



# Exploring the Translation of Tourism Signage from the Perspective of Newmark's Communicative Translation—A Case Study of Jinhua City, Zhejiang Province, China

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## Abstract

Tourism signage plays a pivotal role in showcasing the image of a tourist destination or even an entire city or province. In recent years, Jinhua, a key city along the Belt and Road initiative, has been increasingly internationalized due to its strategic location advantageously connecting the Maritime Silk Road to the east and the Land Silk Road to the west. As a co-host city of the 19th Asian Games Hangzhou 2022, Jinhua's tourism industry has flourished, attracting numerous overseas visitors for sightseeing and tourism. According to data from the Jinhua Bureau of Culture, Radio, Television and Tourism, during the 2023 Mid-Autumn Festival and National Day holiday period, the city received a total of 5.3309 million visitors, which ranks Jinhua third among all cities in Zhejiang Province in terms of total visitor numbers, and first in terms of year-on-year growth rate [1]. During the 2024 Spring Festival holiday period, the city cumulatively received 3.657 million visitors, representing a 28.83% increase compared to the same period last year based on comparable data [2]. Popular attractions such as Lanxi Youbu Ancient Town, Double Loong Cavern, and Jinhua Ancient City rely heavily on accurate and appropriate signage translation to enhance Jinhua's international image and promote its distinctive cultural heritage. However, the current state of translation for public signage in China is often unsatisfactory, characterized by numerous spelling or grammatical errors, lack of clarity in expression, inconsistency in translated names, etc., significantly undermining cultural dissemination and international image. This paper, drawing from the perspective of Newmark's communicative translation theory, explores the current status of tourism signage translation in Jinhua City and proposes suggestions for addressing translation deficiencies.

## Subject Areas

Linguistics

## Keywords

Peter Newmark, Communicative Translation, Tourism Signage, Jinhua City

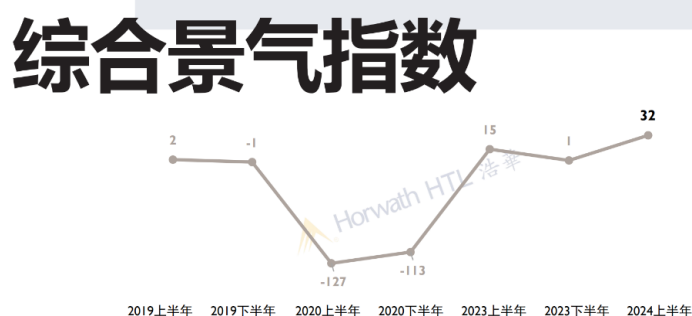
## 1. Introduction

The development and promotion of the Belt and Road initiative, coupled with Mutual Visa Exemptions, have led to a surge in tourism in China, resulting in rapid growth in the tourism industry. According to the *Report on the Prosperity of China's Inbound Tourism Market in the First Half of 2024*, confidence in the inbound tourism market has significantly increased, with the comprehensive market prosperity index reaching a historical peak of 32 in the first half of 2024 [3]. (See **Figure 1**)

For foreign tourists, signage translation serves as a crucial source of information, and inaccuracies or lack of standardization not only mislead tourists but also impact the overall image of the attraction, as well as the city. Therefore, investigating the translation of tourism signage is not only about correcting inadequacies but also about enhancing the overall city image.

## 2. Literature Review

In China, the study of public sign translation is primarily aimed at improving the international image of China and achieving standardized translation of public signs. Many papers have been published in China to explore problems in the translation process, summarize translation methods, and greatly improve the quality of public sign translation. Especially since the 21st century, the translation of public signs has become a major focus of translation studies in China. From initially collecting examples to analyzing errors in public signs from various perspectives such as semantics, comparison between Chinese and English languages, cultural connotations, and differences, researchers have made great efforts.



**Figure 1.** The comprehensive market prosperity index provided by the *Report on the Prosperity of China's Inbound Tourism Market in the First Half of 2024*.

At present, scholars mainly use relevant theories such as Hu Gengshen's Eco-translatology, Edward T. Hall's Cross-cultural Communication Theory, Hans Josef Vermeer's Skopos Theory, Eugene Nida's Functional Equivalence Theory, and Peter Newmark's Communicative Translation Theory to summarize translation methods and provide improvement suggestions.

