

# Research on Chinese-English Bilingual Road Signs in Jingdezhen from the Perspective of National Ceramic Culture Innovation

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**Abstract:** Under the background of the national ceramic culture inheritance and innovation pilot zone, the research on the status quo and countermeasures of Chinese-English road signs in Jingdezhen is particularly important. Jingdezhen has a profound and unique ceramic culture, and its international influence is increasing. However, in the process of promoting Jingdezhen ceramic culture to the world, as an important medium of cultural exchange and communication, there are many problems in the present situation. This study conducted a comprehensive investigation and analysis of Chinese-English bilingual road signs in Jingdezhen City, found the main problems, and put forward the corresponding solutions to the above problems. In addition, the study highlights synergies between government, business and society. In summary, this study aims to make an in-depth analysis of the current situation of Chinese-English road signs in Jingdezhen, propose practical solutions, and contribute wisdom and strength to improving the international communication effect of Jingdezhen ceramic culture and promoting the construction of Jingdezhen national ceramic culture inheritance and innovation experimental zone.

**Keywords:** National ceramic culture inheritance and innovation pilot zone; Jingdezhen City; public signs; bilingual road signs in Chinese and English

## 1. Introduction

Road signs belong to the category of public signs. Public signs refer to the text and graphic information that are publicly faced with the public, notices, instructions, prompts, displays, warnings, and signs that are closely related to their life, life, ecology, and livelihood, and have four outstanding application functions of indicative, suggestive, restrictive and mandatory [1]. At the same time, translation should place the target reader in the central position and pay attention to his understanding and reaction to the translation [2]. In addition, road sign translation is an integral part of publicity translation, and its importance cannot be underestimated. Jingdezhen, also known as Porcelain Capital, is a prefecture-level city in Jiangxi Province. This paper mainly discusses the bilingual road signs in the main urban area of Jingdezhen city. There are 236 roads in the main urban area of Jingdezhen City, and there are more than 200 bilingual road signs. The location of road signs is also important, as shown in Table 1.

Table 1: The Location of the Road Signs

Road signs distribution	Number (approximately)
Main streets	110
Public transport stations	50
Tourist attractions	20
Commercial areas	30

In recent years, with the continuous development of Chinese ceramic foreign trade, Jingdezhen, a small city, has also been widely known. As an important part of public signs, tourism public signs are widely used and have special communicative functions, which can provide information and complete instructions to tourists in time. At the same time, the translation and writing of public signs involve many aspects, such as public service information transmission, social image building and cultural value dissemination [3]. Therefore, taking the Chinese-English bilingual road signs in Jingdezhen as an example, the author conducted a field survey on the current situation of Chinese-English bilingual road signs in Jingdezhen, pointed out the existing problems, and provided constructive suggestions for the

future of Chinese-English bilingual road signs in Jingdezhen, hoping to further improve the translation quality of Chinese-English bilingual road signs in Jingdezhen, and improve the understanding and satisfaction of foreign tourists. So as to further enhance the international image of Jingdezhen.

## 2. Problem of Bilingual Road Signs in Jingdezhen

As a famous cultural city with a long history, Jingdezhen has higher requirements in terms of city image and internationalization in recent years. Among them, the setting of bilingual road signs in Chinese and English is one of the important symbols of the internationalization and standardization of the city. At present, the bilingual road signs in Jingdezhen City have made some achievements. Although most of the road signs are translated accurately, there are still some road signs with inaccurate expressions. This will not only affect the travel of tourists, but also affect the image of the city.

### 2.1. The Translation Expression Is Not Accurate

The purpose of translation is to bridge the language gap and achieve communication and understanding between groups of different languages and cultures. Therefore, any translation needs to follow the principle of accuracy [4]. However, the translation of road signs in Jingdezhen is not always accurate, and there are four major translation errors, as shown in Table 2.

