                              | 92%        |
| 5   | 花城广场              | Huacheng Square                             | 53%        | 一盅两件              | One Pot Two Pieces                          | 12%        |
| 6   | 羊城                 | Canton Fair                                 | 16%        | 黄埔军校              | Huangpu Military Academy                    | 10%        |
| 7   | 花市                 | Rams City                                   | 21%        | 广交会                | Canton Fair                                 | 80%        |
| 8   | 麗湖碧水              | The Green Water of Luhu Lake                | 39%        | 南越王墓              | Southern Yue King’s Tomb                    | 16%        |
| 9   | 羊城                 | Canton Fair                                 | 22%        | 黄埔军校              | Huangpu Military Academy                    | 10%        |
| 10  | Shashi Sacred Heart Cathedral | Ersha Island                        | 22%        | 广州塔                | Canton Tower                                | 47%        |
| 11  | 古街                 | Canton Tower                                 | 22%        | 古街                  | Canton Tower                                | 47%        |
| 12  | 古街                  | Canton Tower                                 | 22%        | 古街                  | Canton Tower                                | 47%        |
| 13  | 古街                 | Canton Tower                                 | 22%        | 古街                  | Canton Tower                                | 47%        |
| 14  | 古街                 | Canton Tower                                 | 22%        | 古街                  | Canton Tower                                | 47%        |
| 15  | 古街                 | Canton Tower                                 | 22%        | 古街                  | Canton Tower                                | 47%        |
| 16  | 古街                 | Canton Tower                                 | 22%        | 古街                  | Canton Tower                                | 47%        |
| 17  | 古街                 | Canton Tower                                 | 22%        | 古街                  | Canton Tower                                | 47%        |
| 18  | 古街                 | Canton Tower                                 | 22%        | 古街                  | Canton Tower                                | 47%        |
| 19  | 古街                 | Canton Tower                                 | 22%        | 古街                  | Canton Tower                                | 47%        |
| 20  | 古街                 | Canton Tower                                 | 22%        | 古街                  | Canton Tower                                | 47%        |
| 21  | 古街                 | Canton Tower                                 | 22%        | 古街                  | Canton Tower                                | 47%        |
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| 23  | 古街                 | Canton Tower                                 | 22%        | 古街                  | Canton Tower                                | 47%        |
| 24  | 古街                 | Canton Tower                                 | 22%        | 古街                  | Canton Tower                                | 47%        |
| 25  | 古街                 | Canton Tower                                 | 22%        | 古街                  | Canton Tower                                | 47%        |
| 26  | 古街                 | Canton Tower                                 | 22%        | 古街                  | Canton Tower                                | 47%        |
| 27  | 古街                 | Canton Tower                                 | 22%        | 古街                  | Canton Tower                                | 47%        |
| 28  | 古街                 | Canton Tower                                 | 22%        | 古街                  | Canton Tower                                | 47%        |

The translations to each tourism image varied from subjects to subjects. Top 3 preferred translations for each image were listed below. For Shrimp Dumplings, the most favorable answers were Shrimp Dumplings,
dumplings, and dim sum. For Canton Tower, Guangzhou Tower, Canton Tower, and Guangzhou Building. For Beijing Road, Beijing Road, Beijing Street, and Beijing Lu. For Baiyun Mountain, Baiyun Mountain, Moutain of Baiyun, and Mount Baiyun. For Canton Fair, Canton Fair, Exhibition Canton, and Guangzhou Trade Show. For Barbecue-Pork-Filled Bun, fried meat steamed bun, bread with pork inside, and pork bun. For Sampan Porridge, porridge, congee, and rice porridge. For Party Pier Beer Culture & Art Zone, party pier, bar, and beer exhibition. For Steamed Vermicelli Roll, dim sum, noodle with meat, and rice noodle roll. For Cantonese Opera, opera, Chinese opera, and Guangdong Opera. For Rams City, City of Lamb, Five Goat Sculpture, and Sheep City. For Shangxiajiu Pedestrian Street, Pedestrian Street, Shangxiajiu Lu, and shopping street. For Claypot, claypot fried rice, fried rice, and hot pot rice. For Huacheng Square, Central Park, Flower Town Mall, and City Flower Square. For Shishi Sacred Heart Cathedral, church, Cathedral, and Catholic Cathedral. For Chen Clan Academy, Chen Family, Chan House, and temple. For Yum Cha, tea, Yin Tea, and Cha. For Shameen, European Style Building, Shameen Island, and Shamian Island. For Ersha Island, Second Town, two separate islands, and island. For Flower Fairs, flower garden, flower market, and flower shop. For Finger Kowtow, thanks for the tea, tea ceremony, and thank gesture. For Guangxiao Temple, Buddhist Temple, temple, and Chinese Temple. For Ancient Xiguan House, western gate, history road, and old buildings. For Dongshan Mansions, East Mountain Street, East Mountain, and Dongshan. For Southern Yue King’s Tomb, South Emperor Memorial, King of South Vietnam, and King Museum. For the Green Water of Luhu Lake, lake, river, and Water Park. For One Pot Two Pieces, bun and tea, two dim sum one teapot, and dim sum. For Huangpu Military Academy, military academy, school, and military school.

**Discussion and Conclusion**

The above results indicated that some famous Guangdong tourism images were not familiar to foreigners so that the English to these images were mostly based on literal translation. Besides, as can be seen from the three types of familiarity images, foreign visitors perceived concrete tourism images more easily and processed them more precisely. For example, Shrimp Dumplings, Barbecue-Pork-Filled Bun, Sampan Porridge, and Steamed Vermicelli Roll being the usual and traditional foods when drinking local Cantonese morning tea belonged to the most familiar type; however, drinking morning tea “Yum Cha”, the politeness culture conveyed from this activity “finger kowtow”, and the metaphorical name of these food and leisure lifestyle “One Pot Two Pieces” belonged to the least familiar type. Likewise, Claypot, another famous and popular Cantonese cuisine, belonged to the intermediate level of familiarity type. Other images belonging to the most familiar type illustrated the places and event that were mostly welcomed by foreigners and could best stand for Guangzhou, e.g., Canton Tower, Beijing Road, Baiyun Mountain, Canton Fair, and Party Pier Beer Culture & Art Zone.

According to Lakoff (Ye, 2013, p. 98), comprehension is a kind of mental activity when expressing is a reflection from one language to another. Thus, translation can be done without understanding the actual meanings, and understanding can occur without being able to translate. The survey demonstrated this opinion. Most of the subjects finished the translating job for the least familiar images with reasonable translations. And for the word “finger kowtow”, quite a number of the subjects could not translate it but they understood that this was a gesture meaning “thank you”.
The conceptual system of different languages and cultures might share some things in common, as well as the differences. Difficulties in translation might refer to different conceptual system, but the language users have the ability to conceptualize the words and the different cultures so as to understand the meanings. Although this survey found out that the subjects can do the translation without understanding the metaphorical meaning, it is still important to construct metaphorical images into tourism English to bring culture to foreign visitors.

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