

Research Article

## Analysis of the Chinese-English Translation of Public Signs: A Functional Theory Perspective

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### ABSTRACT

To achieve an internationally friendly community by interacting better with the foreign nationals in its territory and improving its image in the international world, China has since 2004 made a purported effort to translate and standardize the public signs, which are notices meant for public consumption located at public places or institutions in its domain. However, it has been observed from the bilingual translation of these public signs that, there still exist some translation problems. Therefore, the author of this study after an in-depth discussion of the core concepts of the functional theory and its principles of translation, analyzed the first-hand photos of bilingual public sign and text samples obtained at vantage places utilize by foreigners. Critical observation and analysis of the samples were conducted to find out problems associated with the translated public signs in one of the oldest historical towns in China with various pictorial examples as evidences to buttress the findings and finally suggested the way forward to having Chinese- English(C- E) translation of public signs devoid of errors. The identification of these translation errors would help translators in China to pay more attention during the translation process of C-E public sign in order to lift high the image of China in the international world through the production of quality and meaningful C-E pblic signs in China. This study would also contribute a country-specific knowledge regarding the translation of public signs to the field of study as it will serve as a reference literature to other scholars.

### Introduction

China's technological advancement, scientific development and economic expansion has no doubt contributed significantly to it rising international image and reputation in recent years, making China an icon of admiration and one of the countries with a strong economic force to reckon with in the international world, especially after successfully living up to the task of organizing the 2008 world Olympic games in Beijing. This great achievement brought China to the limelight and forefront of the world and opened the gate for an increasing number of people from the outside world to come to China for various purposes such as studying, trading, tourism, health, research and other diplomatic missions, facilitating cross-cultural relationship between china and these other countries.

In the quest to foster orderly movement of people, smooth rendering of services, smooth cultural interaction and integration, raise high the image of China and build good relationship between the country and it foreigners, it became paramount for the bilingual translations of public signs and text in the country which are a medium through which information can be communicated to aid in the smooth management of foreigners in the running of the state.

Public signs are designed to provide information and convenience to both locals and internationals and to persuade people to live within the acceptable norm. According to the Chinese-English (C-E) public signs dictionary, a reference book on the

standardization of the translation of signs, (Lv & Shan, 2004), public signs have been categorized to cover several subject areas ranging from transportation, catering, businesses, sports, technological education, medical service, tourism, housing, immigration, weather and many others. These signs are made up of characters, graphic images, phrases or words that are closely related to the lives of a community or company with the purposes of warning, alerting, directing, notifying or providing information to the general public (Dai & Lv, 2005). Such signs also play a key role in promoting China's popularity by acting as an advertising platform to draw more international students, tourists, and businesses thereby enhancing the international image of China and promoting tourism, leading to economic development. Performing primarily an informative role, Public text according to Reiss cf. Wang (2011) is classified under non-literary text which includes tourist write-ups, press releases, governmental reports and document, product labels and description, organizational document and many more.

In terms of linguistic features, public signs have been described by many scholars as being concise, straightforward, clear, standard and easy to comprehend. (Luo & Li 2006; Ding, 2006) In reality, a great majority of public signs are indeed made up of short phrase or sentence but this feature of conciseness does not apply to all categories except for road signs. There are conspicuous number of signs too that are made up of many lines of sentences to even paragraphs.

Since Public signs and texts are a vital part of a community, its translation into English, therefore, represents to a large extent, how well a country, city, town or area is established and open to the international world. The C-E translation of public signs and text into English requires pragmatic competence and an In-depth knowledge of the culture, history, art, politics, economics, psychology, education, and religion just to name but a few, on the part of the translator of both the source and target languages and culture of the signs and texts and this, presents major challenges to the translator. According to Li (2016), most of the English translations of the public signs or text in China are below the standards and in most cases fail to convey the intended information or meaning or perform its intended functions. These errors in the English translations make it difficult for foreigners to comprehend public signs and may lead to the building of a distorted image of China or plunge the state into confusion (G. Chen, 2016).