For example, Professor Xue Hongguo conducted a study on the translation of tourism public signs in Shaanxi Province based on ecological translation theory and proposed three suggestions: clarifying the quality responsibility of public sign translation, forming a quality assurance mechanism, and establishing an expert team for public sign translation [4]; Professor Hu Hongyun pointed out that translators must have cross-cultural awareness based on cross-cultural communication theory, and try to reconcile differences in culture, customs, and styles between Chinese and English languages, so that the target language audience can smoothly obtain information and achieve successful Cross-cultural Communication [5]; Gong Xiaochao and He Weihuan started from the Skopos Theory, and proposed that everything starts from the purpose of sign translation, flexibly choosing translation methods so that the target language reader can fully understand the meaning of the sign and successfully achieve communicative purposes [6]; Wang Wenting pointed out in her master's thesis that when translating Chinese public signs, translators should try their best to achieve functional equivalence in an overall way, only in this way can a purified and standardized sign language environment become truly possible [7].

Many scholars have approached the translation of public signage in tourist attractions from the perspective of communicative translation. Drawing on this theory, He Xuegeng selected typical examples of mistranslations in domestic public signage for analysis. Based on Newmark's classification of three text types, He proposed three corresponding translation suggestions: understanding the linguistic features of public signage to ensure concise and clear translations; comprehending the functional meaning of public signage and adhering to the principle of borrowing; and grasping cultural differences between English and Chinese, prioritizing the cultural habits of the target audience [8]. In 2011, Shen Nana and Li Pin also adopted this theoretical perspective to analyze the English translations of the Shanghai World Expo pavilion slogans. They divided the translations of exhibition hall signs into five categories and further explored the reasons behind these translation choices and the insights gained from their analysis [9].

At present, the research on the translation of scenic spot signs is developing rapidly, but it mainly focuses on comparative studies between China and the West or within China or the provinces, and there is still little research and analysis on specific cities or scenic spots, which cannot directly reflect the problem of a particular scenic spot. Therefore, the author decided to start from Jinhua City, to further study the translation errors that appear in it and summarize them.

## 2.1. Communicative Translation

With a growing number of international visitors in the region, there is a pressing need to address linguistic and cultural barriers through effective translation strategies. Newmark's communicative translation approach offers a suitable framework to balance the functional and cultural aspects of tourism-related public signage.

The renowned British translation theorist Peter Newmark has made remarkable contributions to both translation theory and practice. Based on Bühler's language function model—expression (Kundgabe), evocation (Appell), and representation (Darstellung) [10], Newmark categorizes language functions into three common types: expressive function, informative function, and vocative function. He further classifies text types into expressive text, informative text, and vocative text based on this framework. Combining text types, Newmark proposes semantic translation and communicative translation. In his book *Approaches to Translation*, he proposed that Communicative translation attempts to produce on its readers an effect as close as possible to that obtained on the readers of the original. Semantic translation attempts to render, as closely as the semantic and syntactic structures of the second language allow, the exact contextual meaning of the original [11].

Both semantic translation and communicative translation aim to reflect the meaning of the original text and convey its informational content, but their focus and attention are different. Semantic translation seeks to represent the author's thought process, strives to retain the linguistic features and unique expressions of the author, and utilizes the expressive function of language. On the other hand, communicative translation focuses on conveying information and encouraging readers to think, feel, and act. It tailors the content to a specific group of readers, emphasizing the language's function to communicate information and produce effects [12].

Communicative translation recognizes that translation involves not only linguistic transfer but also the adaptation of cultural elements to ensure effective communication between the source and target audiences. For Jinhua's tourist attractions, this theory is highly relevant due to the diverse cultural backgrounds of visitors.

## 2.2. Tourism Signage

The public signs in tourist attractions serve as image labels presented to the public, representing the geographic location and image status of the attraction. These signs create a "linguistic landscape" that characterizes the tourist attraction [13]. Tourism signage primarily serves as guidance, identification, tour narration, and introduction to landscapes for visitors. It not only plays a role in prompting and guiding but also, when translated correctly, facilitates foreign tourists in experiencing Chinese civilization and culture. In recent years, as China's external exchanges and cooperation have deepened, various cities

have continuously improved the translation of their tourism signage. For example, in 2019, the Hangzhou municipal government established a leadership group for standardizing public foreign language signage, and in 2021, Hangzhou released and implemented the *Guidelines for the Use of Foreign Languages in Public Services*, aiming to standardize the use of foreign languages across various public services in the city [14]. These guidelines provide specific instructions and standards for the translation of signage, as well as other public-facing materials, ensuring accuracy, clarity, and consistency in communication with foreign visitors. Despite these initiatives, errors in the translation of tourism signage persist in many tourist destinations, highlighting the ongoing need for vigilance and improvement in this aspect of cultural exchange and hospitality.

### 3. The Current Situation of Tourism Signage Translation

In today's world, where cultural exchange is increasingly frequent, the translation of tourism signage has become a topic of considerable attention. However, many tourist attractions lack standardized and unified translations for their signage due to various reasons. Researchers Liu Meiyuan and Hu Yi randomly selected 1000 samples containing errors or non-standard expressions. (See **Table 1**) Through statistical analysis, they identified the primary types of English translation errors in public signage [15].

