

A Study on the Current Status of Japanese Translation and Corresponding Translation Strategies for Langzhong Tiangongyuan Scenic Area

Zhulin Jiang

Nanchong Vocational College of Culture and Tourism, Nanchong 637400, China

Abstract

This study focuses on the Tiangongyuan Scenic Area in Langzhong, employing a combination of field research and literature analysis to conduct an in-depth examination of the current state of Japanese translation within the scenic area. The research reveals a multitude of issues in the Japanese translations, including translation gaps, inconsistent translations of names, mistranslations and omissions of cultural content, as well as frequent occurrences of Chinglish-like Japanese expressions. Drawing on functionalist translation theory and a cross-cultural communication perspective, this study proposes targeted translation strategies such as supplementation, Dilution, and rewriting. These strategies are designed to effectively enhance the quality of Japanese translations in the scenic area, thereby facilitating the internationalization of Langzhong's tourism industry. The research findings indicate that scientific and standardized Japanese translation strategies play a pivotal role in cultural dissemination and the enhancement of tourism appeal. They are of great significance in advancing the internationalization process of not only the Tiangongyuan Scenic Area in Langzhong but also the tourism industry of Langzhong as a whole.

Keywords

Langzhong Tiangongyuan; Current Status of Japanese translation; Translation Strategies.

1. Introduction

1.1. Research Background and Significance

With the continuous and in-depth advancement of the "Belt and Road" Initiative, China's tourism industry has ushered in unprecedented development opportunities. This macro-strategic context has opened up vast space for the internationalization and diversification of the tourism sector. However, through literature review, it has been found that research on the Japanese translation of tourist attractions, both outside and within the city, remains relatively scarce.

Although research on relevant topics outside the city has already commenced, early studies primarily focused on the field of translation of public signs in tourist attractions. For instance, Zhang Guofeng (2021) identified "hard" and "soft" translation errors in the Japanese translations of public signs in scenic spots in eastern Fujian and proposed corresponding solutions, such as the necessity for translators of public signs to possess a high level of Japanese language proficiency and the implementation of a rigorous proofreading process[3]. Zhang Guo (2022) examined research papers on the Japanese translation of public signs, pointing out issues such as the monotony of research methods and the narrow scope of study. He also offered prospects for the gradual expansion of research scope and further enhancement of research depth[2]. Chen Xu (2023), through an investigation of the Japanese translations of public signs in the Xijiang Qianhu Miao Village scenic area in Guizhou Province, categorized them into three types based on Reiss's text - type theory: informative, expressive, and operative.

The study concluded that the foreignization strategy is more frequently employed for informative public signs, while the domestication strategy is predominantly used for the other two types[1]. In recent years, although research perspectives have broadened to encompass areas such as discourse genre analysis and the Japanese translation of external - publicity websites, the overall research still remains inadequate. For instance, Luo Xianqian's (2018) study on hot - spring tourist attractions in China and Japan revealed that, given the same communicative purpose, the move features of discourses can vary due to cultural backgrounds and modes of thinking[6]. Zhang Yi et al. (2020) conducted a survey on the current state of the Japanese translation of the external - publicity websites for red - tourism resources in Changsha. Their findings indicated that the websites suffered from issues related to website construction and Japanese translation. In response to these problems, they proposed countermeasures, including enhancing the construction of Japanese - language webpages and formulating detailed translation guidelines[4]. In contrast, relevant research within the city is relatively scarce, which to some extent underscores the limitations in the depth and breadth of current studies. For instance, Liu Ziyang (2015) conducted an analysis of mistranslations in the public signs at the Langzhong Ancient City Scenic Area from the perspective of cross-cultural communication and revised the inaccurate and non-standard Japanese translations[7]. Ge Huiling (2019), through a study of the Japanese translations of public signs collected on-site at the Nanchong Wanjuanlou Scenic Area, pointed out issues such as low penetration rate and verbose translations. She suggested that improvements should be made through the collaborative efforts of the government, scenic area administrators, and translators[5].

