

Errors and Solutions of C-E Translation on Tourism Spots Signs

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Abstract

Tourism spots signs translation is throwing its weight in tourism industry nowadays. It has become one of the most useful tools in tourism for foreigners. It highly summarizes the beauty and the historic meaning of spots in China. However, owing to the poor quality of signs translation, it does not meet the purpose of advertising. Many foreign travelers feel a little confused when they read the signs of tourism spots because of some errors in translation. What's more, some translation errors will damage our national image, especially in some world famous cities.

This paper will focus on the translation of tourism spots signs, by discussing some improper and incorrect translation of tourism spots signs. Then through the study of grammar, words, and different culture between Chinese and English, this paper will conclude some principles and methods to avoid committing these errors in order to standardize the Chinese-English translation of tourism spots signs.

Key words: Tourism spots; Signs; Translation; Errors and solutions

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INTRODUCTION

Tourism spots signs translation are widely used in tourism spots especially in some famous tourism spots, such as the

Great Wall, the Imperial Palace, Temple of Heaven and so on. As a tool of communication, tourism spots signs translation conveys information to foreigners with the simplest and the most accurate words. It is well-known that it has played an essential role in tourism.

With China's increasing communication to the outside world, tourism spots signs translation has become more and more important for the tourism industry in China. In translating tourism spots signs, one should try to keep pragmatic equivalence to the original meaning. To keep the pragmatic equivalence, it refers to keep the similar expressions and meanings in translating tourism spots signs. Thus, this article finds out errors in tourism spots signs translation and concludes some useful strategies and methods to standardize the tourism spots signs translation.

1. BRIEF INTRODUCTION OF TOURISM AND C-E TRANSLATION OF TOURISM SPOTS SIGNS

In order to have an overall view of Chinese to English translation, in the first part, it's going to talk about guiding the readers to find the development clues of Chinese to English translation in China; In the second part, it's going to talk about discussing tourism industry and translation of tourism spots signs to make readers be aware the importance of these two aspects in China.

Tourism industry has become one of the most powerful and energy industries in world's economic development. Tourism industry has made great contribution to the culture, the economic development and the employment. According to the report of the World Trade Organization, China has become the largest tourism country and people all over the world want to visit such a historic and elegant country. For this reason, tourism translation plays a crucial role in the tourism industry. Tourism translation carries on the mission of cultural exchange between the east and

the west, which will further spur the human exchange between the two sides.

China is rich in tourism resources, and the cities, such as Beijing, Shanghai, Hong Kong, are almost famous in the world. While other cities and natural tourism resources may not be widely recognized by the foreigners. There are two main ways to know China: One is the press and the other is the Internet. In recent years, most tourism cities and natural tourism spots have published many kinds of brochures to advertise. However, owing to the poor translation quality, it cannot reach the purpose of advertising. Many foreign travelers feel much confused when they read the signs of tourism spots because of some errors in translation. What's more, some translation errors will damage our national image, especially in some world-famous cities. The improper translation will leave the foreigners a bad impression on Chinese culture and people when they see translation errors everywhere.

What is tourism translation? A famous expert gives out the definition: "Tourism translation is an activity which will cross the culture, language, society and space." (Webster, 2002) In other words, tourism translation is a professional service for tourism. Tourism translation, as an important part of tourism, is regarded as the window for foreigners to observe China.

"Sign refers to a lettered board or other public displays placed on or before a building, a room, a shop or an office to advertise business, which can transact the name of person or firm conducting it." (Newmark, 1981) Spots signs are also one kind of public signs. Spots signs are informative, in which words or images are presented to public to give notices, suggestions, indications, and warnings. Tourism spots signs translation is one part of tourism translation, and it is regarded as the most important part because it is often seen everywhere. Signs translation's quality will directly decide the first impressions of travelers.

In order to further develop China's tourism, improving signs translation's quality has become an urgent agenda. This thesis will attach great attention to the tourism spots signs translation, focusing on discussing the errors in tourism spots signs translation, finding out proper methods to solve these problems and improving translation quality.

With the development of information and transportation, English is widely used around the world by many people and in many fields. Nowadays China has a closer relationship with the outside world. Therefore, Chinese-English translation is much more obvious than ever. Now, China is undergoing a tremendous Chinese-English translation storm which will uphold China's development in the years to come. The Information Age and the market economy decide the role of Chinese-English translation—bridge of economic development and culture exchange not only in China but also in the world.

Translation is tied closely to the background of the times no matter it is regarded as a civilization phenomenon or as a special skill.

After stepping into the 21st century, translation, as a special skill, has made great achievements and gotten a rapid development in many kinds of fields, such as education, literature, science and technology, tourism and so on. Tens and Thousands of outstanding translators are making their contribution to the development of translation in every corner. However, China is still suffering the pain of lacking translators who can abide by native speakers language habits in Chinese-English or English-Chinese translation. The overall translation quality still remains improving.

