

A Study of Translation Problems in Public Areas of the Grand Canal Huai'an Section of World Cultural Heritage

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Abstract

Nowadays, translation researches concerning World Heritage have gained significant attention. However, studies of translation problems of the Grand Canal Huai'an Section, one part of the World Cultural Heritage, remains insufficient. By field investigations, first-hand Chinese-English translation corpus from public areas in the Grand Canal Huai'an Section, could be collected. The findings reveal that, after the Grand Canal's successful inscription as a World Cultural Heritage for more than ten years, there are still six types of translation problems in its public areas. Subsequently, the possible causes and solutions are analyzed. This paper may provide some valuable references for translation studies of World Heritage.

Keywords

World Heritage; the Grand Canal Huai'an Section; public areas; translation problems; investigation and research

1. Introduction

World Heritage plays a significant role in the world and China has 60 World Heritage Sites, the largest one in total number. For one thing, World Heritage Sites are regarded as heritage resources with outstanding universal value to humanity (Wang Wenbin, 2020; Li Jin and Yan Haiming, 2021), including World Cultural Heritage, World Natural Heritage, and Mixed Heritage (Xu Mingwu and Wang Mingjing, 2006). World Cultural Heritage Sites include monuments, groups of buildings, sites, historic towns, cultural routes, cultural landscapes, and heritage canals, etc. For another thing, China's World Heritage Sites include 41 World Cultural Heritage Sites, 15 World Natural Heritage Sites, and 4 Mixed Heritage Sites. On June 22, 2014, at the 38th World Heritage Conference, the Grand Canal was inscribed on the World Her-

itage List as a World Cultural Heritage Site. The Grand Canal consists of three parts: the Beijing-Hangzhou Grand Canal, the Zhejiang East Grand Canal, and the Sui-Tang Grand Canal, with a total length of 3,200 kilometers and spanning 35 cities. Huai'an city is one of the 35 cities. It is thought to be responsible for telling the story of the Grand Canal to the outside world.

Nowadays, the Grand Canal has received much attention yet with some research gaps. On the one hand, there is a research boom on the Grand Canal in the academic circle, and the related translation research achievements are abundant (such as Xu Mingwu and Wang Mingjing, 2006; Zhang Meifang, 2009; Xiong Huiming, 2009; Zhang Weihong, 2013; Zeng Mi, 2014; Yang Nianfen, 2018, etc.). On the other hand, the translation studies on specific sections of the Grand Canal, like the Huai'an Section, are relatively insufficient (Guan Xiangfeng, 2013; Ma Xingyu, 2014; Zhong Fangfang, 2018; Li Sainan, Ning Haikun and Gan Shuai, 2023), and its investigation study is rare. In fact, a field investigation reveals that its translation is worrying, which is obviously not beneficial to our work to tell the story of the Grand Canal to the outside world, after it was added to World Cultural Heritage list for more than ten years. Therefore, this paper takes the translation problems in public areas of the Grand Canal Huai'an Section as the object of investigation and analysis.

2. Research Background

2.1. Research on World Heritage Translation

There are abundant research achievements in the translation studies of World Heritage sites, and experts and scholars have analyzed various types of research object, draw on multiple theories, adopt diverse research methods, and solve multiple problems. Firstly, the research subjects include World Heritage Sites' explanatory texts (Xu Mingwu and Wang Mingjing, 2006), public signs in scenic spots (Zhang Weihong, 2013), scenic spots vocabulary (Zeng Mi, 2014), application texts for World Heritage sites (Zhang Meifang, 2009), and websites of World Cultural Heritage scenic spots (Yang Nianfen, 2018). Secondly, translation theories include Skopos Theory (Xiong Huiming, 2009), Ecological Translation Studies (Zhang Weihong, 2013), and Contextual Theory (Yang Nianfen, 2018). Thirdly, translation strategies and methods include foreignization and domestication (Zhang Meifang 2009), transliteration and free translation (Zeng Mi 2014), corpus-based translation (Yang Nianfen 2018), etc. Finally, translation problems, include spelling and omission errors, grammar errors, Chinglish, failed transmission of cultural information, etc. (Zhang Meifang, 2009), and translation errors (Xu Mingwu and Wang Mingjing, 2006).

