

Study on the Translation of Bilingual Signs of Cultural Tourism in Baoding under the Background of Global Tourism

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Abstract: In the process of building a new pattern of global tourism and promoting the transformation and upgrading of tourism structure, it is of great significance to standardize the construction of bilingual signs of cultural tourism. This paper takes the tourism and cultural entertainment sections of the *English Translations of Public Signs in Baoding (Trial)* as the research object and comprehensively uses literature research, questionnaire survey, qualitative analysis and other methods to point out the shortcomings of the existing research on the translation of bilingual signs in Baoding. On the basis of the research, from the four dimensions of accuracy, standardization, cultural differences and humanity of bilingual signs translation, this paper analyzes some errors in the *Trial*, discusses the relevant translation strategies, and gives some reasonable suggestions to the government. In this case, the construction of bilingual signs in cultural tourism will be more in line with the development goals of global tourism.

Keywords: Bilingual signs, cultural tourism, translation problem, translation strategies.

1. Introduction

The construction of bilingual signs is of great importance to implement global tourism strategies and promote foreign exchanges effectively. Public signs have a long history of application as a text form with specific functions. In the process of economic and social development of all ethnic groups in the world, public signs have shown great significance in regulating interpersonal relationships and building a harmonious society. (Lyv, 2005)^[1] As a language carrier for cultural communication, bilingual signs in cultural tourism are an important part in the construction of bilingual signs. Besides, it is also a critical part that reflects local characteristics and conveys cultural connotations. As early as 2006, Beijing took the lead in issuing China's first local standard for the translation of bilingual signs in public places. In 2011, the Ministry of Education and the State Language Commission formulated a set of complete and authoritative translation standards considering Chinese cultural characteristics and habits of foreign visitors. (Wang & Zhang, 2016)^[2] Subsequently, a series of local standards were formulated, combining unique cultural characteristics to facilitate the construction of bilingual signs. However, in the reference *English Translations of Public Signs in Baoding (Trial)* (hereinafter referred to as "*Trial*"), there are many translation errors that do not meet the national translation standards. "If the English translation of public signs can not realize its social function, it will inevitably damage the cultural appearance of the city, hinder foreign exchanges, and even have a negative impact on the international image of the city and the country." (Guo, 2016, P375)^[3] Therefore, based on the research on the translation of bilingual signs of cultural tourism, this paper focuses on analyzing translation errors and strategies of bilingual signs in Baoding, improving the language service system and boosting a new development pattern of global tourism in the city.

2. Review-of-Literature

Firstly, previous studies have stated the necessity for bilingual sign translations to conform to the fundamental linguistic norms of both Mandarin and English. For instance, Tong Jing (2014)^[4], drawing upon the eco-translatology propounded by Hu Genshen, proposed that in bilingual translation, one is supposed to adapt the text according to the linguistic characteristics and differences of both source and target languages, thereby ensuring conformity with linguistic norms.

Guo Xiaochun et al. (2018)^[5] highlights the propensity to translation errors in bilingual signs within various regions' tourist attractions due to cultural disparities and regional linguistic habits. Thus, it emphasizes the necessity of adherence to linguistic standards and norms. However, the translation of tourism signs exhibits a fusion of Chinglish frequently. (Wang, 2013)^[6]

Additionally, the translation of bilingual signs should prioritize the humanistic quality in the text.

"The challenge and its easiness of translation, as well as its quality and its inadequacy—whether they are more related to language or to culture, it is safer to say that they are predominantly shaped by culture." (Tan, 1986, P9)^[7] The language is culture-loaded. Ignoring cultural needs and humanistic quality can hinder cross-cultural communication, causing foreign readers to misunderstand the source culture, thereby impacting its image potentially. (Wang, 2013)^[6] At the same time, a translation bereft of humanistic and aesthetic quality can plunge the translated text into a quandary of translation omission. It ignores readers' aesthetic needs and results in a translation bereft of its unique cultural characteristics, even the essence of Chinese tradition. The essence of the original composition may be entirely erased without any aesthetic appeal.

