



On English Translation of Public Signs in Scenic Spots from the Perspective of Eco-translatology—Taking Sichuan Province as an Example

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Abstract: *Scenic spots are rapidly becoming a key instrument in external communication. To improve the translation quality of tourism signs, this article explores the translation of public signs at Sichuan tourist attractions on the basis of eco-translatology. The author concludes that scenic spots should be standardized in linguistic, cultural and communicative dimensions.*

Keywords: Eco-translatology; Three dimensions; Scenic spots; Public signs.

Cited as: Liao, C. (2024). On English Translation of Public Signs in Scenic Spots from the Perspective of Eco-translatology—Taking Sichuan Province as an Example. *Journal of Theory and Practice in Linguistics*, 1(1), 1–6. Retrieved from <https://woodyinternational.com/index.php/jtpl/article/view/113>

1. Introduction

An increasing number of foreign tourists visit Sichuan Province for travel because of its popularity. Scenic spots are fast becoming a key instrument in external communication. The translation of public signs in scenic spots is highly important for foreign visitors because of the language and cultural differences between China and foreign countries [1]. Improving the quality of tourism public signs is fundamental to inbound tourism.

The static and dynamic indications, directing, prompting, restricting, compelling effects are the functional features of the language applied to tourism public signs. They enjoy their own outstanding stylistic characteristics and translation community [2]. With the progress of China's Internationalization, the translation of tourism public signs is drawing increasing attention from those translation workers. "Eco-translatology" was first proposed by Hu Gengshen, a professor at Tsinghua University and Macau City University in 2001, and was finally launched in all aspects in 2009. Most of the theories, however, are focused on the case of English teaching and translation but inadequacy in research depth and application promotion concerning public signs of tourism.

Research that studies the translation of tourism public signs has become a popular topic, but it is still in its initial stages. A well-known problem with the translation of public signs is that it does not consider different cultures. Translating tourism public signs from the perspective of skopostheorie is unable to meet the needs of propaganda work, and the standard solution to this problem is based on eco-translatology. It takes "multidimensional alternate adaptation and adapted selection" as its translation principle and "multidimensional transformation" as its translation method, promoting the scientific process of the translation of public signs of tourism.

This paper attempts to pursue more suitable methods for the translation of tourism public signs to enhance international exchanges and cooperation. This approach not only deepens the depth of study but also widens the realm of translation.

2. Literature Review

Eco-translatology is a cross-sectional discussion that takes the perspective of ecological holism, ancient Chinese wisdom as the basis, and the principle of "natural selection" as the cornerstone. When searching for eco-translatology on CNKI, the results clearly show that academic circles are still interested in the study of eco-translatology. At the same time, it also confirms the rich foundation of the theory and the connotation of advancing with time. Liu Yanfang and Tang Xingping studied the current situation of tourism translation in ethnic areas from an ecological perspective and developed a new interpretation of the current situation of tourism translation in ethnic areas on the basis of the core concept of eco-translatology [3]. Wang Xiaoxia and Zhang Yiyi reported that three dimensions, including linguistic-dimensional transformation, cultural-dimensional transformation, and communication-dimensional transformation, should be used in the translation process of public signs in geological parks via integrated thinking [4]. From the perspective of eco-translatology, Li Qiang indicated that translation influences the image perceptions of tourist destinations and tourists' behaviors and proposed an indicator system to improve the translation of tourist destinations [5]. On the basis of eco-translatology, Zhaodong Zeng sought to explore how to standardize the translation of public signs in Shanxi tourist attractions with linguistic, cultural, and communicative dimensions and to provide strategies and advice to promote tourism development [6].

In other words, depending on the existing research and application achievements, eco-translatology provides new theoretical thinking and vision for translation studies, which will help translation circles re-examine and interpret various translation problems.

3. Linguistic-dimensional Transformation

3.1 Linguistic-dimensional transformation

Linguistic-dimensional transformation means that translators adopt and selectively transform the language forms in the translation process, which can be carried out in different periods, at different levels and in different aspects [7-9].

In general, this transformation is built on words, syntax, structure, punctuation and other aspects. The language form mainly includes two aspects: one is whether the word is accurate, and the other is whether the syntax is decent [2].

