

Original Paper

J-C Public Signs Contrast and Translation

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Abstract

Public signs are special texts that are common in public places. And functions of them are to provide information or to remind readers of some requirements. As China strengthens exchanges with other countries in economy and culture, the translation of public signs was born at the right moment. The public sign translation is an important link in building a harmonious society, establishing an international metropolis and promoting economic development. Nowadays, the translation of English signs in China tends to be mature, but there are still many mistranslation and misinterpretation of Japanese signs. The purpose of this paper is to introduce the research progress and contrast of Chinese and Japanese public signs.

Keywords

public signs, contrast, translation, significance

1. Introduction

The Japanese language translation level in the public place can directly reflect the internationalization of a city. In the current situation, in some cities, there is a clear phenomenon that the machine is wrong and is instead of Japanese, which is not only difficult for foreign tourists, but also the construction of the “international tourism city”.

The application of public signs has global characteristics. Every language and culture are inseparable. Different language represents different cultures. The translation of J-C public signs includes the differences between J-C public signs. Language, words, style and intonation, as well as the collision of traditional culture. Therefore, in order to complete when translating two languages, the translator must fully understand the text and cultural connotations. There are many public signs both at home and abroad. Therefore, they should strive to be read in Japanese. It is the same as Japanese public signs and has the same functions as Japanese public signs. However, there are still some public signs. It has Chinese characteristics in China, but it is irreplaceable in Japan.

The translation of public signs is a new field in translation studies. For a long time, the research on its

system is not enough. The study of translation of public signs in China began in the late 1980s. The purpose of previous studies is to arouse foreigners' attention to the international image of China. Since then, a number of academic papers and articles have been published to explore the problems in the translation of public signs, which has greatly promoted the standardization of public signs translation in China. There are two scholars publish an article and put forward five principles of "simple, clear, proper tone, moderate and moderate humor" which should be followed in the translation of Chinese into foreign language. After entering the twenty-first Century, the translation of public signs has gradually become the focus of attention in the translation field. From the earliest collection of examples to the analysis of translation errors of public signs from the perspective of semantics, linguistic features, functional features, cultural connotations and cultural differences, and then to explore the translation of public signs. Generally speaking, public signs translation is mainly studied from the perspectives of eco-translatology, communicative translation theory, Cross-Cultural Theory and relevance theory. According to Relevance Theory, two scholars hold that on the basis of the theory of public sign translation, translators should pay attention to the role of context to improve relevance and expand cognitive environment in order to achieve pragmatic equivalence.

2. Definitions and Characteristics

Through the field survey of many scenic spots in Jiangsu Province, we found that most of the scenic spots have signs in Chinese, English, Japanese and Korean, and a few also have signs in Russian. Among them, English signs are more concise and understandable than other foreign languages, and the language is more localized. However, most Japanese signs have obvious translation errors, even signs with literal translation of Chinese characters, which brings cognitive problems to tourists who use Japanese, is not conducive to showing foreign tourists the culture and history of the scenic spot, and will also bring some misleading to Japanese learners. With the deepening development of economic globalization, tourism internationalization is also gradually rising, and more and more foreign tourists choose to visit China. Therefore, the enrichment and perfection of the sign construction can not only improve the tourists' sense of experience and interest in tourism, but also reflect the spiritual outlook and cultural customs of a city. At present, although the popularity of Japanese signs is high, the phenomenon of mistranslation is also serious. Therefore, it is an urgent task to improve the Japanese signs in scenic spots.

Public signs refer to the general instructions for reminding and warning in public places. It refers to written language in public places. In China, the translation of public signs began in 1989. Scholars have made continuous exploration and Research on the translation of public signs, and have achieved encouraging results. With the development of China's economy and the accelerated pace of opening up, friendly exchanges and economic cooperation between China and other international communities are increasing. The Public signs are an important part of external publicity and are widely used in every aspect of our lives. With the successful convening of APEC, G20 and BRICS summits, the translation of public signs plays an increasingly important role. Therefore, the translation of public signs is of great

significance for maintaining the image of China's cities. People must pay enough attention to public signs. However, the translation of public signs in China started late and lacked systematicness and standardization. Errors and problems are still very obvious.