More importantly, the translation should achieve the communicative intention of bilingual sign. Firstly, bilingual signs need to convey meaning accurately. Tong Jing (2014,

P112)^[4] proposed that “in addition to transmitting basic linguistic information and cultural connotations in the source language, translators should also focus on the communicative level of selection and transformation. And the focus should be on how to achieve the communicative intention of the source language text in the translation, in order to achieve the characteristics and functions of indicative and warning”. From a communicative perspective, the communicative goals should be accurately conveyed as the source language aims to achieve. Secondly, bilingual signs are supposed to pay attention to emotional needs. Different translation strategies should be applied in different contexts as they need. Wang Shuhui (2013, P50)^[6] proposed that tourism translation “should adopt a moderate, polite, and tactful tone to make readers more pleasantly accept the instructions of the signs”.

Research on the translation of Baoding slogans has a rich foundation in the past, and there are also studies on the translation of public signs in Baoding. However, previous studies still have limits. For example, previous research samples mostly focused on the investigation of bilingual signs in Baoding's infrastructure, with less research on the increasingly popular cultural tourism and the intangible cultural heritage in recent years. This has led to certain errors and omissions in the bilingual signs of Baoding's cultural tourism landscape. Besides, there is no unified standard for correcting such errors, nor have corresponding strategies been proposed to promote the cultural and tourism development of Baoding. Moreover, previous literature has pointed out many problems in the translation of bilingual signs in Baoding, but there is a lack of specific standardized bilingual translation systems of Baoding, especially in the cultural tourism sector, with specific standardized translation strategies and suggestions. This paper intends to discuss issues such as establishing a standardized bilingual translation system in Baoding, proposing reasonable translation strategies and suggestions, promoting the improvement of the bilingual sign translation strategies of Baoding's cultural tourism, as well as strengthening the linguistic landscape translation in Baoding.

3. Results

When investigating the current situation of bilingual signs of cultural tourism in Baoding, our team used the questionnaire survey method. We issued the "Questionnaire on Bilingual Signs in Public Places in Baoding" (Appendix 1) and collected 87 samples by the "Questionnaire Star" software, among which 82 were valid ones. According to statistics, 90.24% of the respondents live in Hebei Province and 92.68% of the respondents are college students.

Through analyzing the data, we found that more than half of the respondents believed that the existing bilingual signs in Baoding, especially those related to cultural tourism, had some problems. For example, Fig. 1 shows that 59.76% of the respondents believed that Baoding should improve the accuracy of bilingual signs. And 64.64% of the respondents agreed that cultural signs should be more distinctive and graceful to attract foreigners in Fig. 2. Besides, most respondents supposed that improving the bilingual signs in cultural tourism in Baoding would develop public cultural tourism in Baoding and help the city go global. For instance, 62.2% of the respondents agreed that the bilingual signs would affect foreigners' travel and life experiences in Baoding as shown in Fig. 3. In addition, many respondents held expectations towards improving the bilingual signs of cultural tourism in Baoding. For example, Fig. 4 reveals that

60.98% of the respondents believed that it was necessary to revise public signs of Baoding.

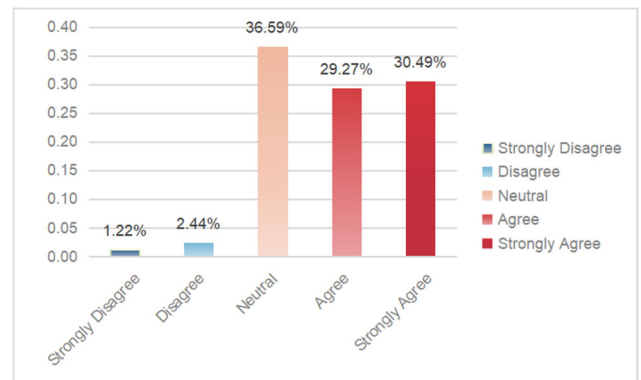


Figure 1. The Degree of Agreement on Improving the Accuracy of Bilingual Signs of Baoding

