

Analysis on the Translation of Nanning's Historical and Cultural Block Three Streets and Two Alleys

Jiayun Chen^{1,a,*}, Xin Mai^{2,b}

¹*School of European-American Languages & Culture, Guangxi University of Foreign Language, Nanning, China*

²*School of European-American Languages & Culture, Guangxi University of Foreign Language, Nanning, China*

^a985994876@qq.com, ^b2964782995@qq.com

*Corresponding author

Abstract: *The Three Streets and Two Alleys is part of the city's historical and cultural district, which has obtained an increasing amount of importance. This is also the first Nanning cultural project focusing on establishing recognizable old Nanning historical and cultural characteristics. In order to improve the way local cultural information is conveyed through publicity translation in Nanning's three streets and two alleys, this essay will examine the current state of publicity translation in those locations and analyze the translation techniques so as to improve the translation of this historical and cultural district.*

Keywords: *publicity translation; translation approaches; Nanning's Three Streets and Two Alleys*

1. Introduction

Three Streets and Two Alleys of Nanning is a historic area with significant cultural relics. It served as Nanning's political, economic, and cultural hub from the Northern Song dynasty to the early Qing dynasty. Since ancient times, the human race, politics, economy, and commerce have all been affected by the significance of this historical and cultural block. According to He Bin (2015)^[1], historical and cultural blocks are the result of long-term historical accumulation and cultural evolution. They are the representation of a city's unique cultural resources and local culture. Nanning Municipal Government has made a commitment to restoring Three Streets and Two Alleys as the local culture has received an increasing amount of attention in recent years. However, neither the outstanding traditional culture that is concealed behind this cultural and historical block nor its exterior exposure has been improved. If public relations is an effective way to increase public awareness of historical and cultural landmarks, then publicity translation is crucial. According to Tang Lin (2012)^[2], the accuracy and vividness of the translation of external publicity reflects the importance to the cultural exchange of a country or a place. Publicity translation is the embodiment of a country's foreign exchange and cultural environment construction. Secondly, the goal of publicity translation is to make it possible for readers to comprehend the meaning precisely, enabling them to comprehend the cultural roots, present circumstances, growth, and other pertinent details of historical and cultural blocks.

In order to increase the external visibility of the historic district and spread its excellent cultural connotation, this paper aims to investigate the current situation of the cultural publicity of the Three Streets and Two Alleys of Nanning, analyze the problems that currently exist in the external publicity, and present suggestions and solutions for a better development of the external publicity of the Three Streets and Two Alleys of Nanning.

With the development of globalization, China interact more fluently with other countries. According to the Internet data, the number of inbound tourists increased steadily from 2013 to 2019. Due to the COVID-19, the number of inbound tourists has been affected from 2020 to 2022. Fortunately, thanks to relevant policies to stimulate domestic demand in China's tourism industry, the domestic epidemic prevention and control work has been effective, and the response measures to China's tourism industry in the era of epidemic have also been increasingly improved. Liu Xinyang (2022)^[3] mentioned that in the era of big data prevalence and the post-epidemic period, cloud tourism has become popular with people. It can meet people's demand for tourism in various ways, which can drive the tourism industry to recover. Therefore, the publicity and translation of local historical blocks is still important.

In other words, the value of publicity translation is seen in the interchange and communication between various cultural groups in modern society, as well as in how it helps foreign tourists better comprehend the local way of life.

2. The current translation of cultural publicity in Nanning's Three Streets and Two Alleys of

2.1. The current situation

As an important historical and cultural block and the project of reconstruction of historical buildings in Nanning, Three streets and Two Alleys has not been completely restored, and this block is still in the construction period in the short term. In order to drive economic development through commercialization, buildings in this block have been developed and transformed and combined with the development of commercialization. Unfortunately, this block has little publicity to the outside world, and foreign tourists know little about landmark buildings in Nanning. Most people only know about Phoenix Tower, Zhongshan Road and Guan Yin Zen Temple on Wanshou Hill. In addition, in the area of Three Streets and Two Alleys, people can scan QR code to enter a small program to understand more about this block, but this project is still in the construction stage. In the block, although there are some introductions and English translation of the Three Streets and Two Alleys, most of the English translation is literal translation, or there exist some problems in the words and translation order, which will lead to a certain negative impact to the foreign tourists on the tourism impression and experience in Three Streets and Two Alleys.

