

Original Paper

Sino-Japanese Contrast and Translation of Emergency Language—Take COVID-19 for Example

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Abstract

Emergency language service is an important component of disaster management, which runs through the whole process of disaster from occurrence to solution. As a disaster-prone area, Japan has rich practical experience in emergency language services. The context formed by major emergencies often endows existing words with certain relevance semantics or situational semantics, as well as the birth to some new words. On the basis of expounding the formal characteristics and operating regulations of emergency language services in Japan, this paper analyzes and compares the changes and differences in relevant words in the context of the epidemic situation based on COVID-19. It is hoped that this study will provide some enlightenment for China to build emergency language service systems, so as to provide reference for the formulation of emergency language services in China.

Keywords

emergency language, COVID-19, language policy, Sino-Japanese translation

1. Introduction

Emergency language ability is a special language ability, which is the activation and utilization of emergency language resources to provide language assistance in response to public emergencies. (Wang, 2020) Language problems in public emergencies include doctor-patient communication, disease naming, multilingual information release, anti-epidemic language translation services, news and propaganda language, rumor prevention and control, etc. (Li & Fang, 2020). In the face of sudden public emergencies, especially global public events, need a response to the world coordinated. In this process, the emergency language service is essential. Emergency language services are, as was the case with emergency public events in a series of key language issues, and are also an important part of the disaster management system.

As a country with frequent natural disasters, Japan has rich experience in emergency management, particularly in disaster emergency management. The COVID-19 outbreak, which broke out in early 2020, is characterized by rapid outbreaks, long duration and wide impact. On March. 11, 2020, the World Health Organization (WHO) announced that COVID-19 could be characterized as a pandemic (a pandemic is the worldwide spread of a new disease). As the first country to report the epidemic situation and have made major strategic achievements in epidemic prevention and control, China should report the epidemic situation to the world in a timely and accurate manner, share experience in epidemic prevention and control and treatment, and strengthen international cooperation to jointly fight the epidemic. This paper classifies and compares the relevant words in COVID-19, hoping to provide enlightenment for the construction of an emergency language service system in China.

2. Sino-Japanese Translation of Words Derived from the COVID-19

2.1 Neologism

When a new thing appears, people's expression of it is usually from complex to simple with the deepening of understanding, constantly changing. This is also the case in translation. Because there is no exact word corresponding to it, so multiple words are often used for descriptive translation.

The most typical case in this COVID-19 outbreak is the determination and translation of epidemic names. Table 1 shows the name "COVID-19" used in the notification process of the Wuhan Municipal Health Commission and the Japanese translation process.

Table 1. The Name "COVID-19" is Used in the Notification Process and the Japanese Translation Process

	Phase 1	Phase 2	Phase 3	Phase 4	Final
Chinese	肺炎疫情	不明原因的 病毒性肺炎	新型冠状病毒 感染的肺炎	新型肺炎	新型冠状病毒肺炎 (新冠肺炎)
Japanese	肺炎の 感染状況	原因不明の肺炎 原因不明のウイ ルス性肺炎	新型コロナウイ ルスの感染によ って引き起こさ れる肺炎	新型コロ ナウイル スによる 肺炎	新型コロナウイルス 肺炎 COVID-19

It is worth mentioning that the word "新型肺炎"(new pneumonia) is not directly translated into 「新型肺炎」 under the premise of having the same synonym of "new" and "pneumonia" in China and Japan. This is because in Japanese, 「新型肺炎」 used to refer exclusively to Severe Acute Respiratory Syndromes (SARS), which is easily misunderstood by the target language audience. With the deepening of people's understanding of the virus deepens, the expression is gradually simplified, in spoken Japanese, it is called 「コロナ」 (corona), and some related phrases have emerged (Table 2).