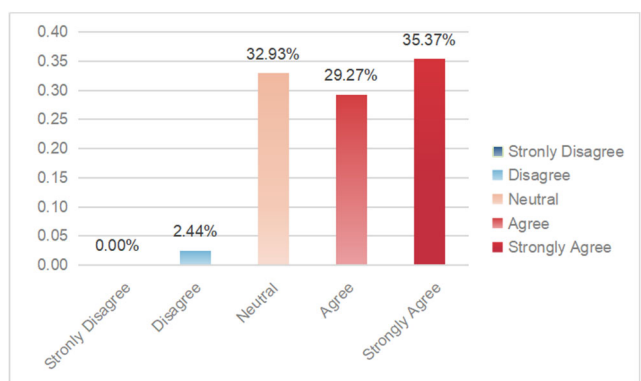


Figure 2. The Degree of Agreement on Highlighting the Characteristics of Cultural Signs of Baoding

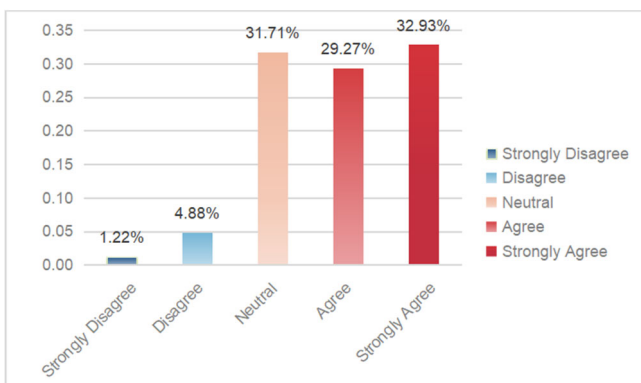


Figure 3. The Degree of Agreement on Bilingual Signs will Influence Foreigners' Tour and Life Experience

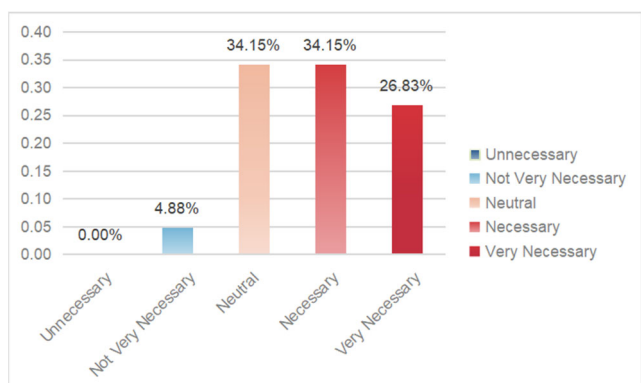


Figure 4. Respondents' Opinions on the Necessity of Revising Public Signs of Baoding

It is noticeable that most respondents are university students living in Baoding. And they have some opinions on the construction of cultural tourism bilingual signs in Baoding. They believe that there are some problems with the existing cultural tourism bilingual signs in Baoding. In addition, most respondents basically agree that improving the cultural tourism bilingual signs is of great significance for the development of Baoding, especially for tourism. They expect Baoding to strengthen the construction of cultural tourism bilingual signs, and help the cultural tourism of Baoding to go international.

Therefore, on the basis of the preliminary literature survey and questionnaire, our team summarized problems in the *Trial* into the following aspects:

3.1. Basic errors

When translating and writing bilingual signs, basic translation errors should be avoided, such as spelling errors, mistranslation, omission, grammatical errors, etc. The above errors have appeared in the *Trial*, which will leave a bad impression on tourists about the negligence of management and translation, affecting tourists' travel experience.

For example, in the *Trial*, the entry "Dragon Lantern in Yi County" is translated as "Lion Dance in Yi County". Dragon lantern is totally different from lion dance. This mistranslation is a basic error. The wrong sign should be modified as "Dragon Lantern in Yi County". In addition, in the *Trial*, the entry "Children's Books" is translated as "Children's Book", which is a basic singular plural grammar error. The correct sign should use the plural and the original entry should be modified as "Children's Books".

3.2. Lack of standards in translation strategies and writing patterns

When translating and writing bilingual signs, complying with the translation and writing standards issued by professional units or departments attaches great importance, such as the *GB/T 30240 Guidelines for the use of English in public service areas*. In the *Trial*, there is the entry "Orient Sunda Window Industry Tourist Attraction", while in fact, the company's official website uses "Orient Sundar Energy-saving Windows Tourist Attraction". When translating and writing this entry, it should be consistent with the company's version.

