An Analysis on the Translation and the Standardization Strategy of Public Signs of Tourist Attraction of South Taihang Mountains

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Abstract. Public signs in the tourist attraction can guide and alert the tourists during the tourism. Recently the foreign tourists have increased, but the public signs do not keep up with the development of tourism. The problems of translation bring a lot of inconveniences for the tourists. Eight problems on the public signs of tourist attraction have been summarized and solution has been proposed.

With the development of the society and the economy, each city focuses more on the construction of the tourist attraction. More and more foreigners have a tour to China. Public signs in the tourist attraction are very important. However, the public signs translation is not good which brings a lot of confusion and misunderstanding for the tourists. This has bad influence on the development of the tourist attraction. Therefore some problems have been summarized and standardized strategies have been proposed after the investigation about eight tourist attractions of Wanxian Mountain, Valley of Eight Li, Mausoleum of Head Lu and Paoma Ridge.

1. The Necessity of Translation of Public Signs of Tourist Attraction of South Taihang Mountain

Sign languages in the tourist attraction are those texts for introduction, alert and guide on the public signs in scenic spots to guide the direction and provide the tourism service and alert the safety for the tourists. The beautiful scenery of the scenic spots attracts the foreign tourists with its regional characters. It is significant to standardize the public signs in the tourist attraction to advocate the features of the scenic spots, manifest the cultivated qualities, provide the barrier-free tourism and promote the development of the tourist attraction.

2. Problems of the Translation of Public Signs of South Taihang Mountains

To get the firsthand materials of the translation of public signs of South Taihang Mountains, the writer took pictures of the public signs of introduction, alert and guide, interviewed the staff and delivered the questionnaires to the tourists of based on the scenic spots of Wanxian Mountain (Nanping Scenic spot, Guoliang Scenic Spot), Mausoleum of Head Lu, Valley of Eight Li, Paoma Ridge, Jinghua Park, Temple of Bigan to study the translation of the public signs with a comprehensive view.

The problems and the attribution of public signs can be summed up as followings through the field investigation in the initial period, sorting and analyses in the medium period and the conclusion and feedback in the later period:
Table 1. Problems of Translation of Public Signs in South Taihang Mountains.

| Problems of Translation of Public Signs in South Taihang Mountains |
|---------------------------------------------------------------|
| Spelling | Grammar | Interpretation without real understanding | Omission | Stiff copying | Mono-language | Missing Translation | Other errors |
|----------|---------|----------------------------------------|----------|--------------|---------------|---------------------|-------------|
| 34%      | 21%     | 16%                                    | 10%      | 8%           | 5%            | 4%                  | 2%          |

### 2.1 Spelling

The spelling errors are the most frequent in the public signs translation errors. There are spelling of words and capital letters and lower case letters in the spelling errors. The rate of spelling errors is 34% which is the highest in the errors after the field investigation in the eight scenic spots, such as the “Stale gallery”, “gars”, etc. Spelling errors are mostly caused by the careless collation and print errors which can be corrected.

### 2.2 Grammar

Grammar errors are also quite frequent and the rate is 21%. The grammar errors can be divided into misnomer, such as using “Separate” rather than “One way” and using “1 time” rather than “once”; errors of singular and plural of nouns, such as “Thanks for” rather than “Thank for”, “It’s pity” rather than “It’s a pity”; errors of tense, such as “dead” rather than “died”; different translation for the same public signs, such as “Tressure burial-mjound” rather than “Precious Dome”. In addition, there are also some other common grammar errors like the lacking of subjects or predicates, the lacking of “and” connecting two sentences and multi-predicate in one sentence.

### 2.3 Interpretation

A lot of English public signs in the scenic spots ignore the differences of the means of expression, language structure and culture and don’t follow the unique stylist features of the public signs as well as the translation rules and common English expressions. Therefore the translation is often too rigid and not idiomatic and fluent and cannot convey the ideas.

Table 2 Part of Errors of Interpretation without Real Understanding of Translation of Public Signs.

| Part of Errors of Interpretation without real understanding of translation of public signs |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Wrong                                                                 | Right                                      |
| Carefully Slide (小心地滑)                                                                 | Caution! Wet Floor!                       |
| Do not Pay Attention to Security around the Edge (注意安全 请勿靠近边沿)                      | Caution! Keep distance!                   |
| Not a Long Time to Step on the Brake (请勿长时间刹车)                                       | Don’t Brake for Long                      |
| Throw Rubbish Ban (禁止抛垃圾)                                                            | No Littering                              |
| Only 15 People at the Same Time Tour (仅限15人同时游览)                                      | Max. Clearance 15 people                 |
| Flood Period (泄洪期间)                                                                   | Flood Discharging                         |
| Don’t Climb (请勿靠近)                                                                   | Keep Away                                 |
| Slope Steep Turn is Urgent (坡陡弯急)                                                     | Steep Slope and Sharp Turn Ahead          |
| Tree growth, not flowers sticks (树木在生长，请勿攀折枝)                                    | Don’t Pick the Trees in Growth            |
2.4 Omission

During the field investigation, omission is found in the translation of public signs in many scenic spots. The translation is obviously decreased than the original texts. It brings a lot of difficulties to the comprehensive understanding of public signs for the tourists to influence the direct feeling of the tourism. For example, the introduction of Suanni in the Mausoleum of Head Lu “传说中是龙的儿子, 高 1.4 米, 长 2 米, 面目极短, 额头硕大, 眼球外突, 眉目斜竖......” is translated into “A supernatural animal, the son of dragon is 1.4 meters high and 2 meters long”. This translation is just the simple introduction which cannot convey the exact Chinese meaning and influence the understanding of the image of Suanni for the foreign tourists.