These phrases are obviously in line with the theory of “word mode” proposed by Li Mingyu. This theory holds that the composition of words consists of a mold slot and a mold marker. The mold slot is the empty space in the word mold, which is a variable component, and the mold marker is a fixed component in the word. The word mold is social and can show the social condition of a certain period. Most of these new words are the negative results of the influence of the epidemic and can be seen as the concrete content of the coronavirus catastrophe.

Table 2. Derived Phrase Related to Corona

Chinese	Japanese	Explanation
后疫情时代	アフターコロナ	Post-epidemic era.
新冠之灾	コロナ禍	The coronavirus catastrophe.
新冠失业	コロナ離職	Under the epidemic, various industries in Japan have been hit and many people have lost their jobs as a result. In addition, many people chose to leave their jobs because they were uncomfortable with the way they worked and the trust relationship with their supervisors had broken down.
新冠肥	コロナ太り	While working from home, many people suddenly gain weight due to lack of exercise and nutritional imbalance.
新冠疏散	コロナ疎開	During the outbreak, some Japanese people chose to leave major cities such as Tokyo and Osaka to return home or to less densely populated areas because of the high risk of infection due to the mix of people in major cities.

2.2 New Translations of Old Words

The new translation of old words is to give new meaning to existing words and make them express a new concept. Such as the concept of “方舱医院” (makeshift hospital) comes from the PLA field mobile medical system. It usually refers to a temporary and mobile hospital, which is composed of a series of square cabins with different medical functions. This may be due to the fact that the original mobile field hospital is temporary in containers, so the original translation is 「コンテナ病院」 (container hospital). But the makeshift hospitals used in Wuhan at the time were temporary refits from fixed buildings such as stadiums, so the idea seems far-fetched. So based on the characteristics of its temporary settings, emergency medical, and translated into 「仮設病院」 (temporary hospital).

And because the concept includes not only makeshift hospital, but also Leishenshan Hospital and other hospitals built by surprise, finally chose 「臨時病院」 (makeshift hospital) this scope is more narrow, more in line with the characteristics of the phrase as a square hospital translation. In addition, some phrases shown in Table 3 are translated in a similar way.

Table 3. New Translations of Old Words

Chinese	Japanese	Explanation
非必要	不要不急	To refrain from going out unless it is unnecessary. The original meaning is non-essential or non-urgent.
疫区	発生地	It originally refers to the epicenter of earthquake, referring in particular to areas with severe epidemic situations in the context of COVID-19.
社区感染	市中感染	Community transmission occurs when someone is infected with the virus without any known contact with the patient. This means that the source of infection is uncontrollable.
暴发性增长	オーバーシュート	A surge of coronavirus cases. The original meaning is to accidentally pass where you should have stopped or to spend more money than you should on something.
封城	ロックダウン	Impose strict restrictions on travel, social activities and the use of public spaces. The original meaning is a situation in which people stay in a locked indoor space during an emergency in order to remain safe.
防护面罩	シールド	Originally, it refers to protective masks used in workplaces such as electric welding, and referring in particular to medical masks during the COVID-19 pandemic.

2.3 Conceptual Vocabulary

Conceptual words in the context of specific events do not necessarily change in translation practice, but their connotation and scope of reference will change. Understanding the important information carried by it is very important to improve the accuracy of emergency translation. “社交距离” (social distancing) is frequently mentioned in reports on epidemic prevention and control. It originally refers to the psychologically acceptable distance between people. There is no set value for the distance. In the context of epidemic prevention and control, social distancing requires people to keep more than one meter apart when they have to gather together. This change from psychological distance to physical distance can be distinguished by context in Chinese, while a different vocabulary is required in Japanese (Table 4).

Table 4. Japanese Translation of Social Distance

Chinese	Japanese	Explanation
	ソーシャル・ディスタンス	social distance
社交距离	ソーシャル・ディスタンシング	social distancing
	フィジカル・ディスタンシング	physical distancing

Similarly, some words have new meanings in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic, and lose this additional meaning after a special period. This kind of conceptual vocabulary, which can reflect social changes, is of great significance for emergency language translation. One of the typical words is “epidemic situation”, which originally meant the occurrence and spread of infectious diseases, and has become a specific reference to the spread of “Novel coronavirus infection” during the COVID-19 pandemic. And with the increase in the duration and impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, this specific reference becomes more and more prominent (Table 5).