Langzhong Tiangongyuan, as the only AAAA-level Feng Shui cultural tourist attraction in China, attracts a large number of domestic and international tourists with its unique cultural heritage and picturesque natural scenery. However, there are numerous pressing issues in the Japanese translation and promotion of this attraction. These problems, to a certain extent, restrict the influx of Japanese tourists and, consequently, hinder the internationalization process of Langzhong's tourism industry. Therefore, conducting an investigation into the current state of Japanese translation at Langzhong Tiangongyuan and proposing targeted translation strategies hold significant cultural and economic value.

1.2. Research Objectives and Methods

The objective of this study is to comprehensively and deeply understand the current situation of Japanese translation at Langzhong Tiangongyuan through field research, literature collection, and summarization. Subsequently, feasible translation strategies will be proposed. The specific research methods employed include field research, literature collection, and summarization and classification. By conducting a meticulous analysis of the Japanese texts within the attraction, the existing problems will be identified, and targeted solutions will be put forward.

2. Overview of Langzhong Tiangongyuan Scenic Area

2.1. Overview of the Scenic Area

Tiangongyuan in Langzhong is located in Tiangong Town, Langzhong City, Nanchong City, Sichuan Province. It is a cultural tourism scenic area established to commemorate the Tang Dynasty astronomers Yuan Tiangang and Li Chunfeng. Covering a vast expanse of land, the scenic area encompasses core attractions such as the ancient architectural complex of Tiangongyuan, the tomb of Yuan Tiangang, and the tomb of Li Chunfeng, as well as distinctive exhibition areas like the Luopan Square and the Tuibei Garden. With its profound historical and cultural heritage and unique geomantic cultural landscapes, Tiangongyuan has emerged as an ideal destination for tourists seeking to explore ancient wisdom and appreciate the beauty of nature.

2.2. Features of the Scenic Area

Tiangongyuan Scenic Area not only boasts picturesque natural scenery but also is imbued with rich cultural connotations. Yuan Tiangang and Li Chunfeng, renowned astronomers and geomancers during the Tang Dynasty, have left an indelible mark on the area with their outstanding academic achievements and legendary life stories, thereby enriching the cultural atmosphere of the scenic area. The Luopan Square within the area features a large-scale luopan (a Chinese compass used in geomancy) with a diameter of 33 meters as its main landscape, vividly showcasing the essence of ancient geomantic culture. The Tuibei Garden displays the *Tuibei Tu*, a book regarded as a prophetic masterpiece, allowing visitors to gain insights into the profound wisdom and mysterious enigmas of ancient sages.

3. Investigation on the Current Status of Japanese Translation in Langzhong Tiangongyuan Scenic Area

3.1. Prominent Issue of Japanese Translation Gaps

Field research reveals that there are significant gaps in Japanese promotional translation within Langzhong Tiangongyuan Scenic Area. There is a severe shortage of Japanese public sign translations in public places such as streets and restaurants within the scenic area. As a result, Japanese tourists encounter difficulties in obtaining necessary information during their visits. This not only detracts from their overall tourist experience but also negatively impacts the image of the scenic area.

3.2. Lack of Uniformity in Japanese-Translated Names

There exists a lack of uniformity in the Japanese translations of names for some scenic spots and facilities within the scenic area. For instance, the Japanese translations of "Tiangongyuan Scenic Area" vary at different locations. This inconsistency will undoubtedly cause confusion for tourists. Such non-uniform phenomena not only hinder the accurate transmission of information but also degrade the overall quality of the Japanese-translated texts in the scenic area.

3.3. Frequent Mistranslations and Omissions of Unique Cultural Elements

The Tiangongyuan Scenic Area is imbued with a wealth of unique cultural elements, such as feng shui culture and ancient astronomy. However, mistranslations or omissions of these cultural elements frequently occur. For instance, in the Tiangongyuan Scenic Area, there is a mistranslation of "Nine Dragons Paying Homage" ("九龙朝圣"). Moreover, in the Tuibei Garden, the phrase "arranged in the order of the 60-year sexagenary cycle" ("以60甲子为序") is omitted. These translation errors lead to tourists developing inaccurate understandings of feng shui culture.