Table 2: Types of inaccurate translation expressions

Translation errors	Number (approximately)
Cultural misunderstanding	6
Literal translation	21
Spelling and grammar errors	9
Ignore context	18

#### 2.1.1. Translation Errors Caused by Cultural Misunderstandings

In some ancient ceramic museums or cultural sites in Jingdezhen, there will be translation errors of ceramic terms or cultural characteristics. For example, in road signs, Guan Kiln is translated as Official Kiln Ware. The term Guan Kiln refers to an ancient Kiln designed to make porcelain for the royal Court, and its royal or court kiln character should be emphasized in translation. The correct translation should be Imperial Kiln Ware or Court Kiln Ware. Although the original translation of Official Kiln Ware is literal, it does not accurately convey the cultural connotation of the kiln, which leads to tourists' misunderstanding of Jingdezhen's ceramic culture.

#### 2.1.2. Semantic Confusion Caused by Literal Translation

Some road sign translations are too literal and do not take into account customary expressions or contexts in English. For example, the bilingual road sign is shown in Figure 1 at the intersection of Xinchang Road translated as: 602 Suo. I think there is something unbecoming, there are two reasons: First, foreign tourists cannot understand this translation, the second is the same road sign only this use of pinyin translation, the rest of the road name translation are meaning translation. Since 602 Institute is known as the Aviation Industry Helicopter Institute and is a large national research institute, the author believes that combining functional equivalence translation, the 602 Institute in the road sign can be translated as Aviation industry Helicopter Institute.



Figure 1: Jingdezhen Xinchang Road Bilingual Road Sign

### **2.1.3. Spelling and Grammar Errors**

In some bilingual road signs, there may be spelling errors or grammatical errors. For example, 1) Ceramics Museum is mistranslated as Ceramic Museu or Ceramics Museum (missing the "m" or wrong plural form), the correct translation should be Ceramic Museum. 2) Parking lot is translated as Parkng lot, the correct translation should be parking lot. Spelling errors will not only make the signpost lose its original indicative role, but also damage the image of Jingdezhen.

### **2.1.4. Translation that Ignores Context**

Some road signs translation does not take into account the specific context or background information, translation errors are mainly reflected in the wrong understanding of a specific culture-loaded word [5]. For example, 1) A direct translation of the term youtou as "glaze head" would confuse the reader. Because youtou in Jingdezhen ceramic technology refers to too thick glaze layer, a more accurate translation should be excessive glaze layer or thick glaze. 2) tianbai translated as sweet white, literally translated as tian and bai respectively, will cause readers to misunderstand that the taste of porcelain is sweet. In fact, tianbai is named after filling white for the firing process, the process is complex and rare, and the glaze color of porcelain fired by this method is white, so the translation of it should focus on emphasizing the characteristics of white and clean, compared with sweet white, pure white can more accurately convey cultural relics information, and will not cause misunderstanding.

## **2.2. Lack of Cultural Characteristics**

Although most of the bilingual road signs in both Chinese and English are integrated with the local culture and characteristics, there are still some road signs that lack cultural connotations and fail to fully show the unique charm of Jingdezhen.

### **2.2.1. Universal Translation**

Some bilingual road signs simply translate the Chinese content into English, without taking into account the unique cultural elements of Jingdezhen. For example, sites with historical and cultural connotations such as Guyao Mingsu Bolanqu may simply be translated into English expressions such as ancient kiln folk customs area on road signs. This translation, while literally accurate, fails to convey the historical story and cultural value of the site. Since everything in Ancient Kiln Folk Customs Area is related to ceramics, the author believes that the Jingdezhen Ceramic culture should be reflected in the translation of the name, and it is better to translate it as Ancient Kiln Folk Customs Area for Ceramic.