The author will classify translation errors found in signage within Jinhua based on this and mainly divide them into local errors, sentence-level errors, and discourse-level errors. When presenting examples, the author will provide the original Chinese text, the Chinese Pinyin, the corresponding English meaning of the words, as well as the original translation, which refers to the actual translation that appears on the relevant sign, and the discovered information related to the signage, including the location and time of discovery. An analysis of the data indicates that in terms of translation problems, public signs in tourist areas in Jinhua City share some problems with those in other areas, such as spelling errors, grammatical mistakes, unclear or distorted meanings, etc.

**Table 1.** Statistical classification based on 1000 errors in translation of public signs.

Error Type	Proportion in Study
Vocabulary errors	42.9%
Grammar errors	18.7%
Spelling errors	13.3%
Pragmatic errors	11.9%
Punctuation errors	2.3%
Punctuation errors	0.8%
Other errors	3.9%

### 3.1. Local Errors

Local errors, also known as unit-level errors or entity errors, include both spelling mistakes and incorrect punctuation usage within individual words or short phrases [15]. These types of errors are often confined to a single linguistic unit and may not significantly impact the overall meaning of a text.

In the translation of tourism signage, spelling errors are a common issue. (See **Table 2**) This problem not only has the potential to mislead tourists and hinder their understanding of the intended message, thus affecting communication between different cultures, but it can also lead to the dissemination of incorrect information, ultimately diminishing the image and reputation of the tourist destination.

The signage is located at the restroom entrance in Lanxi Youbu Ancient Town, Jinhua. Though visitors can accurately identify the location as a restroom through the pictorial signage, it is also easy to notice this spelling error. Even before entering the scenic area, such erroneous signage can leave a negative impression on tourists. It may raise doubts about the translation quality of other signages within the area, affecting the overall visitor experience and undermining the reputation of the scenic spot. (See **Table 3**)

The signage is at a staircase in Jinhua Ancient City, intended to remind people to be cautious of the steps ahead to prevent falls. However, the translation erroneously uses the non-existent English word “stepcaution”, which awkwardly combines “step” and “caution” into one word.

### 3.2. Sentence-Level Errors

Sentence-level errors, also known as segment-level errors, occur within the structure of a sentence and can impact the overall meaning, coherence, or clarity of the text. These errors can be categorized into two main types: vocabulary errors and grammatical errors [15].

**Table 2.** Example of spelling error in English translation of tourism signage.

Chinese	卫生间
Chinese Pinyin	Wèishēngjiān
English Meaning	toilet or restroom
Original Translation	Restrooms
Sign Found	Lanxi Youbu Ancient Town, Jinhua, China, 2023

**Table 3.** Example of spelling error in English translation of tourism signage.

Chinese	小心	台阶	注意	安全
Chinese Pinyin	xiǎoxīn	táijiē	zhùyì	ānquán
English Meaning	be careful	step	pay attention to	security
Original Translation	Reminder: mind the stepcaution			
Sign Found	Jinhua Ancient City, Jinhua, China, 2024			

### 3.2.1. Vocabulary Errors

Vocabulary errors can be further divided into word choice errors and semantic errors [15].

#### 1) Word Choice Errors

Word choice errors occur when a word is used in the wrong form, such as using the incorrect tense or part of speech (e.g., using an adjective instead of an adverb or a noun instead of a verb). These mistakes can lead to confusion or misinterpretation of the intended meaning.

Although the signage conveys the meanings of “文化” and “创意”, there is a lack of consistency in maintaining word forms when translated into English. While translating “文化 culture”, a noun form is used, but when translating “创意 creativity”, an adjective form is employed, and both terms are juxtaposed with “&”, which is incorrect. (See **Table 4**)

#### 2) Semantic Errors

In the context of translation, semantic errors refer to mistakes that involve the meaning or interpretation of words, phrases, or sentences. Semantic errors can significantly impact the accuracy and clarity of the translated text, potentially leading to misunderstandings or confusion among readers.

“Food bar” may not accurately translate “餐吧”, potentially leading to misunderstandings about the nature of the establishment and the services offered. (See **Table 5**) according to the Cambridge Dictionary, a bar is a place where drinks, especially alcoholic drinks, are sold and drunk, or the area in such a place where the person serving the drinks stands [16]. However, from the Chinese term “餐吧”, it can be inferred that the primary business of the establishment should be food rather than beverages. Therefore, the translation here is inaccurate and could lead to misunderstandings for foreign visitors.