2.2. Existing problems

2.2.1. Improper use of translated words

In publicity translation, it is not uncommon to use inappropriate word in the translations. Just as Minna Xu (2009)^[4] mentioned that architecture and English translation have their own expression habits and professional words, so it needs to be combined with the building itself, and the translation works of architecture needs to be accurate. In an introduction board in the Three Streets and Two Alleys, "Jinshi Alley Residential Area" is translated as "Jinshi Alley". The definition of the word "Alley" in the Oxford Dictionary is "a narrow passage behind or between buildings". But "Residential area" generally refers to a relatively concentrated area for the residence in the city, that is, the area has a certain building scale and is a living place for residents with relevant convenient infrastructure for residents to use and so on. So the meaning of "Alley" is obviously inconsistent with the meaning of "residential area". Therefore, I think the choice of "Alley" here is not appropriate.

The ultimate goal of the publicity is to enable foreign tourists to have a better understanding of the Three Streets and Two Alleys historic district and the traditional ethnic culture inside. So if the words in the translation are not chosen properly, the information will not be effectively conveyed, and foreign tourists will misunderstand the buildings of scenic spots, and even some traditional customs in the landmark. Therefore, the tourists will fail to understand the intended meaning, then they cannot correctly and thoroughly understand the traditional Chinese culture related to the scenic spots.

2.2.2. Inconsistent translation

The problem of inconsistent translation is more common in the publicity translation. In the introduction plaque of the Three Streets and Two Alleys, "金狮巷" is translated as "Golden lion lane", while in the other introduction plaque of "Jinshi Alley Residential Area", "Jinshixiang" is directly translated as "Jinshi" in pinyin, which is inconsistent with the aforementioned "Golden lion lane". This situation just highlights a sharp question, that is, there is no correct and formal official translation of the word "Jinshixiang".

Just as Yin Xiaojuan and Chen Xiaolan (2011)^[5] said that foreign tourists lack of understanding of the cultural background in Chinese tourism materials, so there will be some deviation and misunderstanding when they learn the cultural information. As mentioned by Luo Chunxia and Chen Yuanfang (2020)^[6], foreign tourists do not know much or in-depth understanding of the local culture of Guangxi. One of the most important channels for them to understand the local culture of tourism is the local publicity and translation. By this way, they can have a further understanding for local culture. Therefore, it will be difficult for some tourists to understand the true meaning if the translation of names in the Three Streets and Two Alleys is inconsistent, and this problem may also make some tourists to exert negative experience on tourist spot.

2.2.3. *Uncorrected translation in certain parts*

As mentioned by Zhang Likun (2021)^[7], publicity translation needs to establish a unified translation standard to reduce some translation impact, and give tourists a good impression of the scenic spot. In addition, with the help of the cultural background, the translators should pay more attention to the different habits of different languages, discuss and modify the translation and then decide the official translation of the scenic spot so as to reflect different cultural connotations and give passengers a comfortable experience.

However, in the block of Three Streets and Two Alleys, there is an introduction board for the overall situation of the block, and the English translation is not appropriate. The translation of “南宁城隍庙” is mistranslated into “nanning City God Temple”. In fact, the word “Nanning” should use the initial capital letters. The inconsistent writing of the translation here will give tourists the impression that the construction of the scenic spot is too casual, not formal and not official enough.