### **2.2.2. Lack of Cultural Explanation**

For non-local visitors, some words with cultural connotations need more explanation and background. When translating these contents, if relevant cultural explanations are not added, tourists will not be able to understand these words with local cultural connotations, and it will be difficult to have an immersive experience. For example, dunzi ( bu pronounced dun, the third sound), ceramic special term, also known as white dunzi, the shape of white brick block, is one of the basic raw materials of Jingdezhen porcelain. Some tourists from outside the province to visit the porcelain workshop are unavoidably confused, cannot read its correct pronunciation, so as to misunderstanding it, not to mention foreign tourists. Therefore, it is possible to increase the full explanation of the ceramic terminology, not only the noun explanation, but sometimes the pronunciation annotation is also indispensable. The author believes that dunzi can be translated as: (dunzi, bu pronounced dun third sound) A basic raw material for ceramic, like Kaolin.

## **2.3. Lack of Design**

Jingdezhen ceramic art is famous for its unique visual image. In the design of bilingual road signs, we should take into account the visual elements integrated into Jingdezhen ceramic art, such as porcelain patterns, colours, etc. However, at present, many bilingual road signs lack innovation in visual design and fail to integrate with Jingdezhen cultural characteristics. For example, the following road signs, the author believes that ceramic elements should be added to the layout design, such as blue and white pattern, blue and white just coincide with the tone of the road sign.

## **2.4. Lack of Interactivity**

Modern tourism focuses on the participation and experience of tourists. If bilingual road signs can

increase interactivity, such as setting up QR codes for visitors to scan in order to learn more about the local culture, or setting up voice-guided devices or AI virtual reality navigation, it will attract more interests. The interactivity of road signs is mainly reflected in two aspects:

On the one hand, suitable locations for setting up interactive road signs mainly include the entrance of popular tourist attractions and characteristic blocks or cultural squares. The former, such as Yaoli Ancient Town, Royal Kiln Factory, Tao Xichuan, etc., set up interactive signpost devices at the entrance of popular scenic spots to attract attention and guide them into the scenic spot. The latter, such as Sanbao Village, characteristic blocks around the China Ceramic Museum or cultural squares, often have a strong cultural atmosphere and are suitable for setting interactive devices to enrich the cultural experience of tourists.

On the other hand, the interactive ways of street signs mainly include, 1) Touch screen query: touch screen is installed on the road signs, and tourists can query the information of surrounding scenic spots, traffic routes, navigation guidance, etc., by touching the screen. This way is both intuitive and convenient, can enhance the ability of tourists to self-tour. 2) Augmented Reality (AR) technology: The use of AR technology to combine road signs with virtual information. By scanning specific patterns or QR codes on road signs with their mobile phones, visitors can see relevant virtual tour information, historical stories or cultural introductions on the screen. This way can increase the fun and interaction of the tour. 3) Voice interaction: Set up voice prompt or voice question and answer system, tourists can interact with road signs through voice. For example, visitors can ask a road sign for the location or opening hours of a particular attraction, and the road sign will answer by voice. This method is especially suitable for visitors with poor eyesight or who need accessibility services.

Unfortunately, in recent years, Jingdezhen has developed in the field of intelligent transportation, but the degree of intelligence of the road sign system may still need to be improved. At present, the popularity of intelligent road sign system (real-time road condition display, voice prompt, etc.) in Jingdezhen is limited. Compared with the intelligent road sign systems in some developed areas, the road signs in Jingdezhen may stay more in the traditional static indication stage and lack intelligent interaction with road users. Therefore, the author suggests that in the future, Jingdezhen can further strengthen the intelligent construction of road signs, introduce intelligent road signs system, and enhance the interaction between road signs and road users. At the same time, strengthen the maintenance and update of road signs to ensure the accuracy and timeliness of information. In addition, it can also combine urban characteristics and cultural elements to design road signs with more local characteristics and enhance the overall image of the city.