The translation “No Pets” can lead to misunderstanding, as visitors may interpret it as meaning the tourist destination does not have any pets, rather than

**Table 4.** Example of word choice error in English translation of tourism signage.

Chinese	文化	创意	创业园
Chinese Pinyin	wénhuà	chuàngyì	chuàngyèyuán
English Meaning	culture	creativity	pioneer park
Original Translation	Culture & Creative Zone		
Sign Found	Jinhua Ancient City, Jinhua, China, 2024		

**Table 5.** Example of semantic error in English translation of tourism signage.

Chinese	西西里	餐	吧
Chinese Pinyin	Xīxīlǐ	cān	bā
English Meaning	Sicily	meal	bar
Original Translation	Sicilian food bar		
Sign Found	Double Loong Cavern, Jinhua, China, 2024		

**Table 6.** Example of semantic error in English translation of tourism signage.

Chinese	请勿	携带	宠物
Chinese Pinyin	qǐngwù	xiédài	chǒngwù
English Meaning	don't	take	pet
Original Translation	No Pets		
Sign Found	Double Loong Cavern, Jinhua, China, 2024		

**Table 7.** Example of semantic error in English translation of tourism signage.

Chinese	小心	地	滑
Chinese Pinyin	xiǎoxīn	dì	huá
English Meaning	be careful	ground	slip
Original Translation	Carefully Slide		
Sign Found	Lanxi Youbu Ancient Town, Jinhua, China, 2023		

the intended meaning of not allowing pets inside. This error mainly arises from the lack of a verb and determiner in the translation. In English, sentences typically require a verb to convey a complete meaning, and in this example, a determiner is also needed to specify the action or state, indicating “acceptance” or “non-acceptance”. (See [Table 6](#))

The translation contains a semantic error. In English, “slide” typically refers to a sliding or gliding motion, while “carefully” indicates acting with caution. Therefore, “carefully slide” may be misunderstood as sliding carefully on the ground, rather than warning about slippery ground. In public signage, especially those involving safety warnings, clear and accurate expression is crucial to ensure everyone understands and takes appropriate action. Such erroneous translation may lead to visitors overlooking the warning, increasing the risk of accidents. (See [Table 7](#))

### 3.2.2. Grammatical Errors

The differences in linguistic structures and expression habits between Chinese and English can lead to disparities in word usage and grammatical structures. When translating signage, if one directly borrows from Chinese structures, or word forms, or retains Chinese language habits, it can result in grammatical errors in English.

The signage is located at the parking lot of the famous scenic area Double Loong Cavern in Jinhua. Its original intention was to convey that this parking lot is designated for the exclusive use of staff working at the tourist attraction. Although the translation can still be understood to convey this meaning, there is a clear grammatical error where the word form changes from a noun to a verb, which may lead to misunderstanding. On one hand, the original meaning of “停车场 parking lot” is not conveyed, and on the other hand, the exclusivity for “员工 staff” is not adequately expressed. (See [Table 8](#))



**Table 8.** Example of grammatical error in English translation of tourism signage.

Chinese	员工	停车场
Chinese Pinyin	yuángōng	tíngchēchǎng
English Meaning	staff	parking lot
Original Translation	Staff Parking	
Sign Found	Double Loong Cavern, Jinhua, China, 2024	

### 3.3. Discourse-Level Errors

Discourse-level errors refer to issues that affect the coherence, consistency, or overall structure of a translated text beyond the sentence level. These errors affect the broader meaning and coherence of a text beyond the sentence level. They can include problems with the logical flow of ideas, consistency in style and terminology, and the overall organization of the content. Discourse-level errors, which involve the improper understanding or conveyance of meaning within a specific context or culture, can significantly impact the reader's understanding of the translated text and may result in cross-cultural miscommunication [15]. These errors can lead to misunderstandings or misinterpretations due to differences in linguistic, cultural, or situational aspects between the source and target languages.

#### 3.3.1. Inconsistent Names

In the context of translation, maintaining consistency in the translation of names and terms is crucial for ensuring the reader's understanding and the quality of the translated work.

The issue of inconsistent naming is a common problem in tourism translation, particularly in larger tourist attractions where multiple translators are employed. Due to varying interpretations of the same content and different translation strategies adopted by translators, different translations may result in signage in different locations within the same attraction. However, when translating the names of tourist attractions, this phenomenon can potentially mislead foreign tourists. Visitors may mistakenly believe that different translations represent distinct attractions, thereby diminishing the effectiveness of their experience.

There are two different translations for the attraction “双龙洞” on the road signs and informational stone tablet. (See **Table 9**) One translation reads “Shuanglong Cave”, while the other reads “Double-Dragon Cave”. Such inconsistency may lead foreign tourists to believe that they are two separate attractions, resulting in difficulty finding the designated attraction indicated by the road signs. The purpose of signage in tourist areas is to provide information to visitors, and directional signs are specifically meant to assist visitors in locating attractions. However, the inconsistency in signage translation instead causes confusion among visitors.