2.2. Research on the Grand Canal Huai'an Section

The Grand Canal Huai'an Section is an important section of the World Cultural Heritage Grand Canal, but there are relatively few research results on its translation study. On the one hand, Huai'an is known as the capital of the Grand Canal. In the

Grand Canal Huai'an Section, there are 2 world cultural heritage sites, 1 river section, and 5 heritage sites. It involves a large number of public places with a large amount of Chinese-English translation materials, which have important research value for enhancing the external image of the Grand Canal. On the other hand, although previous researches have explored the translation phenomenon of the Grand Canal Huai'an Section, its objects, problems and field investigations are limited (Zhong Fangfang, 2018). For example, Guan Xiangfeng (2013) paid attention to the translation of Huaiyang Cuisine, and proposed some translation strategies; Ma Xingyu (2014) analyzed the translation of ancient architecture on the Grand Canal and believed that cultural factors should be given key consideration in translation; Zhong Fangfang (2018) sorted out the language problems in the translation of the material and intangible cultural heritage of the Grand Canal Huai'an Section, including writing, grammar, omission, and multiple translations; Li Sainan, Ning Haikun, and Gan Shuai (2023) drew on ecological translation theory to explore the translation of cultural tour guides in the Liyun Canal, proposing principles of language transmission, cultural adaptability, and communicative compensation.

3. Research Design

3.1. Research Questions

This study will answer the following two questions: (1). it sorts out the translation problems existing in public places along the Huai'an section of the Grand Canal; (2). it analyses causes and proposes solutions to the problems.

3.2. Research Scope

The paper involves translation problems in public places along the Grand Canal Huai'an Section. To be specific, it covers all the heritage areas, rivers and heritage sites in it, namely, Qingkou Complex, Site of Caoyun Governor's Mansion, Huaiyang Canal, Shuangjin Dam, Qingjiang Dam and Hongze Lake Levee. Public places are limited to those that we can visit. Translation problems are limited to those problems existing in various signs and brochures, etc.

3.3. Data Collection

By conducting on-site visits, this study collected materials from public places in the Grand Canal Huai'an Section. With the help of Guidelines for the use of English in public service areas Part 1: General rules (Zhang Minxuan, Chai Mingjiong, Ding Yanren, etc, 2014), we took photos and samples of various translation problems in those places, obtaining a total of 630 related pictures. Then, through sorting, summarizing and classifying, a small corpus of 16,500 words was formed.

3.4. Results

By analyzing the research results of scholars such as Zhong Fangfang (2018) and conducting a detailed analysis of the translation corpora collected in public places along the Huai'an section of the Grand Canal, we can sort out six types of translation problems, namely, incorrect translation, incomplete translation, inappropriate translation, inflexible translation, inconsistent translation and non-standard trans-

lation. Meanwhile, each type of translation problem may have different manifestations.

3.4.1. Incorrect Translation

In incorrect translation, translators fail to correctly understand and convey the meaning of the original content, or there are spelling or grammatical errors.

Example 1 板闸.....,是陈瑄明永乐十四年(1415)..... (Huaiyang Canal)

Original translation: Banzha..., which was built by Chen Xuanming in the 14th year of Emperor Yongle (1415) ...

Revised translation: Banzha..., which was built by Chen Xuan in the 14th year (1415) of Emperor Yongle in the Ming Dynasty ...

Example 2 每年农历九月初九 (Qingjiang Dam)

Original translation: Every year the ninth dany of the ninth lunar month...

Revised translation: Every year the ninth day of the ninth lunar month...

Example 3 禁止携带下列物品 (Huaiyang Canal)

Original translation: The following objects is not permitted.

Revised translation: The following objects are not permitted.

Example 4 名人故居 (Qingjiang Dam)

Original translation: Former Residence of Famous Character

Revised translation: Former Residence of Famous Characters

In Example 1 the translator misinterpreted the connotation of the Chinese information "陈瑄明永乐十四年", which does not mean Chen Xuanming, the fourteenth year of Yongle, but refer to Chen Xuan, the fourteenth year of Yongle in the Ming Dynasty. Example 2 is incorrect in spelling. It should be "day" instead of "dany". Both Example 3 and Example 4 are grammatically incorrect. Example 3 is a subject-verb agreement problem, and the predicate verb needs to be changed to "are". Example 4 is a plural problem, and "famous people" actually refers to many famous people, so the plural form needs to be used.