In addition, the same or similar signs should be unified and standardized as much as possible. In this case, foreign visitors will not be confused. Instead, they may be impressed by the sincerity and carefulness of Baoding. For example, in the *Trial*, the translation of "scenic spot" varied. When translating "Yesanpo Scenic Area", it used "Scenic Area". When translating "Western Qing Tombs Tourist Attraction", it used "Tourist Attraction". When translating "Langya Mountain Scenic Attraction", it used "Scenic Attraction". Although three translations are all feasible, it is still recommended to unify them, so as to reflect the standardization and unification.

3.3. Not in line with cross-cultural needs

Chinese and Westerners vary in language expressions and thoughts. Bilingual signs mainly serve foreign tourists. Therefore, in the construction of bilingual signs for cultural tourism, the English translation should be designed according to the pragmatic habits of foreigners. And semantic confusion or Chinglish should be avoided.

However, in the *Trial*, some terms fail to meet the cross-

cultural needs of foreign tourists. For example, in the *Trial*, the difference between pond and pool is not distinguished according to the specific situation. In the pragmatic habits of Westerners, pond often refers to artificial ponds, while pool refers to natural ponds. Besides, in the *Trial*, "Folk Park" is also translated as "Folklore Park". In fact, there are some differences between "folk" and "folklore". Folk mainly relates to common people's tradition which reflects their lifestyle, while folklore mainly means traditional tale. This entry mainly refers to a village or park with a characteristic regional style and national style. Therefore, "Folk Park" can be more easily understood by foreign tourists. And it is also used in the Chinese-English translation and inquiry system of public signs in Shenzhen, China.

3.4. Lack of humanistic and aesthetic quality

Language is an important way of cultural expression. Beautiful and appropriate language enables receivers to touch the unique culture behind it. "When foreigners come to China, they will be very interested in Chinese culture and have the need to understand Chinese culture. Therefore, the translation of tourism signs is not only the translation of a series of linguistic symbols, but also the translation and interpretation of a culture." (Wang, 2013, P50)^[6] Compared with the bilingual signs in other fields, when translating and writing the bilingual signs in cultural tourism, we should also pay attention to the cultural and aesthetic connotation embodied in the signs besides its accuracy and standardization.

Some of the terms in the *Trial* can not meet the cultural and aesthetic needs of tourists. For example, "Yugu Cave Scenic Area" is translated as "Yugudong Scenic Area". According to our investigation, Yugu Cave Scenic Area is mainly characterized by odd springs and caves. The translation "Yugudong Scenic Area" simply combines Chinese Pinyin, failing to reflect the characteristics of the cave. Therefore, we suggest translating it as "Yugu Cave Scenic Area" to highlight the characteristics of the cave. In contrast, the term "Winding Yellow River Lamp Array" in the *Trial* is translated appropriately. It not only reflects the winding characteristic of the Yellow River, but also reflects the continuous characteristic of the lamp array.

4. Conclusions

Under the background of global tourism, it is urgent to improve bilingual signs in Baoding cultural tourism. Based on the above investigation and research, our team put forward the following targeted suggestions according to the major problems in the cultural and tourism bilingual signs in Baoding.

First of all, the Baoding government can carry out national error correction activities. There are numerous scenic spots and rich folk culture in Baoding. The workload of the revision of the cultural and tourism bilingual signs in the city is heavy. It is not adequate to simply rely on the strength of the Baoding government and relevant departments. Therefore, Baoding citizens and foreign tourists can explore their potential. The "Shenzhen Chinese-English Translation and Writing Inquiry System" has set up a good example. It has established a "National Error Correction" section and the public is welcome to give advice.

Second, it is suggested to set up a professional team to proofread the *Trial*, refer to the translation standards of the authoritative bilingual signs and the translation versions of professional units, modify and improve the corresponding

entries, unify the translation standards of the cultural and tourism bilingual signs in the city to avoid confusion.

Third, people with a certain translation background can be invited to participate in the revision of the *Trial*, such as bilingual sign translation experts, college teachers and students, etc. These kinds of people have a certain cross-cultural background and research basis for the cultural and tourism bilingual signs and can help polish the bilingual signs. In this case, bilingual signs can reflect the culture and aesthetics behind them and meet the cross-cultural needs of tourists.