**Table 9.** Example of inconsistent names in English translation of tourism signage.

Chinese	双	龙	洞
Chinese Pinyin	shuāng	lóng	dòng
English Meaning	two	dragon	cavity
Original Translation	version 1: Double-Dragon Cave version 2: Shuanglong Cave		
Sign Found	Double Loong Cavern, Jinhua, China, 2024		

**Table 10.** Example of inconsistent names in English translation of tourism signage.

Chinese	徐	家	古	里
Chinese Pinyin	Xú	jiā	gǔ	lǐ
English Meaning	Xu (a family name)	family	old	place
Original Translation	version 1: The Ancient Alley of Xu's Family version 2: Guesthouse of Xu Family			
Sign Found	Jinhua Ancient City, Jinhua, China, 2024			

“徐家古里” is the earliest documented Qing Dynasty (1616-1912) residence discovered within the Jinhua Ancient City area [17], representing a historical relic with distinctive architectural features of mid-Qing period local buildings in Jinhua. Found within the area, there exists a discrepancy in the translation of “徐家古里” between the house plaque and the area’s introduction. One translation reads “The Ancient Alley of Xu’s Family”, while the other reads “Guesthouse of Xu Family”. The primary difference lies in the translation of “古里”. (See **Table 10**)

The term “古里” in “徐家古里” refers to the former site of the “徐家考寓”. A “考寓” was a place where candidates from outside regions would stay and review before taking imperial examinations during the Chinese imperial examination system [17]. It was typically funded and constructed by local governments or specific families or individuals. According to the Cambridge Dictionary: an alley is a narrow road or path between buildings [18]. A guesthouse is a small, inexpensive hotel or a small house near a larger one, where guests are invited to the larger house can stay [19].

From this, it’s evident that both translations are not entirely accurate in this context. In this case, both translations not only mislead visitors but also fail to accurately convey the unique historical and cultural value of this attraction.

### 3.3.2. Literal Translation

Literal translation involves translating the original text word-for-word into the target language, disregarding language conventions and cultural context, resulting in inaccurate or obscure expressions. These issues not only hinder visitors’ understanding of the information provided but may also diminish their satisfaction and overall experience quality. Therefore, strengthening standardized management and professional guidance for tourism signage translation is crucial.

**Table 11.** Example of literal translation in English translation of tourism signage.

Chinese	文明	连着	你	我	他
Chinese Pinyin	wénmíng	liánzhe	nǐ	wǒ	tā
English Meaning	civilization	connect	you	I	he
Chinese	请您	爱护	花	和	草
Chinese Pinyin	Qǐngnín	àihù	huā	hé	cǎo
English Meaning	Would you please	care	flower	and	grass
Original Translation	Civilization is attached to you and me. Please love flowers and grass.				
Sign Found	Double Loong Cavern, Jinhua, China, 2024				

**Table 12.** Example of literal translation in English translation of tourism signage.

Chinese	爱护	脚下	草
Chinese Pinyin	àihù	jiǎoxià	cǎo
English Meaning	care	underfoot	grass
Chinese	莫折	枝头	花
Chinese Pinyin	mòzhé	zhītóu	huā
English Meaning	don't pick	on the branch	flower
Original Translation	Please take care of the grass, and do not pick flowers.		
Sign Found	Double Loong Cavern, Jinhua, China, 2024		

The differences between Chinese and English signage in scenic spots are multifaceted. Due to different cultural backgrounds, there are variations in expression, connotation, and values. In terms of language style, Chinese signage may emphasize rhetoric and rhythm, often employing parallelism and rhyme, etc., while foreign signage tends to favor concise and clear expression [20]. In terms of emotional expression, Chinese signage emphasizes emotional resonance, being rich in poeticism and imagery, while foreign signage more directly conveys information. These differences remind us that in translating signage, literal translation may not fully convey the original text's semantics, cultural connotations, and emotions. Translations should fully consider cultural differences, and employ flexible translation strategies, to ensure that the translation is both accurate and in line with the cultural norms of the target language, thereby better achieving the goal of cross-cultural communication. (See **Table 11** and **Table 12**)

These two translations are similar in that they both utilize a literal translation approach, rendering the signage word-for-word to convey the surface meaning of the message. However, compared to the latter, the former fails to convey the true meaning and intent of the signage, which is to discourage stepping on the lawn and damaging the flowers and plants. As a result, the intended purpose of the signage reminder is not fulfilled, impacting the effectiveness of cross-cultural communication. Additionally, both translations retain the original word order and structure, resulting in longer translations that do not align with the concise

**Table 13.** Example of literal translation in English translation of tourism signage.

Chinese	导游	咨询	处
Chinese Pinyin	<i>dǎoyóu</i>	<i>zīxún</i>	<i>chù</i>
English Meaning	tourist guide	consult	place
Original Translation	Tourist Guide Consulting Office		
Sign Found	Double Loong Cavern, Jinhua, China, 2024		

and straightforward nature of English signage. Also, signage is intended to be easily readable and understandable at a glance, and using excessively long translations may make the message less clear or even unreadable.