3.4.2. Incomplete Translation

In incomplete translation, translators omit part of, even all of the messages given in Chinese.

Example 5 西出入口 (Qingjiang Dam)

Original translation: West Entrance

Revised translation: West Entrance and Exit

Example 6三、四里..... (Qingkou Complex)

Original translation: ... are three or four li away from ...

Revised translation: ... are three or four li (1 li = 500 meters) away from ...

Example 7 禁止游泳 禁止戏水 (Hongze Lake Levee)

Original translation:

Revised translation: No Swimming No Wading

In Example 5, it is a place for entrance and exit, but "exit" is not included. In Example 6, it is necessary to explain the connotation of "li", because there is no corresponding word for "里" in Western culture. In Example 7, the translation of the whole warning statement was omitted. As it is set up by a high-risk river and its English translation needs to be supplemented to avoid risks.

3.4.3. Inappropriate Translation

There are many forms of inappropriate translation, including inappropriate capitalization of words, inappropriate font, inappropriate spaces, inappropriate punctuation and inappropriate line spacing format, etc.

Example 8 洪泽湖大堤 (Hongze Lake Levee)

Original translation: Hongze Lake levee

Revised translation: Hongze Lake Levee

Example 9 《癸巳类稿·板闸喻》 (Huaiyang Canal)

Original translation: IN HIS COLLECTION OF DRAFTS IN THE YEAR OF
GUI-SI-EXPLANATION OF BANZHARevised translation: IN HIS COLLECTION OF DRAFTS IN THE YEAR OF
GUI-SI-EXPLANATION OF BANZHA

Example 10 咨询电话 (Site of Caoyun Governor's Mansion)

Original translation: Consul tation Tel

Revised translation: Consultation Tel

Example 11 ...卫生间。 (Hongze Lake Levee)

Original translation: ...rest room。

Revised translation: ...rest room.

Example 12 水深危险 (Qingkou Complex)

Original translation: Danger---Deep Water

Revised translation: DANGER

Deep Water

In Example 8, as a proper noun, the first letter of all its words needs to be capitalized. In Example 9, the font of the book title needs to be in italics. In Example 10, the extra space between the letters "l" and "t" needs to be removed. In Example 11, the punctuation mark should be a solid small dot in English. In Example 12, it is in an irregular format and it requires a new line.

3.4.4. Inflexible Translation

Inflexible translation is closely related to the way of translation. The inflexibility of translation mainly lies in the dimension of translation methods, which is in contrast to mechanical translation.

Example 13 水深危险 (Huaiyang Canal)

Original translation: Water depth risk

Revised translation: DANGER Deep Water

Example 14 里运河水上风光游 (Huaiyang Canal)

Original translation: In the canal water travel

Revised translation: Water Scenery Travel of Li Canal

Example 15 请勿进入 (Qingkou Complex)

Original translation: No Entry

Revised translation: Staff Only

From Examples 13 to 15, translators just translated the expressions word by word in the order of Chinese letters. Such translations are stiff and may confuse foreign

tourists. Therefore, adjustments need to be made according to the characteristics of English writing and the actual needs of foreign tourists.

3.4.5. Inconsistent Translation

The inconsistency in translation is mainly reflected in the inconsistent translation of proper names and the inconsistent methods of translation.

Example 16 周桥大塘 (Hongze Lake Levee)

Original translation: The Zhou Bridge Pond, Zhouqiao Great Pond, Zhouqiao Big Pond, Zhouqiao Pond, Zhou Qiao Da Tang, The Big Zhou Bridge Pond, the big Zhouqiao pond, Zhouqiao Datang

Revised translation: Zhouqiao Big Pond

Example 17 总督漕运公署遗址 (Site of Caoyun Governor's Mansion)

Original translation: Ruins of Water Transport governors office, RUINS OF THE WATER TRANSPORT GOVERNOR'S OFFICE, The Site of Caoyun Governor's Office; Site of Governor's Office of Waterway Transport, Ruins of the Governor's Department of Transportation

Revised translation: Site of Caoyun Governor's Mansion

Example 18 卫生间保洁每日 6-8 次、消毒 2 次, (Hongze Lake Levee)

Original translation: ... cleaned for 6-8 times and disinfected twice everyday.