A thorough studies therefore into the various areas of the C-E translations of Public signs in Zhengzhou, as a means of contributing to the building of an overall best image of China in the world and making life comfortable and adaptable to foreigners is a step in the right direction, since no research has been conducted in English to investigate the translation of public sign and text situation in this important city with thousands of foreigners patronizing its educational and medical facilities, immigration services, transportation services, tourism site and many others.

### **An Overview of the Functional Theory of Translation**

Being the pioneer in propounding the functional theories, Katherine Reiss (2000) recognizes and posits the text as the level of analysis, rather than the word or sentence. However her concept of text typology and language functions (informative, expressive and operative) proposed were criticized to be rigid and simple for practical complex translation situations (Snell-Hornby, 1995).

With the stage of the functionalist theory set by Katherine Reiss, Hans Vermeer, a German translation theorist, in order to break through the traditional equilibrium theory of language translation, proposed the Skopos Theory, a core of functional translation. According to Du (2012), the theory of skopos was introduced to bridge the gap between theory and practice that existed in the earlier widely accepted Equivalence theory. Nord (2018) also stipulated that Vermeer sought another translation method that would transcend linguistics forms and thus, move translation forward from the quandaries that existed in the past linguistic theories of translation, to a more sociocultural and functional approach since translation is an act of communication involving the transference of culture. Translation action of any kind may has been perceived as a *purposeful practice* (Nord 1997) therefore, Hans J. Vermeer's skopos theory also views translation action as such hence, skopos theory which embodies one of the most important concepts in contemporary translation work, notes that translation is not merely an act of linguistic transference from one text to another, but the application of purpose. This theory, in other words, stipulates that there is always a purpose in mind behind a writing, therefore, translation of any texts need to be approached with an aim or intent as well, since knowledge of the translated text's purpose determines which strategies and tools that are required to be employed in the translation process to ensure that the target text (TT) reflects and fulfill this purpose.

This submission runs counter to the once popularly known principle of translation work which states that linguistics elements, forms and styles of the source text in the translation work should be maintained since the source text was considered the only way of comparing and judging the translation. However, the skopos theory shifts focus from the sacredness of the

source text to the achievement of *the purpose* by the TT. Thus, if the target text accomplished the same purpose as that of the source text, then the translation is considered successful. Let us consider this example below:

ST: 小草有生命, 请勿踩 (xiao cao you shengming, qing wu cai) .  
Literal translation: 'the small grass has life, please do not step on' (TT1)

The ST sounds beautiful and poetic. However, the TT is considered as not being natural and unacceptable, a stance also taken by some Chinese scholars of translation including (Zhao 2006; Tang 2009; Guo 2010 & Song 2013). The function of TT is to stop people from damaging the grass/lawn. But keeping the sacredness of the ST thus, maintaining some elements of ST in the TT may result in an error in translation. Therefore, following the *skopos* of the text, our translation should be '*keep off the grass/lawn*'. (TT2). The sacredness of the ST has been compromised but the purpose of translation has been attained by the target text which is a much more practical and efficient approach to the entire process of translation (Reiss and Vermeer 1984 [cf. Nord, 2014])

The theory also posits that, for every translation action to be considered successful, 3 necessary evils should be considered and observed in the translation process. The first being the "skopos rule" which implies and requires that the form of TT as well as the translation methods and strategies employed, should be decided primarily by the 'purpose' to be fulfilled by the TT in the target context. In other words, "the end justifies the means"(Reiss & Vermeer 1984 [cf. Nord, 2014]). Translation is conducted with a purpose in mind and it is initiated under a commission, determined by a client who could be an individual, a body or an entity. This purpose of TT and its mode of realization are negotiated between the client and the translator. In order therefore to achieve the purpose of translation, the client is obliged to provide as much information about the *skopos* (purpose or function) and target recipients as possible. The detailed information makes up the translation brief (Nord, 2001). The second rule requires translators to make the target text relevant to or coheres with the target language's culture and situation so that it becomes meaningful to the recipients. In other words, no meaningful translation would be produced without careful consideration of the target recipients' social circumstances and cultural background. This rule is referred to as coherence rule of translation and is attained when receivers can understand the translated text and interpret it as being consistent with their culture and communicative situation (Nord, 1997). The final necessity of translation per the *skopos* theory, requires a relationship between the ST and TT as the target texts are generated per the information provided by the ST. In line with that, both the interpretation given to the ST by the translator and the purpose of the translation will determine the form of the TT. (Nord, 2001; 2014).

