

The Linguistic Ways to Attract Tourists:

An Analysis of Japanese Travel Brochures and Translations in English and Chinese*

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1. Introduction

In 2016, international visitors to Japan topped 20 million for the first time, reaching around 24 million. In March 2016, the Japanese government formulated its “New Tourism Strategy to Invigorate the Japanese Economy,” which consists of mid- to long-term policies. The government has set targets of 40 million international visitors in 2020 and “spending by international visitors of 8 trillion yen in Japan in 2020.”¹ “Language services” are seen as being crucial for increasing foreign tourism. According to Oyabu and Ouch (2008), language services seek to make tourism in Japan convenient for foreign visitors by improving signs, websites, and brochures in various languages. Signs using foreign languages in Japan are part of the “linguistic landscape” studied by researchers in the field of sociolinguistics.² Linguistic landscape refers to the visibility and salience of languages on public and commercial signs in a given territory or region. Their study attempted to verify the relationship between linguistic landscape and specific aspects of vitality beliefs, ethnolinguistic identity, and language behavior in multilingual settings. However, travel brochures are usually ignored despite being an important resource for studying the connections between language and tourism. Moreover, by analyzing the translations of brochures, linguistic and cultural differences are also revealed. This paper demonstrates that each language has different features of expressions for attracting tourists through Japanese travel brochures and translated versions in English and Chinese.³ In addition, it shows that the differences of linguistic features are produced by culture which can be seen in storytelling for tourism.

* I would like to express my sincere gratitude to Professor Ippei Inoue of Keio University and Professor Keiko Abe of Kyoritsu Women’s University for their insightful comments and suggestions on this paper.

¹ Retrieved September 1, 2018, from <http://www.mlit.go.jp/kankocho/en/index.html>

² Landry, Rodrigue & Bourhis, Richard Y. (1997) used “linguistic landscape” first.

³ In this paper, “Chinese” refers to Standard Chinese, the official language of mainland China.

2. Preceding Studies on Tourism and Language

Bruner (2002) claims that experiences are incomplete when they are not ordered by narrative.⁴ Even if people experience something, the experience itself cannot have meaning. A leading narrative changes chaotic experiences into experiences that are worth mentioning. People's experiences can gain meaning only through narrative with story. That is, various discourse for story intervened in tourism.⁵ It is important to study how Japan is described in foreign languages to consider the branding of Japan or the pull factor for tourists. In other words, it is necessary to examine how written words are communicated in Japanese and foreign languages.

To study trends in written communication, domestication and foreignization in translation should be considered. Venuti (1995, 2008) introduces these terms, explaining that domestication means translation by inclining to a target language, while foreignization means translation by inclining to a source language. *Introducing Translation Studies* written by Munday (2008) discusses various issues in translation studies, cultural and ideological, the roles of a translator, and connection with the media. Pym (2010) uses logic similar to Venuti's to examine equivalence, uncertainty, and the localization of translations. In short, translation mediates cross-cultural understanding which cultural anthropologists study. Translation is not just translating a source language into another language verbatim.

In linguistics, pragmatics deals with the logic of language use. According to Verschueren (1999), pragmatics analyzes the context, code, and style of sentences or discourse beyond sentence level. The study of "cognitive communication" includes a spread of their research field. Not only topics of pragmatics like speech act, understanding deixis, aspect, tense, information structure, and rhetoric, but also discourse, cultural meaning, and structure of tales can be studied.

3. A Contrastive Research

This paper aims to study language used in travel brochures from the perspective of sociolinguistics and contrastive linguistics, comparing the language of the following Japanese

⁴ Bruner defines narrative as one of the cognitions of human. When people think something with "narrative mode," they try to make reality by ordering experiences which includes paradox or ambiguity along time series.

⁵ "Story" here means the cognition of atmosphere and experiences which staff or visitors make through tourism.

brochures with “foreignized” sentences in English and Chinese. The brochures which I used for the research are below.