3.4. Prevalence of Chinglish-like Japanese Expressions

There exists a widespread issue of Chinglish-style Japanese expressions in some Japanese translations. Specifically, translators directly render the Chinese text into Japanese based on Chinese sentence structures and vocabulary, resulting in translations that do not conform to Japanese linguistic conventions. For instance, in the Tiangongyuan Scenic Area, the translation of "Qilin Running towards the Sun" ("麒麟奔太阳") is "麒麟が太陽に奔る". Such Chinglish-style Japanese expressions not only hinder the accurate transmission of information but also diminish the readability and appeal of the Japanese-translated texts.

4. Analysis of the Causes of Japanese Translation Issues in Langzhong Tiangongyuan Scenic Area

4.1. Scarcity of Professional Translators

During the translation process, problems such as the improper use of technical terms and the omission of cultural background information frequently emerge. These issues are closely intertwined with the scarcity of professional translators. Currently, the scenic area is severely lacking in professional Japanese - language translators. As a result, it is challenging to ensure effective translation and proofreading of the Japanese - translated texts. Due to the insufficient number of professional translators, the translation work often fails to meet a high professional standard, thereby compromising the quality of the Japanese - translated texts.

4.2. Over-reliance on Translation Software

Some parts of the scenic area rely excessively on translation software when conducting Japanese translation work, resulting in numerous problems in the translated texts, including grammatical errors and unnatural expressions. Consequently, the cultural connotations and distinctive features of the scenic area cannot be accurately conveyed. Although translation software offers the advantage of convenient operation, it cannot fully replace the professionalism and accuracy of human translation. Human translators are capable of making flexible adjustments based on specific contexts, cultural backgrounds, and other factors, a capability that translation software lacks. This, to a certain extent, restricts the improvement of translation quality.

4.3. Insufficient Understanding of Cultural Differences

There are significant disparities between China and Japan in terms of cultural backgrounds and ways of thinking. During the process of Japanese translation in the scenic area, if these differences are not fully taken into account, mistranslations and omissions are highly likely to occur. Taking the Japanese translation of Feng Shui terms as an example, without a profound understanding of their underlying cultural connotations, it is difficult to accurately convey their profound meanings. Cultural differences constitute a crucial factor that cannot be overlooked in the translation process. Only by fully recognizing these differences and adopting appropriate translation strategies can we ensure that the Japanese translations accurately and appropriately convey the relevant information of the scenic area.

5. Translation Strategies for the Japanese Translation of Langzhong Tiangongyuan Scenic Area

5.1. Supplementation Method

In response to the issue of gaps in the Japanese translation within the scenic area, the supplementation method can be employed for translation work. Specifically, Japanese signage translations should be added in public places such as streets and restaurants within the scenic area. This ensures that Japanese tourists can promptly obtain the necessary information during their visit. Moreover, for the unique cultural elements embedded in the scenic area, such as feng shui terms and ancient astronomy nomenclature, meticulous supplementary translations are required. By doing so, tourists can gain a deeper understanding of the profound connotations of these cultural elements, thereby enhancing their overall visiting experience.

5.2. Dilution Method

For information within the scenic area that is of relatively low value or appears repetitively, the dilution method can be adopted for translation processing. During the translation process, such information should be appropriately simplified or omitted to highlight the core content and

distinctive cultural elements. For instance, when introducing the historical background of the scenic area, key events and important figures can be briefly summarized to avoid lengthy and repetitive narratives. This makes the translated text more concise and clear, enabling tourists to quickly grasp the essential information.

5.3. Rewriting Method

Given the phenomenon of Chinglish expressions in the scenic area's translations, the rewriting method can be utilized for translation optimization. During translation, reasonable adjustments should be made to the sentence structure, vocabulary selection, and mode of expression to make the translated text more in line with Japanese expression habits. For example, long Chinese sentences can be split into short or compound Japanese sentences, enhancing the readability and appeal of the translation. This allows Japanese tourists to understand the content more smoothly.

5.4. Standardization of Name Translations

To address the problem of inconsistent Japanese name translations within the scenic area, a unified standard for name translations should be established. On the one hand, the Japanese names of the same scenic spot or facility must be consistent across different locations to avoid confusing tourists. On the other hand, for scenic spot names with special cultural meanings, a combination of proper nouns and explanatory notes should be used in translation. This helps tourists better understand their cultural connotations and improves their awareness of the scenic area's culture.