### **3. The Cause of Bilingual Road Signs**

#### ***3.1. Lack of Unified Management of Road Signs***

This is the main reason for the mixed use of English and Chinese pinyin. First, the department of the use of road sign translation does not pay enough attention to the work of road sign translation; The second is the lack of business capacity of the department that makes the road signs. The translation without spelling or grammatical errors finally has spelling or grammatical errors in the production process. For example, at the critical section of an expressway junction in Jiangxi province, Welcome to Jiangxi is correctly translated as Welcome to Jiangxi province. However, when the road signs were made, there should have been a grammatical error due to negligence or technical reasons. The error, which translates as Welcome Jiangxi province, is due to the absence of the preposition to, which makes the sentence incomplete and turns it into an adjective phrase rather than a complete sentence. Such grammatical errors, while seemingly minor, can cause confusion and even misunderstanding for foreign visitors in situations where a clear message needs to be conveyed, such as road signs. Therefore, when making road signs, we must strictly control every detail to ensure the accuracy and standardization of the translation; Third, there is no unified management of the quality of the translation of the inspection department, road signs after the translation of the production, without the final inspection is put into use. The above example would not have happened if it had been tested.

#### ***3.2. Translators have Different Levels of Translation***

Due to the inaccurate grasp of the basic grammar and pragmatic rules of English, the translation result may have grammatical errors or be inconsistent with English expression habits. Due to the lack of in-depth understanding of the English language system and culture, some translations directly

translate word for word, without taking into account the English expression habits and accuracy, resulting in incorrect translation results. In some signs, the translation results do not conform to the English expression habits or laws, resulting in inaccurate information transmission or misunderstanding. For example, No Visitors is translated as no visitors, but in fact, Staff Only is more in line with the expression habits of the target language readers.

### ***3.3. Transliteration of Chinese Road Sign Terms***

In the English translation of ceramic terms, transliteration is a common translation method, which has its own advantages and disadvantages. Transliteration includes pure transliteration, transliteration plus literal translation, transliteration plus free translation, transliteration plus annotation [6]. Proper use of transliteration can achieve good results.

First of all, maintain cultural characteristics. Transliteration can better retain the original sound and cultural characteristics of ceramic terms, so that foreign readers can associate with Chinese ceramic culture when they hear or see these transliterated words. For example: Kaolin, Kaolin is one of the commonly used raw materials in ceramic production, and the transliteration of its name Kaolin is also widely adopted internationally.

Second, avoid misunderstandings. Some ceramic terms may not have direct equivalents in English and may lead to misunderstandings if they are translated freely or literally. Transliteration can avoid such misunderstandings and maintain the accuracy of terms. For example, the transliterated word Zisha has become a synonym for Chinese Zisha pottery in English and is widely accepted and used.

Finally, promote cultural exchanges. With the passage of time, the transliterated vocabulary may be gradually accepted by foreign readers and integrated into their language system, thus promoting the external publicity and communication of Chinese ceramic culture.

However, the transliteration of ceramic terms in road signs will also have some problems. First, understanding is difficult. For foreign readers who are not familiar with Chinese ceramic culture, the transliterated vocabulary may increase their understanding difficulty and require additional explanation or background knowledge to understand. For example: Ru kiln, Jun kiln, Ge kiln and other famous kiln names should not be simply transliterated as Ruyao, Junyao, Geyao and so on. Taking Ru kiln as an example, it is very appropriate to adopt transliteration plus annotation when translating the words with profound cultural connotation and historical background. Transliteration can preserve the pronunciation characteristics of the original word, while annotation can explain the cultural connotation and historical background behind it, helping readers to better understand. Ru Kiln can be transliterated as Ru Kiln or Ruyao. Then, on the basis of transliteration, add annotations to explain its meaning. Therefore, a complete translation could be: Ru Kiln, a famous type of porcelain kiln during the Song Dynasty in China, renowned for its delicate texture and icy blue glaze. Such a translation not only retains the pronunciation characteristics of Ru kiln, but also introduces its historical background and cultural value in detail through annotations, which helps international readers to better understand and appreciate this traditional Chinese cultural treasure. Junyao, Geyao can be translated as respectively Jun Kiln, a renowned porcelain kiln during the Song Dynasty in China, particularly famous for its unique Jun Crackle glaze, which exhibits a complex network of fine cracks that shimmer with different colors under light; Ge Kiln, another prestigious porcelain kiln from the Song Dynasty, characterized by its delicate texture, elegant shapes, and distinctive crackle glaze, which known as gelie in Chinese.