3.2 Case Analysis

When they are translated incorrectly, those public signs will bring inconvenience and troubles to visitors. For the translation of public signs in scenic spots, translators should pay special attention to the cultural background and thinking mode of readers and have the ability to grasp and analyze the differences between Chinese and English. They ought to fix the linguistic features that the translation should reflect.

The translations of the public notice boards of various tourist attractions often have mistakes such as grammar and word selection, and some translations do not meet the language characteristics of English public signs. Core words such as real words and keywords are generally used, whereas definite articles, indefinite articles, pronouns, and auxiliary verbs can be omitted.

For example, some scenic spots in Sichuan, such as “小心碰头”, are translated into "Attention Your Head". In fact, attention is a noun, and its collocation is a violation of the principles under normal conditions. The correct translation should be "Mind Your Head".

As we can see from the public signs on Huanhua Brook Park, which lies in the Du Fu Thatched Cottage, “入口” is transformed to "way in", and “出口” is translated into "way out". Other scenic spots in Chengdu translate “入口” and “出口” into "Entrance" or "Entry" and "Exit". According to the international standard ISO7001-ADD "Public Information Graphic Symbols", marks that are not emergency exits are "Way out" instead of "Exit". The author suggested that for tourist cities, the vocabulary of international common practices should be followed.

Another example, on Mount Emei, “欢迎下次再来,” is misinterpreted as "Welcome you again". "Welcome" is used to welcome visitors arriving at scenic spots instead of returning visitors. So the correct English translation

should be "Please come again".

In addition, the Chinese and English languages also differ greatly in terms of syntax and text structure. The syntactic feature of Chinese is parataxis, underlining logical relevance, which is a manifestation of the Han nationality's emphasis on integrated thinking. The syntactic feature of English is hypotaxis and emphasis on the cohesion of form, which embodies the other way of individual thinking.

Thus, in terms of linguistic dimensions, translators must understand the similarities and differences between Chinese and English.

4. Culture-dimensional transformation

4.1 Culture-dimensional transformation

The core of linguistics is culture. Previous research has established that the role of culture is quite significant in the process of translation [10]. The cultural dimension plays a pivotal role in the transformation of translation practices, as translation involves the communication of culture.

In culture-dimensional transformation, translators focus on the transmission and interpretation of the connotations of bilingual culture in the translation process. This transformation emphasizes differences between the source language culture and target language culture in nature and content to prevent misinterpretation of the original text from the target language culture [8].

Culture-dimensional transformation requires translators to have cultural awareness and to be clear that translation is a crosslinguistic and cross-cultural communication [11]. Culture has five characteristics: nationality, inheritance, rheology and compatibility [10]. In addition, translators should pay attention to the distinction of bilingual culture in the process of translation.

4.2 Case Analysis

Translation has specific objects; what translators do is to produce a text in the target setting for a target purpose and target addresses in target circumstances [12]. Translators can only obtain an advantageous position if they are all culturally and communicatively conscious at the same time.

For example, in "Standardized English Translation of Sichuan Tourism Common Terms", it translates “请您随时保持警惕，将您的包袋、个人物品随身携带” into "Watch Your Belongings. "This type of public sign is a "vocative text" focusing on pragmatic functions. If it translates to "do not leave Your Belongings Unattended. ", it will be easier to think and act by public signs, and the form is also close to the expression habits of Westerners.

At the entrance of the Sanxingdui Museum, a wooden sign translates “温馨提示：本馆共设有三处验票点。请妥善保管好门票” into "NOTICE! Please keep your tickets; it will be checked 3 times." Chinese used to say the reason first and then the result, whereas English used to say the result or purpose first and then state the cause. Owing to these differences between Chinese and English, this public sign's translation prompted first to remind tourists to keep the tickets and then briefly state the reason that the tickets need to be checked three times in the second.

In addition, when “温馨提示” is translated as "NOTICE", capital letters are used to attract the attention of tourists, preventing the inconvenience of tourists losing tickets after one use so that the translation successfully accords with the reading habits of foreign tourists.

Differences between Chinese and English force translators to make good cultural dimension transformation. Translators are committed to maintaining Chinese primeval features and avoiding cultural misunderstandings due to cultural differences.

5. Communication-dimensional Transformation

5.1 Communication-dimensional Transformation

Translation is a recreation activity in which translators adapt to the ecological environment of translation. After the translator completes the conversion of language information and the transfer of cultural connotations, he will inevitably focus on the communicative level, and all the needs of the communicative dimension will be unfolded in the translation community where translations operate [13].