5.5. Strengthening Translator Training

To improve the quality of Japanese translations in the scenic area, efforts should be made to strengthen translator training. Professional training courses can be organized, and lectures can be invited from Japanese experts to enhance the Japanese language proficiency and cross-cultural communication skills of the scenic area's translators. Meanwhile, a comprehensive translation quality review mechanism should be established to rigorously proofread and revise Japanese translated texts, ensuring the accuracy and professionalism of the translations and providing high-quality translation services for Japanese tourists.

6. Case Studies

6.1. Translation Case of Tiangongyuan Ancient Architectural Complex into Japanese

As one of the core attractions in the scenic area, the Japanese translation of the Tiangongyuan Ancient Architectural Complex should place significant emphasis on the precise conveyance of its cultural connotations and the appropriateness of the expressions. In specific translation practices, the amplification method can be employed to meticulously translate elements such as architectural names and historical backgrounds. Meanwhile, the adaptation method can be utilized to adjust sentence structures and expressions, making the translated text more in line with Japanese linguistic habits.

For instance, "Tiangongyuan" ("天宫院") can be translated as "天宫院" (天文学者袁天罡と李淳風を記念して建てられた古い建物群). This translation not only presents the architectural name in its entirety but also elucidates its historical background, thereby facilitating Japanese tourists' better understanding of the cultural significance of this architectural complex.

6.2. Translation Case of Luopan Square into Japanese

As one of the distinctive exhibition areas in the scenic area, the Japanese translation of Luopan Square should focus on highlighting its functions and characteristics. During the translation process, the amplification method can be adopted to provide detailed translations of key information regarding the structure and functions of Luopan Square. Simultaneously, the omission method can be applied to simplify some less valuable or repetitive information.

For example, "Luopan Square" ("罗盘广场") can be translated as "羅盤広場" (直径33メートルの大きな羅盤を中心とした古代堪輿文化展示広場). This translation not only underscores the function of Luopan Square as an exhibition area for ancient geomancy culture but also reasonably simplifies certain information, resulting in an accurate and concise translated text that enables Japanese tourists to grasp the core points of Luopan Square with ease.

7. Conclusion and Prospect

7.1. Research Conclusion

This study employs a comprehensive approach combining field research and literature analysis to conduct an in-depth exploration of the current state of Japanese translation at Tiangongyuan Scenic Area in Langzhong. The research reveals that numerous pressing issues exist in the area's Japanese translation. Specifically, there are translation gaps, inconsistent translations of names, mistranslations and omissions of cultural elements, and a prominent occurrence of Chinglish-like Japanese expressions.

Based on functionalist translation theory and from the perspective of cross-cultural communication, this study proposes a series of targeted translation strategies, including supplementation, dilution, and rewriting. The research findings strongly indicate that scientific and standardized Japanese translation strategies play a pivotal role in cultural dissemination and attracting Japanese tourists. Effective Japanese translation not only accurately conveys the cultural connotations of the scenic area but also enhances the visiting experience of Japanese tourists, thereby promoting the development of the local tourism industry.

7.2. Research Prospects

Future research can be further deepened and expanded in multiple dimensions. On the one hand, the research scope can be broadened to include other scenic areas in Langzhong City as well as other tourist attractions in the Nanchong region. A comprehensive investigation of the current state of Japanese translation in these attractions can be conducted, and corresponding translation strategies can be formulated to establish a more comprehensive Japanese translation system for tourist attractions in the Nanchong region.

On the other hand, research can be carried out on the assistance and optimization of Japanese translation by integrating modern technological means, such as artificial intelligence (AI) translation tools. Leveraging the powerful capabilities of AI technology, the efficiency and quality of Japanese translation can be improved. Additionally, efforts can be made to explore how to better combine AI translation with human translation to achieve optimal translation results.

Furthermore, research on cultural exchange and cooperation between China and Japan should be strengthened. By gaining a deeper understanding of cultural differences between China and Japan, the deep integration of the Chinese and Japanese tourism industries at the cultural level can be promoted, injecting new vitality into the joint development of the tourism industries in both countries.

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