Christiane Nord (2005) a functional theorist also applies her ideas of extratextual and intratextual influences to the theoretical and practical dimensions of translation problems. The extratextual factors, according to Nord, are aspects relating to for instance, the recipient, sender, medium and function of the text whereas the intratextual factors are topic, content, register and genre. Extratextual considerations often apply to macro-strategies (Nord, 2005). She addresses three essential aspects of translation: commission of translation, study of text, functional hierarchy and problems associated with the translation process (Nord, 1997)

Toury (1995) also presents a systematic translation method. He attempts to create a universal theory that centers on the target culture and considers the translated texts to be "the target culture reality". He proposed the initial, preliminary, and operational norms that affect translator decisions during different stages of the translation process. Although some regard Toury's theory to be a significant forward movement in descriptive translation studies, it has been criticized for its lack of application to a broader field of translation since it is limited to literary translations.

This article draws on the fundamental tenets of functionalist theory with emphasis on *skopos theory* in the investigations of the C-E translation of public signs and text in Zhengzhou since the theory is more applicable to non-poetic or non – literary forms and it is more functional in nature for translating public signs (Wang, 2011). the author also adopted and applied the functional theory perspective to the analysis of public signs and text because, though contemporary translation theories in the field of translation have been propounded, a careful scrutiny of the theories revealed that the functional theory (*skopos theory*) which has the purpose of the target text as its primary focus best suits the study and analysis of C-E translation of public signs and texts in China.

### Related studies on the Translation of Public Signs

Since the past 2 decades, many translation studies on public signs and texts with it different approaches and theories have been conducted by many scholars in China (Li, 2016). Some of these researches which include the study conducted by (Liu & Xu, 2008; Pi, 2010; Yan, 2018) outlined the principles and strategies employed in public sign translation; translation of public sign with the theory of adaptation (Wang, 2017); Eco- translatology approach to the study of signs where strategies based on the ecology were formulated (Ma, 2014); the use of the functional equivalence theory approach which saw the translation of signs based on the micro and macro perspective strategies (Shi, 2014) was also conducted. Some studies have also given much attention to causes of errors situation in public signs translations (Liu, 2008; Liu & Hu, 2009; Wang 2017); characteristics (Zhang & Zhao, 2016) and classifications (Bi 2017b; Liang 2013) of public sign translation in English. Other researchers conducted case studies to investigate different tourist sites and publicity texts from the viewpoint of skopos theory of translation (Li, 2016; Luo, 2014; Yu, 2016), text typology (Liu & Wang, 2012), functional equivalence (Zhang & Li, 2015) and reception aesthetics (C. Chen, 2016).

After carefully analyzing studies on translation of public signs and public text of particular areas in China, the author discovers that there is no related research on public sign and texts translation in Zhengzhou under the functional theory even though this provincial city has in the past few years witnessed tremendous increase in the number of foreigners patronizing it diverse tourism, educational, health, immigration, accommodation and transportation services in the city. Therefore, this present study conducted a detailed analysis of the bilingual translations (Chinese - English) of public signs and texts in Zhengzhou to ascertain whether the translation of public signs and text are reflective of the TT's culture and communicative situation.