2. ANALYSIS OF TRANSLATION ERRORS

In the following part, it's going to list four kinds of translation errors, which are frequently made by Chinese and try to analyze those errors through examples. The result of the following analysis will try to point out a right direction to avoid these errors.

2.1 Chinese English

Since the spots signs in China are almost translated from Chinese into English, Chinese inevitably causes influence on English translation. Chinglish refers to learners who first write English note before translating Chinese into English, or list a Chinese outline, and then translate Chinese mechanically into English, with obvious Chinese traces and therefore these translation versions cannot be accepted by native speakers. Chinese English in English is called "Chinglish". It is made up by the two words "Chinese" and "English". Chinese English generally has no mistake in grammar. It just expresses English in Chinese thoughts and it is a common problem in China. In tourism spots signs translation, Chinese English is indiscriminately used. Some translators believe that they are excellent in English so that they can express everything in English. Therefore, they translate Chinese into English just by Chinese thoughts. For instance, "请勿用手摸展品" is translated for "Don't use your hand to touch the exhibitions", which should be translated as "Hands off the exhibitions." Another two examples are as follows:



Figure 1
Chinese English

Source: [Http://image.baidu.com/i?ct=503316480&z=0&tn=baiduimage&detail&word](http://image.baidu.com/i?ct=503316480&z=0&tn=baiduimage&detail&word)

The two translations are words to words translations, such as “小心落水” was translated for “Falling into the water carefully” and “好” in the sentence of “请您带好随身物品” was translate for “good”. These are typical examples of “Chinglish”. These translations may be a disaster for foreigners, they can understand all the words but they cannot understand the meaning of the whole paragraph.

These mistakes are often committed by Chinese English learners and many professional translators cannot completely avoid either. Why is it so hard for Chinese to translate English in a proper way? To solve these problems, the most urgent thing is to find out the reasons why Chinese make these mistakes.

2.2 Spelling Mistakes

Spelling mistakes are a major issue in tourism spots signs translation. We are rounded by spelling mistakes on the bus, on the street, in the park, in the company, even can say in every corner whenever English translation exists. In tourism spots signs translation, spelling mistakes are usually caused by carelessness. When the translators try to translate a paragraph even more signs, they will lack of patience and mind then committing spelling mistakes is unavoidable. For example, “TOURISM ZONE” has been written for “TOUR SM ZONE”, which makes the foreigners believe this area is really open! “IMPERIAL” was spelled as “IMPETAL”. The next picture has two spelling mistakes such as “EMERGENCY” spelled in “EMERGENOY” and “EXIT” for “EXIB”.



Figure 2
Spelling Mistakes

Source: http://www.ce.cn/xwzx/shgj/gdxw/201004/09/t20100409_21254387.shtml

2.3 Grammar Errors

The first error which is often committed by Chinese is the grammar. Grammar error includes the misuse of grammar relations and the misunderstanding of meaning. These two will cause huge translation errors, and those are what we should try to avoid in translation. These errors are closely related to the translators’ basic English foundation or skills. Grammar errors in tourism spots signs translation are sure to leave an extremely awful first impression to the travelers. For instance, signs like 华山以峰称奇, it means Mountain Hua is a wonder. The translator translates it into “Mountain Hua is surprised at its peaks”. The right translation should be “Mountain Hua is surprising for its peaks”. This translation error shows that the translator

does not fully understand the differences between V-ed and V-ing. Besides that, capitalizing the first letter or not is often confusing for translators, for example, China being written as china, which means just a letter misuse will make a great difference. The following two pictures show us how right grammar is important in English translation.



Figure 3
Grammar Errors

Source: [Http://www.hinews.cn/news/system/2011/07/12/012926750.shtml](http://www.hinews.cn/news/system/2011/07/12/012926750.shtml)

Therefore, much more attention should be paid for English grammar when translating Chinese into English.

2.4 Improper Use of Words

There are two ways to overcome the improper use of words. The first step to translate tourism spots signs well into English is to understand the source language and find out a proper word to express it. A lot of words can express the same meaning in English, but these words are often used in different circumstances. Sometimes, some words are not allowed to use in tourism spots signs translation. Facing a large number of words with the same meaning, translators should be able to select one word which is most suitable for native speakers. But translators are unwilling to look them up in the dictionary especially those who lack of tourism spots signs translation experience and they believe they can use these words properly. So there is no doubt that many improper words are used in translation. Some ridiculous translations are listed below: “天涯海角” (the edge of the sky and the ring of the sea) was translated into “the End of the World”.