The translation also underwent a literal translation, resulting in some semantic inaccuracies. Firstly, “tourist guide” typically refers to a person, rather than an organization or location. (See **Table 13**) Therefore, the translation “tourist guide consulting office” is somewhat confusing semantically, as it seems to refer to a consulting agency for tour guides rather than providing consulting services for tourists. Secondly, the use of “consult” here might lead to misunderstandings or unnecessary complexity. “Consult” implies seeking advice or opinions from professionals, usually in problem-solving or decision-making contexts. However, this place in China typically offers general information, advice, and guidance rather than specific professional consulting services. Hence, “consulting” or “consultation” might mislead people into thinking that the facility provides professional consulting services rather than general information and guidance. Additionally, “consulting office” lacks the colloquial expression and sounds somewhat stiff in translation.

#### 4. Communicative Translation Perspective on Jinhua City Signages

The renowned British translation theorist Peter Newmark, based on Bühler’s language function model proposes semantic translation and communicative translation. Semantic translation focuses more on the original text, while communicative translation focuses more on the target language readers [11]. Next, the author, based on Newmark’s theory of communicative translation, will offer suggestions for modifications regarding the aforementioned case.

##### 4.1. About Word Choice Errors

The main issue from the example of **Table 4** lies in the inconsistency of word types, which is considered a basic error in translation. As the name of the park, this is the first location signage that visitors see upon arrival, and such errors can create a negative visual experience for them. It is recommended to ensure consistency in word types on both sides of the “&” symbol, translating it as “culture & creation” or as an adjective modifying the noun “zone”, the preferable translation would be “cultural & creative”.

## 4.2. About Semantic Errors

### 4.2.1. Unequal Semantic Range

The translation of “餐吧” as “food bar” may not be appropriate. In Chinese, many words containing “吧” are often translated as “bar”, such as “酒吧 (jiǔ bā)” for “bar”, “清吧 (qīng bā)” for “sober bar”, “网吧 (wǎng bā)” for “Internet Bar”, and “舞吧 (wǔ bā)” for “dance bar”. Translators only consider the problem from a literal perspective, replacing the most common meaning of a single word in the source language with a symbol that carries that meaning in the target language, without regard for the communicative intent of the sender and the external referent of the linguistic symbol [20]. While this translation may be accurate in some contexts, it may not be suitable in others. In exploring how to translate this term, the author conducted a comparative analysis of “cafeteria” “buffet” “restaurant” and “pub”. According to the Cambridge Dictionary:

Cafeteria: a restaurant (often in a factory, college, or office building) where people collect food and drink from a serving area and take it to a table themselves after paying for it [21].

Buffet: a restaurant in a station, where food and drinks can be bought and eaten [22].

Restaurant: a place where meals are prepared and served to customers [23].

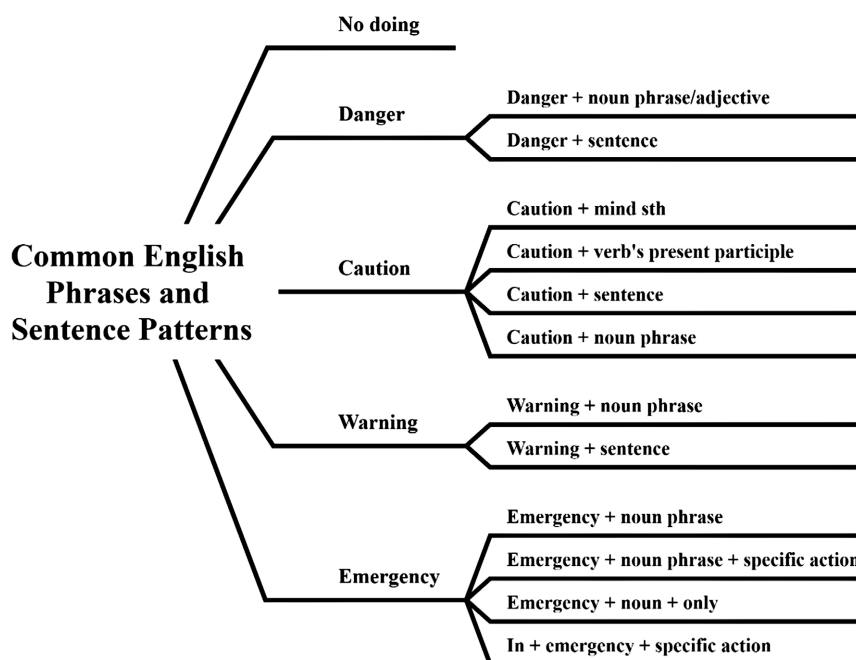
Pub: a place, especially in Great Britain or Ireland, where alcoholic drinks can be bought and consumed, and where food is often available [24].