Revised translation: ...cleaned for 6-8 times and disinfected 2 times everyday

Example 19 古堰北门站, 古堰北出入口 (Hongze Lake Levee)

Original translation: Guyan Beimen Station, Guyan Northern ...

Revised translation: Guyanbeimen Station, Guyanbei ...

In Example 16, for the same pond in the same place, there are eight different translations, it should be given the same name. In Example 17, for the same place with different name in the Ming and Qing Dynasties, translators need to employ the same name. In Examples 18 and 19, the two numbers in the same sentence and the same word in two expressions should be treated in the same way.

3.4.6. Non-standard Translation

Non-standard translation mainly refers to the situation where translation methods or translations do not conform to common standards.

Example 20 双闸村 (Shuangjin Dam)

Original translation: SHUANG ZHA CUN

Revised translation: SHUANG ZHA VILLAGE

Example 21 淮河 (Hongze Lake Levee)

Original translation: Huai River River

Revised translation: Huaihe River

Example 22 全国重点文物保护单位 (Hongze Lake Levee)

Original translation: a major historical and cultural site protected at the national level

Revised translation: National Key Cultural Heritage Site

Example 23 残疾人设施 (Site of Caoyun Governor's Mansion)

Original translation:Facilities for disabled person

Revised translation:Disabled Only

In Examples 20 to 23, translators do not conform to the national standards or norms for English translation in public service field. The common name of Example 20 needs to be translated into English. The proper name of Example 21 is monosyllabic so the common name can be regarded as part of it. In Examples 22 and 23, there are standard translations in Guidelines for the use of English in public service areas Part 1: General rules, so the translators should follow.

4. Discussion

4.1. Possible Causes

The above-mentioned six translation problems are usually caused by subjective reasons of translators or objective reasons such as cost. In terms of subjective reasons, it may involve translators and other relevant personnel such as reviewers, sign manufacturers, inspectors, etc. One or some of them may not be meticulous, rigorous, or careful enough in their work. They may have insufficient knowledge reserves and a weak sense of putting tourists at their heart. They are possibly not sensitive enough to language, culture, and thinking differences between China and foreign countries, and are probably not familiar enough with translation standards or norms. In terms of objective reasons, translation activities may involve different translators and numerous related personnel from different periods, with limited time, heavy tasks, limited financial support, and high capital and time costs for the correction of translation problems.

4.2. Suggested Solutions

To solve those translation problems, it is necessary for the translators and other relevant personnel involved in translation activities to work together. Firstly, the translator needs to take translation work seriously and responsibly, proofread the translation again and again to avoid fundamental errors, improve English translation skills, master translation theories and methods, possess cross-cultural communication awareness, learn from foreign translation experience, value language, cultural, and thinking differences between China and foreign countries, and fully understand world cultural heritage sites such as the Grand Canal. Secondly, the other relevant personnel involved in translation activities need to raise awareness, strengthen process supervision and management, and provide various policies and financial support (Zhang Weihong, 2013). Thirdly, translators and the other personnel involved in translation activities need to clarify the purpose of translation (Xiong Huiming, 2009), abide by translation principles and norms, especially national standards, and focus on the target audience of the translation (Zhang Meifang, 2009). They together should improve translation quality and present the beauty of

the Grand Canal Huai'an Section in a way that is pleasing to the audience.

5. Conclusion

The paper presents the translation problems of public areas in the Grand Canal Huai'an Section, a world heritage site, through investigation and analysis. It summarizes six translation problems, analyzes their causes, and proposes solutions. It may provide reference for the improvement of other related translation research and practice in other regions. What's more, this study is beneficial for improving the overall image and international influence of the Grand Canal, and can do good to the city's external image. It may help to tell the story of the Grand Canal well to the outside world. In a new era, the Grand Canal, as an important symbol of Chinese civilization and a world cultural heritage, shoulders the important mission of mutual learning between Chinese civilization and world civilization.

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