Table 1. The brochures for the research

1	Arakawa City Nippori Walking Map
2	Arakawa City Minami-Senju Walking Map
3	Central Tokyo for Tourist Map
4	Edo-Tokyo Museum Information
5	Ghibli Museum, Mitaka Information
6	Ikebukuro Otome Map
7	Karuizawa
8	Miraikan Floor Guide – National Museum of Emerging Science and Innovation
9	Minato City Tourist Map
10	National Museum of Nature and Science Museum Guide
11	Odaiba Palette Town Guide
12	Shinagawa Aquarium
13	Shinjuku Tourist Map Ochiai
14	Shinjuku Tourist Map Takadanobaba Waseda Okubo
15	Shinjuku Tourist Map Yotsuya
16	Shinyokohama Ramen Museum
17	Sunshine Aquarium
18	Tama Center Town Guide
19	The National Museum of Western Art Museum Guide
20	Tokyo DisneySea Entertainment Today
21	Tokyo DisneySea Guide Map
22	Tokyo Ramen Kokugikan Mai
23	Tokyo Solamachi Souvenir Guide
24	Tokyo Tower Guide Book
25	Ueno Park

An examination of these brochures reveals three features of foreignization. First, brochures written in English tend to describe the place from the perspective of visitors, while Japanese and Chinese versions tend to be written from the perspective of the staff.

(1) Japanese: お客様のご案内と併設しているギャラリーで東京タワー建設中の貴重な動画や半世紀以上の歴史が感じられる写真を展示。

English: Here visitors can get information and other assistance and also view the photographic gallery exhibiting the over half century history of Tokyo Tower including valuable film of the tower under construction.

Chinese: 在与游客的导游并设的画廊, 展示了东京塔在建中的珍贵视频和能感受到超过半世纪历史的照片。

(At the gallery which is built next to the information for visitors, the special video of Tokyo tower under construction and photos which can feel over half century history have exhibited.)⁶

(Tokyo Tower Guide Book)

Ichiki (2017) demonstrated that English prefers an objective viewpoint while Japanese prefers a subjective viewpoint. Chinese has a flexible viewpoint which differs from both English and Japanese. If this hypothesis can be applied to the above examples, it can be said that Chinese employs a flexible viewpoint when travel brochures are translated.

Second, the Japanese and Chinese approach to invitation involve explaining the situation, while the English versions presuppose that visitors are actively present and engaging in the experience.

(2) Japanese: 水量 500 トンの大水槽を約 60 種 900 点の生き物たちが優雅に泳いでいます。

English: Stroll beneath the expansive 500-ton water tank as about 900 marine creatures of 60 varieties swim around you.

Chinese: 约 60 种 900 多个生物们优雅地畅游在盛水量 500 吨的大鱼缸里。

(About 60 varieties 900 creatures swim elegantly in the 500-ton water tank.)

(Shinagawa Aquarium)

Here the original Japanese and its Chinese translation mention “creatures are swimming in the water tank.” However, the English version invites visitors to “stroll beneath the water tank.”

⁶ Translations of Chinese sentences in English is made by the author.

Third, Chinese translations employ the distinctive expression “欢迎 (huanying),” which means that the staff are glad if visitors come.

(3) Japanese: ぜひ気軽にお立ち寄りください！

English: Please feel free to drop by Tokyo Chuo City Tourist Information Center!

Chinese: 欢迎您的光临！

(We welcome your coming!)⁷

(Central Tokyo for Tourist Map)

Although the Chinese word “huanying” is defined as “welcome” in dictionaries, it is translated by a different word in these brochures.

“Huanying” indicates that customers come there. Therefore, when brochures put importance on activities after arriving there, other expressions are used. For example, “可以 (keyi)” appears frequently.

(4) Japanese: 沖縄直送のオリオンビールや種類豊富な泡盛と一緒に楽しみください。

English: The izakaya even serves Orion beer shipped in directly from the islands, a wide lineup of awamori liquor.

Chinese: 可以让您搭配冲绳产地直送的 ORION 啤酒和种类丰富的泡盛酒一道享用。

(You can enjoy drinking Orion beer shipped in directly from the islands and a wide lineup of awamori liquor for you.)