Figure 4
Improper Use of Words

Source: [Http://www.stnn.cc/zbj/tbtj/2016/0421/307857.shtml](http://www.stnn.cc/zbj/tbtj/2016/0421/307857.shtml)

Those improper words are not only jokes, but an alarm for our translators. Improper words can be eliminated as long as our translators make efforts to study English in a strict way and use dictionary more frequently.

3. THE REASONS FOR COMMITTING TRANSLATION ERRORS

To have a better comprehension of the reasons which cause translation errors, it’s going to list three reasons for

the next part for readers to understand why translation errors are often committed and how they come into being.

3.1 Culture Differences

Language is deeply influenced by culture a lot. When one is busy in exchanging two languages, he should consider the differences between Chinese and English culture. Culture has rich content and it includes geography, customs, and religious beliefs and so on.

Firstly, there exists the difference of the living environment. Language is closely related to people's work and life. Britain is an island country, the seafaring once had led the world in history; while the Han people lived in the mainland of Asia, and they cannot live without the land. English is "spend water like money", while Chinese is "spend money like water". There are many idioms about the ship and water in English. In China, we cannot even find expressions equivalent with phrases of the same meaning. Like "to rest on one's OARS" (which means: temporary rest for a while); "to keep one's head above water" (which means: struggle to survive); "all at sea" (which means: at a loss), etc.. In the Chinese culture atmosphere, "east wind" is "the spring wind", and summer is often connected with fire; "scorching sun" is often used to describe the summer. Britain is located in the western hemisphere, North Temperate Zone with Marine climate. The reporter of spring news is the west wind. A famous British poet Shelley's *Ode to the West Wind*, which is the best demonstration.

Secondly, differences of customs between English and Chinese are various. The attitude towards the animals is the most typical one, such as the dog. For example, the dog in Chinese is a humble animal. For the dog, Chinese idioms mostly manifest bad meaning, for example, "狐朋狗友" ("fox friend dog party", it means the bad friends). In recent years, although the number of the pet dogs is dramatically increasing, the "status" of dog seems to have not been changed, for the dog's bad image has rooted profoundly in Chinese language and culture. However, in English-speaking countries, the dog is usually considered to be the most loyal friend. The dog in English idioms mostly is of no bad meanings. In English idioms, people often use the dog's image to describe people's positive behavior. Such as, "You are a lucky dog".

Thirdly, Religious culture is an important part of human culture. It refers to the culture which combines the national religious consciousness and religious belief. It performs in different nationalities in the advocating culture. Taoism, Buddhism is China's three major religions. The two major religions in China have profound influence on the Chinese people. In both Chinese and English, a large number of idioms reflect the relationship between religious beliefs and the language. Buddhism has been more than one thousand years of history in China. Chinese believe that the Buddha beliefs can control everything in the world in Buddhism. Therefore in the

process of translation, the translator should not draw the two different cultures together without a thorough research. One should understand the differences of religious culture. Only in that case, can he carry on cross-cultural communication accurately and skillfully.

For these reasons, translators should take cultural differences into consideration when they try to translate something and should also pay great attention to the accuracy and faithfulness of translation.

3.2 Translators' Personal Factors

"Translating, as a purposeful activity, isn't that stating the obvious? Aren't all human activities aiming at some purposes or others?" (Nord, 2001) According to the *Functionalist Translation Theory*, translation is a purposeful activity. Thus, when translating, one should choose different methods or strategies according to different purposes of translation. Good translators will not only convey the original meaning but also the original author's purpose, which are the keys of improving translation quality.

The capability of the translators in utilizing language, professional knowledge, and understanding of the cultural background will mostly affect the translation quality. Some translators are not proficient in Chinese, so they cannot describe things vividly in English or express sentences in various ways. Besides, some translators have a vague understanding of grammars or sentence structures, so it is hardly impossible for them to ensure the translation quality. Even a translator with a lot of translation experience and skills, if he is not familiar with tourism spots signs translation, might adopt some inappropriate words in the translation. What's more, he may be affected by psychological factors and physiological factors. Therefore, he may make mistakes just because of carelessness, absent-minded state, and tiredness.

3.3 Social Factors

Social factors influencing the translation can be divided into two parts. The first one is the wrong attitude. A lot of people believe that if one who has learned English, and then he can be sure to be a translator. They do not know being a translator needs professional knowledge and skills and a large number of translation practice. Translators must master the basic translation theory and measures, and at the same time a higher level of applying English and Chinese is necessary. Having some experience in translation is also necessary. But sometimes, in order to save time and money, some tourism bureaus do not hand over the translation of spots signs to some professional translation agencies to translate. They just find someone who has learned English for years and knows a little about translation of the signs. After that, they do not check the translation. Therefore these translations have extremely awful influence on tourism. The second one is the loose management. On one hand, the management

system is not complete and the supervised system is not established. Nobody is required to directly guide the tourism translation at present, so the tourism market still needs to develop for a long time. On the other hand, the translators occupied in translation market mainly consist of translation agencies, individual translators, English teachers, and some students. There is no strict rule for the translator selection. That is the reason why the tourism spots signs translation quality might still be in a low level.