In addition, the first sentence of the translation introduction clearly states “Old Nanning Three Streets and Two Alleyway” for the English-Chinese translation of the name “Three Streets and Two Alleyway” that is shown to the passengers in the introductory board. “Three streets and two lanes” is then used as its introduction. Both the name of the picturesque location and the phrase “alleys” are translated without the use of fixed words. There is no doubt that it is a mechanical machine translation. These incorrect translations will then present a significant barrier to tourists’ ability to interact with and comprehend the scenic spot’s cultural stories. They will give visitors the initial impression that the translation of the scenic spot is superficial and unreliable.

Secondly, for “邕州知州殉难遗址”, the introduction card of this block directly uses Chinese pinyin to translate as “Yongzhou Zhizhou Martyrdom site”. However, each foreign tourist has a different understanding of Chinese cultural background, and the lack of local cultural background knowledge will make it even difficult for foreign tourists to understand the translation content and it will lead to certain misunderstandings. “知州” is an official position in ancient China. If it is translated directly by Chinese pinyin, it will inevitably make foreign tourists feel confused and difficult to understand the specific historical and cultural background story of the official. So the interpretation of the official position of “知州” should be explained.

However, as for the name “南宁欧骆汉风陶瓷博物馆”, the scenic place translated its name as “Nanning Ouluo Hanfeng Ceramic Museum and a series of cultural exhibition halls”. International tourists who are unfamiliar with the museum may believe it to be in “Korean waves” rather than the “Chinese wind” that China adopted. Also, the word “Ouluo” originally referred to the collective name of the Xiou tribe and the Luoyue tribe in the Baiyue tribe, which is the ancient Chinese nation, but the scenic place did not explain the word but instead exploited it. As the translation is done using Chinese pinyin, travelers will have a difficulty in understanding the museum and won’t be able to predict from the name of the museum where cultural artifacts and stories will be on show.

3. Measures to improve the publicity translation of Nanning’s Three Streets and Two Alleys

3.1. *Literal translation*

例①:ST: 金狮巷居民区

TT: Jinshi Alley residential complex.

As mentioned by Wang Hainan (2022)^[8], when the tourist attraction is introduced, literal translation method can retain the meaning of the text to a great extent without damaging the information of relevant cultural traditions that the scenic spot intended to convey to tourists. The cultural publicity itself is to pursue the accuracy of its interpretation and get close to the meaning it wants to convey. The majority of translations will keep the content unchanged while translating picturesque locations. In order for passengers to become familiar with the background information and comprehend the connotation of cultural traditional stories through understanding the translation, it is best to use the literal translation method which avoids the use of unnecessary gorgeous language and excessively complex tautology.

On the introduction board of the general overview of the block, “金狮巷居民” is translated into “Jinshi Alley Residential Complex”. Such a wrong translation will cause some troubles to foreign

tourists. The “Jinshi Alley Residential Area” of Jinshi Alley emphasizes “the residential area in Jinshi Alley”. Therefore, the author believes that it is more appropriate to translate this landmark into “Jinshi Alley residential area” by literal translation. According to the Chinese meaning, it also can be translated as “Golden Lion Alley Residential Area” to highlight the relationship between the alley and the golden lion, which will help to arouse the curiosity of tourists to the golden lion and stimulate their interest in exploring the alley. Literal translation allows foreign visitors to directly know that Jinshi Alley is a “residential area” rather than a complex area of residents.

例②:ST:邓颖超纪念馆

TT: Dengyingchao Museum

Another example is “邓颖超纪念馆”. In the introduction card of Three Streets and two Alleys, the translation of this hall is “Dengyingchao Museum”. The word “Museum” in the Oxford Dictionary has only one meaning, that is “museum”. Museum is a place to represent objects and collect, store, display and study natural and human cultural heritage. It also introduces and explains objects with different meanings and types in a classified way, so as to provide knowledge, education and cultural appreciation for the masses.