2.5 Stiff Copying

Public signs like “严禁随地大小便” in the scenic spots can be translated into “Don’t arbitrary leave the faeces or urine anywhere.” Warning signs like this are quite common in Chinese scenic spots. The Chinese tourists have already accustomed to it. They do not think there is anything wrong with it. It has a lot of difference with our cultural environment. However, in the most beautiful tourist attraction, public signs like this can be so vulgar that many foreign tourists cannot accept it. What’s worse is that this may lead to the misunderstanding of Chinese. They may misunderstand that Chinese may urinate everywhere if the alert is not emphasized. Therefore, in my opinion the public signs should not be translated to avoid the misunderstanding for the foreign tourists to say nothing of the error of property of arbitrary in the original text.

2.6 Mono-Language of Translation

During the field investigation in the South Taihang Mountains, it is found that the translation of public signs is mainly English. Few are translated into Korean, Japanese, etc. However, Korea and Japan are the first two countries of the inbound tourists. The lack of the matched system of public signs translation in the scenic spots brings a lot of language difficulties for the identification and understanding. It also influences the direct feeling of the tourist attraction and the amount of the tourists of the second tour indirectly.

2.7 Missing Translation

The missing translation is a conspicuous problem. The basic Chinese and English bilingual public signs are missing in some tourist attraction. Some signs are in the form of Chinese characters and Chinese phonetic alphabet to replace the combination of Chinese and English which cannot convey the meaning of Chinese public signs to foreign tourists. After the field investigation and the communication with the staff in Yuhuang Palace in Valley of Eight Li, it is found that there is no English translation of the figures of the Buddha.

2.8 Other Errors

There are other errors of public signs translation such as the delete or the addition of space and hyphen at will, violation from the International rules and requirements of translation as well as the translation of proper nouns within Chinese phonetic alphabet. It can influence the effects of translation of English public signs to some extent to disappoint the tourists to destroy the image of the tourist attraction.

3. Strategies of the Standardization of Translation of Public Signs of Tourist Attraction

3.1 Define the Rules of Translation of Public Signs

According to the German functionalist skopos theory, any kind of action has its own purpose. The purpose of translation decides the strategy of translation. It is generally supposed by the national experts that the theory applies to the non-literary text translation of clear purpose which is also the rule of the translation of public signs. The translated public signs should be simple and clear within the consideration of the acceptance and recognition of the tourists.
3.2 Focus on Cultural Difference

Cultural difference is mainly about the mode of thinking and national psychology. The orientals are good at comprehensive thinking, figurative thinking and CIS thinking. On the contrary, the westerners have strong analytical thinking, abstract thinking and reverse thinking. National psychology is an inherent and national psychological activity formed by long-term historical accumulation. China has always advocated that behavior should be modest, courteous and abiding. Western countries stress the individual self and freedom and equality. The social and cultural factors should be considered and the cultural differences should be focused when the public signs are translated. The public signs should be based on the context to convey the meaning exactly.

3.3 Strengthen Management

The translation of public signs is not just the piling up of the foreign words or the free translation. They are the public texts which should conform to strict standards. In the early stage, it is necessary to translate accurately and carefully. In the later period, strict verification is essential and every link is meticulous in order that the error can be reduced to the lowest level.

3.4 Rectify the Translation of Public Signs of Tourist Attraction

The current public signs should be cleared systematically and standardized in the scenic spots. Important foreign translation of scenic spots, tickets, brief introduction should be reviewed and checked again. The correct foreign translation to the public signs as well as the translation of the signs in other languages should be added for the lack of the translation of the foreign language.

3.5 Establish the Long Feedback Mechanism

After the questionnaire is issued to tourists in the scenic area, it is found that only 38% of the tourists can give direct feedback to the staff of the scenic spot when they find the inappropriate translation after the sample survey of the data. However, the results of feedback cannot be known. More tourists do not have a better way to improve the problems of the translation of public signs. The management of the tourist attraction should establish the long feedback mechanism in order that visitors can reflect the translation errors of the discovery to the relevant departments in time and effectively to correct some errors of public signs more quickly.

4. Conclusion

After the field investigation, the eight problems of the translation of public signs of South Taihang Mountains have been concluded. With the analyses of the necessity of the standardization of the translation of public signs in the tourist attraction, some strategies of the standardization are proposed considering the characters of the city and the actual situation of the tourist attraction. It is hoped that the importance of the translation of public signs of tourist attraction can be improved to refine the current situation of the translation of the South Taihang Mountains to promote the development of the tourist attraction at the international trends continuously.

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