5. Funding

The paper is funded by College Students' Innovative Entrepreneurial Training Plan Program (S202310079154).

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Appendix 1

Sample Questions of Questionnaire on Bilingual Signs in Public Places in Baoding

I. Basic information

1. My grade:
 - A. Preparatory Year
 - B. Freshman Year
 - C. Sophomore Year
 - D. Junior Year
 - E. Postgraduate Year
 - F. Others
2. My gender:
 - A. Male
 - B. Female
3. My major:
 - A. Literature
 - B. Art
 - C. Natural science
 - D. Engineering
 - E. Medicine
 - F. Others
4. I think my choice is valuable (I often pay attention to bilingual signs in Baoding).
 - A. Yes
 - B. No
5. The frequency of my visits, sightseeing and walking in Baoding (outside campus) is close to:
 - A. Three times a week
 - B. Once a week
 - C. Every two weeks
 - D. Once a month
6. The main purpose of my trip to Baoding is to:
 - A. Study or work
 - B. Receive medical treatment
 - C. Go sightseeing and visit historic sites
 - D. Enjoy delicious food
 - E. Entertain
 - F. Wander around

II. Choose the degree of agreement to which the description matches.

(1-Strongly Disagree, 2-Disagree, 3-Neutral, 4-Agree, 5-Strongly Agree)

1. The guiding signs (directions, tips, etc.) in the main commercial entertainment centers in Baoding are inappropriate.
2. The content of the guiding signs in the major commercial and entertainment centers of Baoding is wrong or ambiguous.
3. The number of guiding signs in the major commercial and entertainment centers of Baoding should be increased.
4. Some important signs (toilets, elevators, etc.) in the major commercial and entertainment centers of Baoding are too small.
5. Some important signs (toilets, elevators, etc.) in the major commercial and entertainment centers of Baoding are eye-catching.
6. There exist deficiencies of fire signs.
7. The lack of guide signs in shopping malls made it difficult to find stores.
8. The English translation of the guiding signs in the major commercial and entertainment centers of Baoding has grammatical errors.
9. The English spelling of the guiding signs in the major commercial and entertainment centers of Baoding is wrong.
10. I am used to using my mobile phone to navigate, without looking at the direction signs in the commercial and entertainment centers.
11. The location of the guiding signs (ticket office, directions, etc.) in the scenic spots and historic sites of Baoding is very appropriate.
12. The content of the guiding signs in the scenic spots and historic sites of Baoding is wrong or ambiguous.
13. The number of guiding signs in Baoding is insufficient, and scenic spots cannot be found easily.
14. Some important signs (no photo, toilets, etc.) of the scenic spots in Baoding are too small.
15. Some important signs (no photo, toilets, etc.) of the main scenic spots in Baoding are eye-catching.
16. The Chinese introduction of a scenic spot should be more abundant.
17. The English introduction of the scenic spots in Baoding is too straightforward and simple.
18. The English translation of the guiding signs of the scenic spots in Baoding has grammatical errors.
19. The English translation of the introduction of the scenic spots in Baoding has grammatical errors.
20. The English translation of the guiding signs of the scenic spots in Baoding is incorrect.
21. The English translation of the introduction of the scenic spots in Baoding is incorrect.
22. The English spelling of the guiding signs of the scenic spots in Baoding is incorrect.

23. The English spelling of the introduction of the scenic spots in Baoding is incorrect.
24. The English introduction of the scenic spots in Baoding is not faithful and graceful.
25. I am used to using my mobile phone to navigate, without looking at the guiding signs and introduction of the scenic spots.
26. Cultural signs should be used more distinctly to increase the attractiveness.
27. The propaganda signs should be more attractive.
28. Increasing the signs which introduce Baoding tourism and cultural characteristics in the train station and high-speed rail station is necessary.
29. Baoding should increase the accuracy of the signs.
30. Baoding lacks distinct cultural characteristics.
31. Baoding needs a resounding cultural slogan.
32. The accuracy of the English signs in Baoding will affect the foreigners' tour and life experience.
33. The revision work of public bilingual signs in Baoding is necessary.