Table 5. Japanese Translation of Epidemic Situation

Chinese	Japanese	Explanation
	伝染病の大流行	outbreak
疫情	感染蔓延	epidemic
	感染拡大	pandemic

2.4 Terminology

Due to differences in the classification of laws, diseases, names of institutions and abbreviations in different countries, as well as the interference of fixed usage caused by historical factors and differences in audience and other factors, related terminology is also different in different languages (Table 6).

In particular, both Japanese and Chinese use Chinese characters. It is easy to misuse Japanese and Chinese homomorphic words. Terminology usually has a strong professional, so it is necessary to find the relevant information of the relevant country and industry, find the corresponding relationship between the original language and the target language, and adopt flexible and accurate translation strategies according to the translation strategies.

Table 6. Comparison and Translation of Some Sino-Japanese Terminology

Classification	Chinese	Japanese	Contrastive
Law	甲类传染病	甲類伝染病 X 甲類感染症/一類感染症 ✓	There are homotypic Characters in Japanese, but due to clear legal provisions, the translation of homotypic Chinese characters is not adopted
Organization	中国红十字总会	中国赤十字總會 X 中国赤十字会 ✓	A common translation has been used for many years
COVID-19	密切接触者	密接接触者 X 濃厚接触者 ✓	There are homotypic Chinese characters in Japanese, but due to the corresponding terminology, the

Epidemic	口岸防控	空港や港などの検疫 X 水際対策 ✓	translation of homotypic Chinese characters is not adopted Japan is an island country surrounded by the sea, so Japan has its own terminology for strengthening port quarantine
Medicine	核酸检测	核酸検査 X PCR 検査 ✓	Mistranslation caused by not knowing the meaning of words

2.5 Public Announcements with Chinese Characteristics

In the process of fighting the COVID-19 pandemic, the Chinese people have also created many new words, the most common of which are the non-idiom four-character. These four-character words have Chinese characteristics. They are concise in form but can contain a lot of information, which is very useful for disseminating information. Because of this particularity, there is usually a stage change in the process of translation: first, literal translation and explanation are adopted to avoid semantic loss, but the translation is relatively cumbersome. As people adapt to the context of COVID-19 pandemic, they should simplify it and improve the speed of information dissemination. As shown in Table 7, the clearer the context, the closer the semantics are to the core words, so the translation process of such terms is mostly a process of changing from complexity to simplicity.

Table 7. Japanese Translation of Four-character Words with Chinese Characteristics

Chinese	Japanese	Explanation
动态清零	ダイナミックゼロコロナ→動的ゼロコロナ	dynamic zero-Covid policy
确诊病例	感染が確認された症例→感染者	confirmed case
自主隔离	自主隔離→外出自粛	refraining from going outside
重症患者	症状の重い患者→重症者	critically ill patients
本土病例	本土の感染者→国内の感染者	locally transmitted cases

3. Conclusion

The emergency language service in Japan has a long history (Bao, 2020) and rich experience. To clarify the current situation of the emergency language service in Japan during the outbreak and master its characteristics and countermeasures can also be used as a reference for the establishment of China's emergency multilingual service system. Studies show that individual's language ability tends to decline when he or she is under stress (Yao, 2022). Therefore, the translation process is also a process of changing vocabulary from professional to popular. Based on the comparative analysis of the words derived from the epidemic situation between China and Japan, this paper summarizes the translation

characteristics of different types of words. Although the translation of words will be inaccurate over time, it provides a reference for the rapid adoption of translation responses in the event of the next emergency and the establishment of an emergency language guarantee thesaurus.

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