The language of any country has a profound cultural heritage and its uniqueness. People of different nationalities have different living habits, customs and cultural backgrounds. In the communication between China and the West, cultural differences lead to different understanding of information. There are great differences between English and Chinese, and English pragmatics is also affected by cultural differences. When translating Chinese and English signs in life, many translators will translate blindly because they do not take into account the cultural background of the readers, resulting in communication difficulties. The same applies to Japanese translation. If the translator does not pay attention to the cultural differences in the signs between China and Japan, it is easy to translate Japanese with Chinese thinking, which is easy to cause misunderstanding by foreign guests. In the translation of C-J signs, it is necessary to fully understand the literal meaning, cultural connotation and customary expressions of Japanese words, so as to avoid the failure of the translation of Japanese signs. Public signs have the characteristics of conciseness, standardization, formality and so on. It is generally conventional, consistent, conspicuous and convenient. Public signs are written in public places in order to attract people's attention. This unique style can be seen everywhere in people's life. For example, “禁止入内(*No Admittance*) 立入禁止”, “禁止吸烟(*No Smoking*) 禁煙”, “免费(*Cost Free*) 無料”, “禁止穿鞋入内(*No Shoes*) 土足厳禁”, “禁止停车(*No Parking*) 駐車禁止”, “步行街(*Pedestrian Street*) 歩行者天国”...

There are two main characteristics of public signs are summarized in the paper. The first characteristic is conciseness, which is the easiest to understand. Conciseness is the most important linguistic feature of public signs. It requires that the words and phrases in public signs are simple and concise, and the language strives to express the best effect in the simplest form. Most busy people want to get the most accurate information in a limited time in public places where people come and go. Only simple public signs will never be forgotten. Therefore, imperative sentences are mostly used in public signs. In terms of vocabulary, public signs seldom use complex words, but verbs and sorting. The use of phrases will make language more concise and clear. For example, “注意脚下(*Mind your Step*) ---足元注意”, “临时停靠(*Temporary Stop*) ---一時停止”, “禁止横穿马路(*No Crossing the Road*)---横断禁止”, “严禁烟火(*No Smoking*) ---火気厳禁”, “减速行驶(*Slow Down*) ---徐行”, “谨防扒手(*Beware of Thieves*) ---すりご用心”, “急转弯(*Sharp turn*) ---急カーブ”, “安全出口(*Exit*) ---非常口”, “正在施工 (*Under Construction*) ---工事中”, “禁止拍照(*No Photographing*) ---撮影禁止”...

The second characteristic is straightforwardly. Public signs convey information directly to the public, not indirectly and euphemistically, and avoid using gorgeous rhetoric or esoteric terminology, which is totally different from literary works. Such as “售罄(*Sell Out*) ---売り切れ”, “登记住宿(*Check In*) ---チェックイン”, “办公室(*Office*) ---オフィス”, etc. Abbreviations are widely recognized and widely used in public facilities and public services. With the development of international communication,

public signs are becoming more and more standardized and internationalized. Some public signs have been used internationally. The translator does not have to translate in a big way, but only needs to directly refer to the original text of the target language country.

Japanese characters are made up of Chinese characters, katakana and Roman characters. Among them, Chinese characters include simplified Chinese characters and traditional Chinese characters, and Katakana includes hiragana and katakana. Katakana is also used for non-English-speaking foreign words.

3. FAQ Analysis

The application of public signs has global characteristics. And every language and culture are inseparable. Different languages represent different cultures. The translation of Chinese-Japanese public signs includes the differences of languages, choice of words, style and intonation, and the collision of traditional culture. Therefore, in order to complete the translation of the two languages, the translator must fully understand the text and cultural connotations. Many public signs are available both inside and outside China. Therefore, they should try to be read in Japanese in the same way, and they should have the same functions as Japanese public signs. However, there are still some public signs with Chinese characteristics in China, or there is no substitute for them in countries like Japan. It is worth noting that when translating these public signs, the purpose is not only to provide necessary information for foreign tourists but also to let foreign friends understand Chinese culture. And then, the translation should be consistent with discourse coherence. Although there is no direct substitute for foreign language, translators should try to conform to the conventions of Japanese public language. The Japanese translation should be the same as the meaning of the Chinese public signs, cannot arbitrarily tamper with. Japanese translation should have the same meaning as Chinese public signs and should not be tampered with at will.

3.1 Wrong Words

Such errors are common in the use of Japanese signs, especially the mixing of Chinese characters and Japanese homographs.

“景区(scenic)” is directly translated into the homonym “観光地区”, and “出口” is accidentally marked as “輸出”. No matter from the perspective of C-J(景区) or E-J (SCEIN) translation, there is rarely such expression as “観光地区” in Japanese. Generally speaking, “scenic spots” and “tourist attractions” in Japan are usually expressed as “観光スポット”, which is a combination of Japanese words and loanwords, and is closer to the local expression. Such signs with errors due to word spelling may be caused by the lack of care in translation, or by the operator’s failure to understand its meaning during printing or typesetting. Mistakes like this should be avoided as much as possible, because they are the lowest mistakes.