But the memorial hall takes memorial as the theme. The memorial hall is a memorial place established to commemorate people who have made outstanding contributions to the society and the people or major historical events. The spirit of the event is expressed by multimedia, physical objects and other aspects. “邓颖超纪念馆” is a memorial to commemorate Deng Yingchao’s outstanding contributions to our country, and it mainly publicizes and praises Deng Yingchao’s great deeds. Therefore, the word “Museum” adopted in the translation is not appropriate, which will confuse foreign tourists’ understanding of the connotation of “Deng Yingchao Memorial Hall”. Therefore, the author believes that the entry of “邓颖超纪念馆” should also be translated literally as “Deng Yingchao Memorial Hall”.

3.2. *Literal translation+annotation*

例①:ST: 南宁城隍庙

TT: Nanning Chenghuang Temple.

As one of the most significant deities in ancient Chinese religious tradition, “南宁城隍庙” was also known as the local protector God and was primarily worshipped by local leaders. The City God Temple is a temple in China devoted to Cheng-huang. People in Nanning and Guilin will offer sacrifices to Su Jian. In all the introduction boards of Three Streets and Two Alleys, there are several translations about “南宁城隍庙”, such as “Chenghang Temple”, “nanning City God Temple” and “Nanning Chenghuang Temple”. One thing to note is that there isn’t a single official translation of “南宁城隍庙”. Another difference between international visitors and local residents is that foreign visitors have little awareness of Chinese temple culture, let alone the pertinent historical context. Local residents, on the other hand, have a certain level of cultural familiarity with “南宁城隍庙”. Yet, the majority of Western visitors know little about Chinese temple culture and the pertinent historical context. Consequently, it is advised that literal translation be used together with annotation while translating “南宁城隍庙”. This will provide tourists a greater grasp of the local customs and culture as well as a more intuitive comprehension of the attractive locations. Hence, “南宁城隍庙” in the Three Streets and Two Alleys can be interpreted as follows: Temple in Chenghuang (This kind of temple in China is dedicated to local people who have made outstanding contributions.)

例②:ST: 两湖会馆

TT: Lianghu Guild Mall.

“两湖会馆” is yet another case. Actually, when we say “两湖会馆”, we mean the two locations that are located in the north of Hunan Lake. Since it was constructed during the Qianlong era by the merchants of Yongcheng, a tourism in the two locations north of Hunan Lake, it was given the name “两湖会馆”. Due to its construction during the Qing Dynasty and subsequent restoration during the Republic of China (1912-1949), “两湖会馆” possesses elements of Republic of China architecture. It was listed as a municipal cultural relics in 2001, and its decoration style also effectively captures the architectural features of the Hunan and Hubei regions. In the introduction plate of Lianghu Street and

Liangxiang, “两湖会馆” is translated as Lianghu Guild Mall. When visiting the Three Streets and Two Alleys for the first time, foreign visitors and non-locals frequently mistake the translated entry “two lakes” for the name of the two lakes. The translation is not helpful for visitors to have a basic comprehension of the hall. In general, it fails to convey the location. Therefore, the author believes that the translation of “两湖会馆” should adopt the method of literal translation and annotation, adding the explanatory explanation of “两湖会馆” after the translation, which will be more helpful for visitors to have a preliminary understanding of “两湖会馆”. Therefore, “两湖会馆” should be translated into Lianghu Guild Hall (Lianghu: refer to Hunan province and Hubei province)

3.3. Transliteration+annotation

例①:ST: 王阳明在广西陈列馆

TT: Wang Yangming Memorial

Transliteration + annotation is also a common translation method in publicity translation. Transliteration is mainly used to translate the names of people, places and unique things of the region. However, only transliteration used will confuse foreign tourists inevitably, because tourists do not know much about the culture of the region, and it is difficult for them to understand the essence of the transliterated words. Therefore, the method of transliteration and annotation can better convey the deep meaning and cultural connotation of words.