By conducting on-site investigations, the author found that this “餐吧” is similar to a self-service restaurant, mainly selling traditional Chinese snacks. Therefore, using “cafeteria” would be more appropriate in this context.

### 4.2.2. Semantic Ambiguity

Firstly, concerning the translation of “请勿携带宠物”, the original translation “No Pets” lacks modifiers and can be misleading. According to Newmark’s classification of text types, this signage should serve as both a vocative text and an informative text, aiming to alert and inform visitors. Following the principles of communicative translation, the translator needs to accurately convey the information and ultimately ensure that visitors do not bring pets inside. Therefore, it is suggested to add a verb such as “Taken” or “Allowed” after the original translation to indicate the status or action of pets, thus clearly expressing the information and achieving the communicative purpose.

Secondly, regarding the translation of “小心地滑”, the original translation “Carefully Slide” also carries a strong potential for misunderstanding and poses a threat to visitors’ safety. In the Double Loong Cavern, there is a similar sign saying “当心滑倒”, which conveys the same meaning as “小心地滑”. In this context, it is translated as “Warning Slippery Surface”. Although compared to “Carefully Slide”, this translation conveys the intended meaning of the original text and avoids misleading implications, it still lacks naturalness. According to Newmark, this signage belongs to the informative text type, where the most important aspect for the translator is to accurately translate the original information. Generally, it



**Figure 2.** Sentence structures can be adopted in warning signs [25].

is more common to follow “warning” with a verb phrase or a complete sentence to express the warning content.

When translating warning signs, the following commonly used sentence structures can be adopted. (See **Figure 2**)

It can thus be seen, for warning signs like “小心地滑” or “当心滑倒”, the suggested modification using the sentence structures provided could be “Caution/Warning: Slippery/Wet Floor”.

### 4.3. About Grammatical Errors

Regarding the “员工停车场”, it can be addressed from two aspects: “员工” and “停车场”. Firstly, for “停车场”, the commonly used translation is “parking lot” in English. However, the particularity of this parking lot is that it is exclusively for “员工”. In such cases, reference can be made to signage commonly seen in settings like companies or restaurants, where areas restricted to staff are labeled “staff only” at the entrance. Therefore, to ensure both grammatical correctness and ease of understanding for foreign visitors, it is suggested to translate it as “Parking Lot for Staff Only”.

### 4.4. About Inconsistent Names

#### 4.4.1. Double Loong Cavern

When translating the names of scenic spots, adherence to the principle of unified translation is crucial. From the communicative perspective, translators need to consider whether the communicative intent of the original text is effectively conveyed in the translated system as a whole [26]. The primary communicative purposes of scenic spot signage are information dissemination and knowledge

sharing. Since the names of scenic spots may contain unique cultural connotations, translators must maintain uniformity and clarity in translation, ensuring that the translated names are consistent and unambiguous.

The renowned Ming Dynasty (1368-1644) traveler and geographer, Xu Xiake, documented his explorations, later compiled by later generations into *The Travels of Xu XiaKe*. In it, he describes, “This cavern is vast and spacious, resembling a grand building rising high, with doors and windows on all sides, no longer resembling the cramped and narrow chambers of a typical cave. Inside the cavern, stalactites coil gracefully, and stalagmites hang downward in various shapes and forms. The name ‘双龙’ originates from this spectacle” [27]. The modern writer Ye Shengtao also supports this account in *Two Caverns in Jinhua*, stating, “First and foremost are the ‘双龙’ winding along the cavern ceiling, one yellow, and the other green” [28]. This is the origin of the name “双龙洞”.

Version 1 translates “龙” as “dragon”. In traditional Chinese culture, the dragon is revered as a symbol of auspiciousness, wisdom, and power [29]. However, according to the Etymology Dictionary, “dragon” is used in the Bible generally for creatures of great size and fierceness [30], which contrasts sharply with the image of the Chinese “龙”. Therefore, translating “龙” as “dragon” is incorrect. For foreign tourists, such a translation may lead to misunderstandings and fear, making them perceive Double Loong Cavern as a dangerous and inhospitable place, thus reducing their interest and willingness to visit. In recent years, with the extensive exchange between Chinese and Western cultures, Chinese official media suggested translating Chinese “龙” as “Loong”. This not only closely resembles the pronunciation of the Chinese character but also helps avoid confusion with the Western concept of “dragon”.