(Shinyokohama Ramen Museum)

“Keyi” is one of the auxiliary verbs in Chinese. According to Liu, Pan, Gu (2001), “keyi” can have five meanings, as below:

1. subjective ability

他可以说英语。

(He can speak English.)

2. objective conditions

这个房间很大，可以住三个人。

⁷ “您” means honorifics of “you.” “光临” means honorifics of “coming.”

(This room is very big, so three people can live in.)

3. allowing

休息室里可以抽烟。

(You can smoke in the lounge.)

4. possibility

可以进来吗？

(May I come in?)

5. worth

这本书写得不错，你可以看看。

(This book is good, so you can read it.)

This last meaning of the auxiliary verb “keyi” in the travel brochures shows worth, as in the sentence (4). The sentence (4) “可以让您搭配冲绳产地直送的 ORION 啤酒和种类丰富的泡盛酒一道享用。” (You can enjoy drinking Orion beer shipped in directly from the islands and a wide lineup of awamori liquor for you.) means “It is worth drinking Orion beer shipped in directly from the islands and a wide lineup of awamori liquor.”

4. Discussion

These three features can be considered as linguistic features because they appear in various brochures:

(1) The brochures which we can see the differences between perspectives of visitors and perspective of staff:

Arakawa City Minami-Senju Walking Map, Ghibli Museum Mitaka Information, Karuizawa, National Museum of Nature and Science Museum Guide, Odaiba Palette Town Guide, Shinagawa Aquarium, Shinjuku Tourist Map Ochiai, Sunshine Aquarium, Tama Center Town Guide, Tokyo Solamachi Souvenir Guide, Tokyo Tower Guide Book, Ueno Park

(2) The brochures which we can see the differences between explaining the situation and engaging in the experience:

Edo-Tokyo Museum Information, Ghibli Museum Mitaka Information, Miraikan Floor Guide – National Museum of Emerging Science and Innovation, Shinagawa Aquarium, Shinyokohama Ramen Museum, Tama Center Town Guide, Tokyo Solamachi Souvenir Guide

(3) The brochures which we can see the features of “huanying”:

Central Tokyo for Tourist Map, Karuizawa, National Museum of Nature and Science Museum Guide, Shinyokohama Ramen Museum, The National Museum of Western Art Museum Guide

As above, the three features can be seen in various brochures. They don’t depend on genres of tourist spot, such as museums or town guides, and personal habit of translators.

The following table summarizes the features of three languages.

Table 2. The features of translations

	Japanese original	English	Chinese
1	perspective of staff	perspective of visitors (you/visitors can/will...)	perspective of staff
2	explaining the situation	engaging in the experience (imperative)	explaining the situation
3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ・～して ください ・お楽しみ ください 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ・ Please ・ enjoy 	欢迎

The reason why the linguistic ways to attract tourists are different is the discourse for storytelling is different. Japanese and Chinese need detailed explanations to make story. Thus, brochures in these two languages prefer introducing the situation from the perspective of staff. On the other hand, English likes displaying specific activities. Brochures in English show what visitors can do there directly. Japanese and English use words like “please” or “enjoy” to attract tourists, but Chinese use “huanying.” This is because Chinese tourism story is that staff are waiting visitors and visitors want to join them. The structure is not seen in Japanese and English.

5. Conclusion

In conclusion, an examination of Japanese travel brochures and their translations in English and Chinese reveals (a) differences of perspective, (b) explanation of a situation or presupposition that visitors are joining in, and (c) the use of “huanying.” The reason of these changes is the difference in discourse for tourism story. Brochures in Japanese and Chinese explain detail information in order to make story. English brochures prefer to show specific activities that visitors can experience there. In Chinese tourism story, staff are waiting visitors coming and tourists want to join them, so brochures use “huanying.” Japanese and English tourism story do not have this structure.

If Japanese language services are to be improved for foreign tourists, these features should be considered. Finding features is also important for understanding cognition of English, Chinese and Japanese. For further research, travel brochures written originally in English or Chinese should be examined. In recent years, more and more people see information on websites before getting to destination. The sentences on websites must be studied. The new theme will be the differences between brochures which visitors get after they arrived and websites which tourists read at their home.

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