The Application of Chinese-English Translation in Urban Language Landscapes: An Analysis of Cultural Adaptability and Functionality

Xiaoying Xue, Yumei Huang

School of Foreign Languages, Gansu University of Political Science and Law, Gansu Lanzhou 730070

Abstract: This study aims to explore the application of Chinese-English translation in urban language landscapes and analyze its performance in terms of cultural adaptability and functionality. Through field surveys and content analysis of language landscapes such as public signs, directional signs, and advertisements in multiple cities, this study reveals the current status and issues of Chinese-English translation in conveying information, reflecting cultural characteristics, and meeting functional needs. The research finds that despite efforts made by many cities in Chinese-English translation, there are still issues such as cultural misunderstandings, pragmatic failures, and functional inadequacies. To address these issues, this study proposes a series of improvement suggestions to improve the effectiveness of Chinese-English translation in urban language landscapes, promote effective cultural dissemination, and advance the internationalization process of cities.
Keywords: Chinese-English translation, language landscapes, cultural adaptability, functionality

Introduction

As an integral part of urban culture, the quality of Chinese-English translation in urban language landscapes directly affects the international image of the city and the experiences of tourists. It not only serves as a window for the city to showcase its image but also a crucial means for international tourists to obtain information and experience the city's culture.[1] Thus, the quality of Chinese-English translation directly impacts the accessibility and international appeal of the city. This study aims to delve into the practical application of Chinese-English translation in urban language landscapes, analyze its performance in terms of cultural adaptability and functionality, identify existing issues, and propose corresponding improvement suggestions, in order to enhance the effectiveness of Chinese-English translation in urban language landscapes, promote effective cultural dissemination, and advance the internationalization process of cities.

1. Application analysis of Chinese-English translation in urban language landscapes

This study first conducted in-depth field surveys of language landscapes such as public signs, directional signs, and advertisements in multiple cities. Through these surveys, we collected a large amount of firsthand data, including examples of different types of translations and actual application scenarios. Subsequently, we used content analysis methods to systematically organize and analyze the collected data. This method helped us identify common patterns and trends in Chinese-English translation, as well as some specific translation issues, such as inappropriate word choice, grammatical errors, and misunderstandings due to cultural differences. Content analysis focused on a deep interpretation of this data, including the accuracy, cultural adaptability, and functionality of the translations. The selection of research samples covered different types of urban spaces, such as commercial areas, tourist attractions, and transportation hubs, to ensure the

comprehensiveness and representativeness of the study. During data collection, a combination of qualitative and quantitative methods was used, through questionnaires, in-depth interviews, and text analysis, to ensure the richness and reliability of the data. The analysis steps included preliminary data organization, theme identification, problem summarization, and exploration of solutions, aiming to reveal the actual application of Chinese-English translation in urban language landscapes from an empirical perspective and provide a basis for subsequent improvement suggestions.

2. Cultural adaptability analysis of Chinese-English translation

In the process of Chinese-English translation, cultural adaptability issues are particularly prominent. Due to English and Chinese belonging to different language systems, each carrying unique cultural connotations and expression habits, challenges often arise due to cultural differences during translation.[2] For example, certain English expressions may not have direct equivalents in Chinese, or certain cultural metaphors may be difficult to find appropriate substitutes in Chinese. Additionally, differences in social customs, historical background, religious beliefs, and other aspects can also affect the accuracy and adaptability of translation. Therefore, translators need to flexibly apply various translation strategies on the basis of respecting the original text to achieve the best balance of cultural adaptability. In the analysis of cultural adaptability in Chinese-English translation, we find that despite many cities' efforts to achieve bilingualism, there are still many cultural misunderstandings. In terms of cultural misunderstandings, some translations fail to accurately convey the cultural connotations of the source language, leading to deviations in international tourists' understanding of the city's culture. For example, certain vocabulary or phrases with profound cultural backgrounds lose their original charm and depth during translation, making it impossible for tourists to truly appreciate the city's cultural essence. Pragmatic failures manifest that translations don't match the context of the target language, causing communication barriers.[3] For instance, some directional signs or advertisements are directly translated, ignoring the habitual expression of the target language, thus affecting the effective transmission of information.

3. Functionality analysis of Chinese-English translation

3.1 Information transmission function

The primary function of Chinese-English translation in language landscapes is information transmission.[4] In multilingual environments, providing bilingual signage or text in both English and Chinese ensures that people from different linguistic backgrounds can obtain necessary information. For example, at transportation hubs such as airports and train stations, bilingual signage helps travelers understand directions, rules, and service information, thereby improving travel efficiency and experience. Additionally, in commercial areas and tourist attractions, Chinese-English translation also facilitates smoother communication between businesses and tourists, promoting the prosperity of commercial activities and tourism.

3.2 Cultural exchange function

Chinese-English translation is not only a language conversion but also a cultural transmission. Through translation, people from different cultural backgrounds can better understand and appreciate each other's cultural characteristics. For example, in signage or promotional materials introducing traditional Chinese festivals, through Chinese-English translation, foreign tourists can learn about the historical origins, customs, and significance of the festivals, enhancing their understanding and interest in Chinese culture. Similarly, in venues showcasing Western culture, Chinese translations also help Chinese people better access and understand Western cultural elements, promoting cultural exchange and integration in both directions.

3.3 Social identity function

Chinese-English translation also has a social identity function in language landscapes.[5] In a multicultural society, the use of bilingual signage and texts reflects respect and inclusiveness towards different language communities, contributing to the construction of a harmonious social environment. For instance, for foreigners working and living in China,

English-Chinese translation provides convenience, enabling them to better integrate into the local society and enhance their sense of identity with the city they are in.

4. Improvement measures

To address these issues, this study proposes a series of improvement suggestions. Firstly, enhancing cross-cultural awareness is key to improving the quality of Chinese-English translation. Translators need to deeply understand the differences between the two cultures to avoid cultural conflicts and misunderstandings, ensuring that the translation content accurately conveys the cultural connotations of the source language. When translating, it is important to reflect cultural characteristics. For translations of cultural characteristic words and phrases in advertisements and promotional materials, such as local specialty foods and traditional festivals, the original cultural charm and characteristics should be preserved. It is necessary to adopt cultural adaptation strategies, balance cultural differences in the Chinese-English translation process and use strategies such as literal translation, free translation, or creative translation to cater to tourists from different cultural backgrounds.[6] Secondly, optimizing translation strategies is also important. In terms of optimizing Chinese-English translation strategies, it is essential to focus on the accuracy and authenticity of language. The translation should not only be faithful to the original information but also conform to the expression habits of the target language. Finally, to enhance the standards of translation quality, a rigorous translation review mechanism should be established to ensure that every step of the translation process meets professional standards. This will elevate the overall quality of the city's linguistic landscape, facilitate effective cultural dissemination, and accelerate the city's internationalization process.

5. Conclusion

In the tide of globalization, cities are not only centers of economic and cultural exchange but also intersections of diverse languages and cultures. As international exchanges become increasingly frequent, the Chinese-English translation in the linguistic landscape of cities becomes particularly important. This bilingual expression not only relates to the shaping of the city's image, serving as a business card that showcases its openness and inclusiveness to the world, but also directly affects the experiences of international tourists. An accurate and appropriate Chinese-English translation can help tourists better understand the city's culture, facilitate daily communication, and thus enhance the city's accessibility and attractiveness. Therefore, a thorough exploration of the application of Chinese-English translation in the urban linguistic landscape, analyzing its performance in terms of cultural adaptability and functionality, is of great significance for promoting effective cultural dissemination and advancing the internationalization process of cities.

Conflicts of interest

The author declares no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

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