Version 2 employs the transliteration method, which is commonly used when introducing specialized technical terms, personal names, place names, and product names. It helps retain the original pronunciation more accurately during the bilingual conversion process, thereby facilitating the dissemination of culture to some extent. For example, “包子”, a type of yeast-leavened filled bun in various Chinese cuisines, can be transliterated as “baozi”, and “西藏 Tibet”, as “Xizang”. However, directly transliterating “双龙” as “Shuanglong” would lose the cultural connotation and uniqueness of the original name, failing to convey the stories, legends, or history behind Double Dragon Cave, which may hinder foreign tourists’ understanding of the attraction.

Additionally, through consultation with the Cambridge Dictionary, a “cave” is a large hole in the side of a hill, cliff, or mountain, or one that is underground [31], while a “cavern” is a large cave, typically used to describe those that are more spectacular, spacious, or deep cave systems [32]. Therefore, when describing such a large karst cave, “cavern” is more appropriate, hence translating “双龙洞” as “Double Loong Cavern” could be more suitable.

#### 4.4.2. Xu’s Mansion

“徐家古里” is a scenic spot name with a strong traditional Chinese cultural cha-

racteristic. Based on the previous analysis, it is evident that neither version's translation of “古里” as “考寓” is entirely appropriate. However, since “考寓” is a term deeply rooted in Chinese culture and challenging to convey in a brief place name, some cultural connotations must be sacrificed, focusing instead on its external features to achieve a degree of simplification. Additionally, both versions translate “家” as “Family”. However, in English culture, “Family” often refers to immediate relatives. Considering the lineage records, the Xu family was influential in Jiangnan, with a branch in Jinhua tracing back to the Tang Dynasty (618-907), originating from a prominent bureaucratic family in the Central Plains [17]. The construction of “徐家古里” was funded and collectively built by this family. Therefore, it is more appropriate to use the term “mansion” here, translating it as “Xu’s Mansion”, with its specific cultural connotations elaborated in the introduction to the architecture.

#### **4.5. About Literal Translation**

Literal translation is widely used in signage translation, but due to significant differences in grammatical structures between Chinese and English, literal translation may result in unnatural or awkward syntax in the target language. Moreover, differences in characteristics between Chinese and English signage, as well as linguistic and cultural variations, can sometimes lead to the neglect of the context and purpose of the original signage, focusing solely on conveying the literal meaning.

##### **4.5.1. Cultural Misinterpretation**

Examples from **Table 11** and **Table 12** share similar connotations in their Chinese signage expressions, primarily characterized by literal translations. Such signage is common in various tourist attractions and parks across China, with many opting for the method of literal translation. In this context, the author is not negating the validity of using literal translation. Newmark's communicative translation emphasizes the reader's experience when reading such signage, aiming to ensure that foreign visitors grasp the emotional and contextual meanings conveyed by the signage. Some translators may also mimic the rhetorical devices and language structures of Chinese signage while conveying the essence of the message, allowing visitors to appreciate the vividness and charm of the original text, for example, “Please give me a chance to grow”. However, in this case, the translation of the signage is overly verbose, failing to retain the balanced structure of the Chinese text or convey its essence. English signage strives for the most concise form to achieve optimal feedback, as it is often displayed on limited-space signs, and people have very little time to acquire essential information. Indeed, for such signage, a concise and commonly used translation would be “Keep off the grass”, which is widely adopted abroad and easily understood by foreign visitors.

##### **4.5.2. Overly Word-for-Word Translation**

Regarding the translation of “导游咨询处”, based on the analysis above, “tourist



guide” can be misleading and confuse the subject. Therefore, the omission method can be used here, omitting the “导游” translation. Additionally, this is merely a place for obtaining information, typically involving basic details such as tickets, discounts, and the location of attractions. Therefore, in translation, it is recommended to focus on conveying its informational function, rendering it as an “Information Center.

## 5. Conclusions

The translation of scenic spots and signage embodies a city’s cultural beliefs and conveys its cultural influence. Standardizing the translation of public signage helps enhance cross-cultural communication in today’s global context. To strengthen cultural confidence, facilitate Jinhua’s integration into the global community, and promote Chinese culture internationally, it is essential to strictly regulate the English translation of scenic spot signage.

Various translation methods are used for signage translation, including literal translation, free translation, transliteration, omission, and amplification. However, errors still exist in signage translation, and citizens should enhance supervision and provide timely feedback to relevant authorities to ensure correct spelling, grammatical accuracy, and unified translation names.

As translators, it is crucial to deepen our understanding and awareness of Chinese culture. Translation should be conducted with a thorough understanding of the cultural background of the scenic area, avoiding blind literal translation. Additionally, translators should respect their own culture while adhering to the principle of empathy and practicing communicative translation theory, considering translations from the perspective of foreign tourists.

## Conflicts of Interest

The author declares no conflicts of interest.

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