In the introduction card of Three Streets and Two Alleys, “王阳明在广西陈列馆” is translated as “Wang Yangming Memorial”. However, foreign tourists do not know who Wang Yangming is. From the perspective of tourists, if this entry is added with a personal introduction of Wang Yangming, it can help them have a preliminary understanding of Wang Yangming and make them more eager to visit this exhibition. Therefore, using the method of transliteration + annotation, the entry should be translated as “Wang Yangming’s Exhibition Hall in Guangxi (Wang Yangming was an outstanding thinker, litterateur, strategist and educator in the Ming Dynasty. He made great achievements especially in ideological aspect)”

3.4. Addition

例①:ST: 仓西门

TT: Cangxi Gate

As mentioned in Li Yang (2022)^[9], in translation, we should use addition on the basis of ensuring the unchanged expression of the original meaning. The translator should modify, adjust the order of the original text or add part of phrases and vocabulary appropriately in the target text, so as to improve the smoothness and integrity of the target text.

On the introduction board of scenic spots of Three Streets and Two Alleys, the translation of “仓西门” is “Cangxi Gate”. For foreign tourists, “仓西” expressed in Chinese pinyin is just a name. Actually when visiting the site, visitors will find this so-called “gate” is a building that built in the Song Dynasty, also known as Zhenyuan Gate. Because the gate is near the granary and located on the west side of the it, so it named “仓西门”.

Therefore, “仓西门” is actually the site of the gate left over from the Song Dynasty. So, it is inappropriate to simply translate “gate” in the translation, and it should be translated as “Cangxi City Gate from Song Dynasty” by the addition method.

By using addition method, compared with the original translation, it can not only further display the “门” of “仓西门” to help visitors understand that “仓西门” is an ancient gate, but also clearly explain the dynasty in which the building started work, so that visitors can clearly understand that the Song Dynasty is the historical background of “仓西门”. It can be said that it can kill two birds with one stone.

例②:ST:人民剧院 1942

TT:People’s Theater in 1942

Another illustration is the introduction of “人民剧院 1942” in this historic block, which adopts the English version of “People’s Theater in 1942”. The number “1942” displayed in this translation, however, will pique the intense interest and inquisitive psychology of tourists who is lack of the

background cultural knowledge. “Why is the year mentioned individually?” “Has it any unique significance?”, foreign visitors want to know more. As a result, if the technique of extra translation is employed in this case, the number “1942” may be further translated, and the context and meaning of the year can be added, which is more favorable to visitors’ interest in visiting this picturesque location.

In fact, according to the records, in 1942, a theater dedicated to performing Cantonese opera was built beside Wanguo Restaurant on Minsheng Road, Nanning, funded by Mo Hanying. With 1,338 seats, the theater was the best performing place in Nanning in the 1940s. The theater was nationalized after the liberation, and the Gui Opera and the Peking Opera Troupe joined, so it was given the new name-People’s Grand Theater. In order to add “construct” to the original “人民剧院 1942”, the author suggests addition should be used to translate it- “People’s Theater (construct of the west side of the original Wanguo Hotel in 1942)”. Additionally, the addition of the verb “construct” can help visitors understand the People’s Theater’s long history more clearly, understand its original location more intuitively than they would have otherwise, create a link to other picturesque locations, and subtly direct visitors to explore more of the block.

4. Conclusion

In conclusion, translating a historical and cultural district’s external publicity from Chinese to English is not a straightforward process. Instead, it requires combining the local excellent history and culture with disseminating the district’s excellent history and national culture to the outside world. In fact, the Three Streets and Two Alleys of Nanning are less well-known today. If we want to attract more visitors, we should use the advertising strategy of translating from Chinese to English to convey the wonderful history and culture of the Three Streets and Two Alleys of Nanning concealed in the streets from the perspective of tourists. Together with incorporating the local culture, the quality of the English translation for external exposure should be guaranteed. Foreign visitors’ first impressions of the local culture are significantly influenced by translation, which is not just an essential means of cross-cultural interaction and communication. As a result, while choosing terms for translation, translators should consider the original meaning. Be mindful of the significance of culture and history. The local government should enhance the building of the tourist guide database of the block in addition to the translation quality, so that visitors can learn more rapidly about the wonderful historical and cultural connotation of the historical and cultural blocks of Nanning. The block’s popularity is increased, and it is made more ideal and attractive.

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