3.2 Syntax Error

“Ambiguous expression” is well known as an important and unique existence in Japanese society. For example, the English translation attached to the sign “当心台阶” is generally “MIND THE STEPS”, but the Japanese translation will appear in such inaccurate expressions as “石段に注意”, “階段に気を付ける” and so on. In the logo, the word “当心(*be careful*)” is used to remind the state, and the form of honorific should be used to show politeness and respect. The form of “気を付ける” is slightly serious and blunt in public signs, and even reflects the state of “command”. For Japanese users who are accustomed to using respectful language, it will produce an aversive attitude to see this use, and the translation content is extremely impolite. Through searching a large number of signs in Japan, the author found that most of the public signs use highly respected grammar, such as “ご用心ください”, “ご注意ください”, “ご注意お願いします” etc., to persuade others in public. Therefore, in order to conform to Japanese language habits and translation principles, it is possible and more appropriate to translate “段差に注意”, “段差あり注意”, “階段注意”, “階段に気を付けてください”, “階段にご注意お願いします”.

In addition, the translation of signs is to make it easier for foreign tourists to understand the text content and prompts. Under the condition that the meaning of signs remains unchanged, the consistency of the translation should be maintained to avoid misunderstanding and trouble caused by different semantics.

4. Solutions

4.1 Directly Use Foreign Expressions and Conventional Expressions.

First of all, the most convenient way is to use some foreign expressions directly, for example, beware of “当心地滑(*caution wet floor*)”---“転倒注意”, “洗手间(*toilet*)”---“洗面所”, etc. This will not only make foreign friends feel friendly, but also facilitate their understanding. If there is no way to directly correspond, we should translate by ourselves. At this time, we should transfer our Chinese thinking to Japanese thinking, or assist in English thinking, so as to make our translation more in line with the Japanese expression habits as far as possible, so that foreigners can understand it at a glance, without making jokes and causing misunderstandings. For this kind of translation that has been correctly expressed, we can use it directly without translating it into new expressions.

4.2 Follow Some Principles

We should follow certain principles when translating. For example, the principle of accuracy is that the words used should accurately express the correct meaning. The principle of conciseness. Some meanings that have been implied need not be translated. Politeness principle, the language should be civilized and polite.

4.3 Pay Full Attention to Humanization.

It is far from enough for translators to have excellent translation skills. They also need to understand the cultural differences between China and the West and pay corresponding attention to foreign cultural customs. They should provide services for tourists from the perspective of their own language. As we

all know, language and culture are inseparable, while Chinese and Japanese represent different cultures. From this point of view, the Japanese signs used in tourist attractions should also be appropriately linked with culture, that is, they should not be completely copied from machine translation, but should pay attention to both literal equivalence and effectively highlight the equivalence in function and style. Therefore, translators in the scenic spot should thoroughly analyze the cultural information contained between the lines of Chinese characters, and give humanistic care as much as possible to create great convenience for foreign friends.

4.4 Suggestions to Relevant Departments.

First of all, the translation of city signs should be handed over to qualified companies or institutions. Many logo errors are very simple. As long as the translator has certain qualifications, he can check spelling errors, grammatical errors, etc. Secondly, relevant companies and institutions should have a unified standard for the translation of the standard language, and each region can also have its own translation standard to strictly check. Moreover, it is necessary to increase the research and study of relevant work at home and abroad. Foreign language signs represent the cultural characteristics of a city, region, or even a country, and also directly affect the impression of foreigners here. Therefore, it is of great significance to strengthen the management of the translation of signs.

5. Conclusion

Public signs are an indispensable part of national development. Their qualities are directly reflected in their comprehensiveness. It affects the quality of a country and China's image in the world. Nowadays, the translation of English signs in China tends to be mature, but there are still many mistranslation and misinterpretation of Japanese signs. Therefore, we need to strengthen and attach importance to the improvement and construction of Japanese signs.

In the context of the Belt and Road Initiative, China's march to the center of the world stage has been an irresistible trend. Now more and more signs will be translated into multiple languages, and foreign language signs have become a culture that can be seen from home. To a certain extent, foreign language signs represent the cultural characteristics and humanistic qualities of a city or a country. However, the faster the development of logo translation, the more problems it will cause. The wrong logo not only brings inconvenience to the lives of foreign friends, but also affects China's international image. The translation of signs should be managed and strictly controlled, so that the meaning of signs can be fully expressed and the Chinese culture can be correctly displayed in front of the world.

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