Communicative-dimensional transformation refers to translators paying attention to the intention of bilingual communication when making adoptions and selections during the translation process. This requires translators not only to be concerned with the transformation of language information and cultural connotations but also to focus on communication. In addition, it requests that translators ensure that the original communicative intention is reflected in the translation [8].

English and Chinese are quite different in terms of language style, cultural background, values, aesthetics and logical ways of thinking. The translation of public signs at the communicative level should follow the adaptation and selection transformation in eco-translatology.

5.2 Case Analysis

The translation of public signs in tourist attractions often overpursues loyalty to the original text, resulting in the Chinglish phenomenon. However, public signs in scenic spots arouse tourists' humanistic feelings, and the mood should be soft, friendly and polite [5]. From the perspective of communication, such an expression makes foreign tourists feel nervous and uncomfortable, which affects the realization of communication intention [2].

For example, “禁止烟火” translates to "Fire Prohibited"; prohibition refers to the act of prohibiting a certain substance or act, the information expression is clear from the linguistic level, but it is like a command at the communication level, blunt and impolite. In a country where English is the mother tongue, its culture promotes democracy, whereas Chinese people prefer to use rigid, mandatory vocabulary or imperative imperatives. When translators express “禁止做某事”, it is better to translate it into "No + noun or gerund". So it is softer to translate the text as "No Flammables".

In Chengdu Baihuatan Park, the label “青草依依，踏之何忍” translates into "Don't step on the green grass". This English slogan uses a tone of imperative to express commands. However, to remind tourists, "Keep off the grass" or "Please keep off the grass!" is generally accepted in English-speaking countries. The author holds that in the translation of poetic public signs, there is no need to follow this sentence pattern.

Therefore, in the translation of public signs from the perspective of eco-translatology, translators should take the communicative intent of the original text as the ultimate goal and pay more attention to the adaptive choice of communicative intent on the basis of transforming the language structure and conveying cultural connotations [14].

6. Conclusion

The translation of public signs in scenic spots demonstrates China's civilization to the rest of the world. The translation of public signs is complicated, and quality can be an important basis for measuring the language environment and human environment of international tourist destinations [15]. Research on these kinds of public signs is worthwhile.

Scenic spots often embody the historical culture and folk style of areas. Directing, prompting, restricting and compelling are the four most important functions of tourism public signs. It is translators' responsibility and obligation to follow the language style of public signs and properly transfer information. This is how tourists are capable of fully realizing the function of public signs in scenic spots.

In many tourist attractions in Sichuan, English public signs are translated word by word and sentence by sentence, making them difficult to understand and failing to achieve the purpose of public signs.

This paper suggests that translators cannot mechanically translate a language directly into another language. Instead, they must transform into the three dimensions of linguistics, culture and communication for the easy understanding of foreign tourists. The author suggested that when such signs are translated, the translator should be familiar with the functions of the signs as well as their language features and comprehend the cultural

differences between English and Chinese signs. The translator should always keep the target language reader in mind; otherwise, it will be difficult to hit the optimal versions.

In short, three-dimensional transformations are not three individual processes; rather, they are interrelated with each other. The translator's adaptive choice behavior should be the result of comprehensive consideration at the three levels. In the translation process, the translator can improve the quality of public signs only by creating a harmonious translation ecosystem; combining the three levels of language, culture, and communication; and balancing, coordinating, and adapting. The clean and comfortable international language environment makes full use of public signs as a bridge for international communication and exchange.

In this thesis, the author explores the translation of tourism public signs in Sichuan Province from the perspective of eco-translatology. This thesis provides deeper insight into the translation of public signs. The correct and appropriate English public signs are the elegant and civilized business cards of the scenic spots, as well as the display window of the cultural image of the scenic spots. It can serve more inbound tourists and can greatly enhance the image of the scenic spots in Sichuan.

Acknowledgments

First, I want to thank my tutor for her careful guidance in my writing process; you like a beacon to illuminate my path. Second, I would like to thank all the teachers who teach English double degree courses. It's your selfless professor of knowledge that I can go one step further.

Finally, I want to thank my classmates and the family and friends who silently supported me in the back. I intend to start a new journey; I will always be grateful and become a better person.

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