From all above, the reasons making people commit translation errors are clear. At this moment, to figure out a way to solve these problems and improve the translation quality is the primary task. The next two may be the most common but effective methods.

4. SOLUTIONS AND DISCUSSION

For the purpose of finding out the ways to scope these problems, it's going to point out three methods and discuss how these methods will be taken into effect in the next part. At end of this part, there will be a conclusion about conquering translation errors.

4.1 Improvement of Translators' Professional Ability

The so-called basic literacy ability is the basic condition of translators and the basic requirement for translators. Besides the noble characters, serious and scientific attitude of translators, there are other three literacy abilities that the translators must bear: They are: the in-depth understanding of Chinese culture, the professional knowledge of English and the translation practice.

Understanding the value of culture is the most important step to improve the sense of cultural differences which will affect the Chinese-English translation. Hu Wenzhong, a famous cultural scholar in China, has pointed out that of all the problems discussed or studied in intercultural communication research, value is one of the most important problems and deserves great attention. Values come from social life providing criteria for behavior. The value of culture is also the identity of a nation. Therefore, different cultures stand for different identities which cannot be translated by anyone in any language. However translators can make foreigners feel the existence of identity and make them feel the deep impact of Chinese culture. In a word, translators should never forget the value of Chinese culture especially when they translate Chinese into English. Rome is not built in a day, so the process of learning is a long way to go for translators.

With regard to the English language ability, translators should pay attention to make a firm foundation, expand their vocabulary, and enlarge reading. In the aspect of Chinese, translators should strengthen grammar, logic and rhetorical knowledge training. At the same time, reading and writing more essays is good for translation. In the

subject of professional knowledge, the translator need to make great efforts to master his own business, and master more relevant professional knowledge; Read more domestic and overseas professional journals, and know well the development of translation.

A lot of translation practices show that if three aspects are of higher quality, the translators can finish the translation work more successfully. Translation is a creative language activity, with a very strong sense of practice. Without a lot of practice, one who wants to improve translation ability, is the same as who wants to learn to swim, but never jump into the water. Of course, practice should be put in a scientific way. Beginners without expert advice, one would better find some Chinese translation materials in which the degree of difficulty is suitable to do the translation exercise and contrast with others' translation after one translates it by oneself. First, he should check up on the understanding of the articles, and then he should check up the expressions. At last, he should be aware of the shortages. With the increasing ability, one can gradually transit to the specialized subject translation.

4.2 Good Management of Translation Market

Nowadays, China is undergoing the high tide of translation, but the translation market is still in chaos. There are criteria instructing translators and translation institutions are not enough. Therefore, the quality of translation is hard to be ensured. The spots signs translation is a window for foreigners to observe China. Thus, enhancing the management of translation market is the primary task for the government. To strengthen the management of the tourism market, the government should perfect supervision mechanism and set up the system. And the national tourism English translation and the words on the net should be unified. What's more, perfecting the translation market, inspecting translation companies and improving personal practice ability and qualification are necessary to make the translation market in an orderly competition.

The methods to conquer English translation errors are always more than problems in translation. As long as all the translators treat translation seriously and bear in mind when they make efforts to improve translation quality, a huge progress of translation industry in China will be made in the near future.

CONCLUSION

Spots signs are a kind of social pragmatic material which meets the purpose of communicating and guiding. This paper introduces the definition, function and translation strategies of spots signs translation, and then analyses various errors in translation of spots signs. To deal with these problems, the paper offers some solutions based on *Functionalist Approaches* of Nord Christine.

Spots signs may be just a few words. However, the translation of them is not easy at all. In order to emphasize the importance of spots signs translation and present a better tourism environment, translation of spots signs does not simply mean changing Chinese directly into English. During translating, cultural factors should be taken into account. In order to beautify the image of Chinese tourism, we should spare no effort to improve the translation quality and standardize the translation of spots signs.

For one thing, this paper tries to arouse public attention to deal with the current problems and to create a better tourism environment. For another, by studying some useful strategies of translation, this article lists a large space for improvement in spots signs translation.

To conclude, an increasing number of people have realized the importance of spots signs translation so far. We are fully confident that the quality of spots signs translation will be improved in the near future. In that way, Chinese tourism industry will be further developed.

This paper serves as a modest spur to attract an increasing number of talents to contribute to the translation of spots signs, aiming at promoting a beautifully pure language environment for China. It is firmly believed that China, enjoying the reputation of

Tourism Resort, will show her beauty to people in every corner of the world.

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