Secondly, the pronunciation is not accurate. Due to the differences in pronunciation between English and Chinese, the pronunciation of some transliterated words in English may be quite different from the original pronunciation, resulting in confusion for readers. For example, the pronunciation of Longquan Kiln, Longquan can be mispronounced in English, especially the syllable quan, because it has no direct counterpart in English. Some people might pronounce it as long-kwan or long-gwan rather than the correct Chinese pronunciation.

### ***3.4. Lack of Standardized Road Sign Translation Standards***

The translation standard of road signs is not perfect. Because there is no authoritative and unified guidepost translation specification or standard, there are some problems such as non-standard, ununified and diversified translation.

#### **4. Countermeasures**

According to the current situation of bilingual road signs in Jingdezhen City, it can be improved from the following aspects:

##### ***4.1. Set up a Road Sign Translation Working Group***

The relevant departments should set up a high-level working group for translating road signs into English and formulate standards for translating road signs. Translators should do three things well: understanding, expression and choice [7]. The team should regularly inspect and maintain bilingual road signs in the city in both Chinese and English to ensure the accuracy and clarity of road signs. Correct and replace wrong or ambiguous road signs in time.

##### ***4.2. Add Cultural Features to Road Signs***

When designing and making bilingual road signs in Chinese and English, the culture and characteristics of Jingdezhen should be fully considered to make road signs more local. By integrating cultural elements into the road signs, the history, culture and charm of Jingdezhen can be better displayed.

##### ***4.3. Encourage Public Participation***

Through publicity and education, this study aims to improve the public's awareness and attention to bilingual road signs in Chinese and English. This study encourages the public to pay attention to and participate in the maintenance and improvement of road signs, and allows the public to participate in the supervision of road sign translation.

##### ***4.4. Improve Relevant Laws and Regulations***

Relevant agencies have formulated and improved rules and regulations concerning road signs in both Chinese and English, clarified the setting standards, management authority and responsibilities of road signs, ensured the standardization and legalization of road signs, and urged relevant departments to correct incorrect translation of road signs in a timely manner.

Through the implementation of the above countermeasures, the overall image and service level of bilingual road signs in Jingdezhen can be further improved, providing strong support for the internationalization process of the city. At the same time, it also helps to improve the civilized quality of citizens and the overall image of the city, and promote the comprehensive economic and social development of Jingdezhen.

#### **5. Conclusion**

Public space is one of the most accessible areas to the public eye [8]. Globalization has had an enormous impact on our lives and cultures. At the same time, it has great effects on language, which is considered an important tool for enhancing understanding and communication between cultures [9]. Public signs and propaganda words are common expressions in public places [10]. Road signs translated from English not only provide necessary information for foreign tourists, but also let foreign friends know about Chinese culture. It has shed light on the nuanced representations and strategies used through public signage. It contributes to understanding how linguistic elements can shape perceptions and experiences [11]. Therefore, the translation of road signs must attract enough attention from the relevant departments, improve the communicative intention and effect of road signs, attract more foreign tourists, and further enhance the international image of Jingdezhen. Looking forward to the future, with the continuous improvement of the internationalization of Jingdezhen, bilingual road signs as an important part of the city image, its construction and management will be paid more and more attention. We hope that Jingdezhen can continue to improve the construction of bilingual road signs in the future, provide tourists with more convenient and efficient services, and also inject new vitality into the international development of the city.

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