### Methodology

The data on public signs and texts in Zhengzhou for the study were predominantly collected from busy site like parks and residential communities at "zhong yuan qu" (中原区) and Er qi (二七) an extremely busy environment which provides us with a picture and sense of an international modernity because of it high class infrastructures such as offices, international hotels, hospitals, shopping malls, subways, restaurants and train stations which are places whose services are highly and sometimes compulsorily patronized by foreigners living in the city. Each survey area had well demarcated motorable route within which all signs were counted. Operationally, a sign, in this study was considered to be any definable frame of printed or written text, including stickers and billboards. Each sign was counted as one item, irrespective of its size. A total of 867 first-hand photos of public signs and texts were obtained at the above mentioned places as samples. Critical observation and analysis of the samples were conducted to fish out for the signs and texts with problems in translation. Depending on the analysis, some possible causes of the errors in the English translations were spelt out, with useful translation strategies to enhance the English versions of the signs investigated. The quantitative summary of signs collected are given in Table 1 below.

Table 1. Translated signs versus zero translated signs (n= 867)

Type of sign	Counted sign	(%)
Bilingual translated sign	619	71.3
Zero translation	248	28.6
Sum	867	

This study attempts to explore the Translations of public signs through analysis of C-E translation focusing on issues of linguistic and cultural differences in China. This analysis aims to identify errors committed in translations in conveying public sign messages in English. The identification of these errors would create awareness to the public sign translators in the country and the world at large. This study would also contribute a country specific knowledge regarding the translation of public signs to the field of study.

### Problems Associated with C-E Translation of Public Signs and Texts

Critical analysis of the English versions of public signs and texts rendered revealed numerous inconsistencies and errors of various kinds in the translations.

In other to understand the classification of errors of the public signs, it would be prudent to provide a brief definition of what makes up an 'error'. An error According to Norrish (1983), is a systematic deviation from the accepted norms of the target language. Nord (1997) also explains 'translation error' as anything that impedes the attainment of the purpose of the translation commission to the target recipients. From the above two explanations of errors, one can deduce that translation

errors occur when linguistic and cultural meaning are *obstructed* in the process of translation. Below is a discussion of some common errors found in a few selected images of the C-E versions of the public signs and text in Zhengzhou.

**Lack of translated versions**

As has already been explained above, the primary aim of public signs and text is to provide information to the populace, be it, locals or foreigners, in a particular country to get the people to behave in an acceptable manner or inform them on certain phenomena in and about the country. It was observed during the collection of data however that, many of the public signs or text at some important places which are frequently patronized by foreigners such as the hospitals, immigration (stay permit) offices, train stations, malls, restaurants, and others in Zhengzhou were not translated. In order words, the English versions of most of the important information at these places which foreigners can read and understand were lacking. This circumstance may make life uncomfortable to the foreigners as they may be ignorant of the rules or acceptable norms in the vicinity. The image below was taken from one of the renowned hospitals in Zhengzhou with the inscription “qing baoguan hao caiwu, xiaoxin pashou” cautioning the public to “take care of their belongings” and to “beware of thieves or pickpockets”. Such a piece of important information, at such a public place, was not translated. This was just but one situation discussed. There were numerous related cases found out during this research. This study is, therefore, a wakeup calls to the city authorities of the presence of foreigners in their locality.



Fig 1.Zero translation

**Inconsistency in translation**

The study also found out there are different translated English versions of the same Chinese public sign leading to inconsistency in the translation. One feature of public signs is their unique semantic labels wherever they appear. The situation, however, seems to be different in Zhengzhou. The sign in figure 2 below are normally pasted on waste bins and were collected from certain vantage points in the city. These signs depict three different translation outcomes. That is;

ST: 可回收垃圾/物 (ke hui shou la ji/wu)

TT outcomes:

- A. Recoverable
- B. Recyclable
- C. The situation of using other images for the explanation of the sign.
- D.



## Fig 2. Translation inconsistency

The ST; 可回收 (kehuishou- one word) in figure 2 above, means *recoverable*, *recyclable* with its function being to collect items or materials that can be reprocessed for reuse. However, *recoverable* has been explained by some dictionaries as something one can get back after it has been lost or spent, can reuse or something that can be taken from under the ground or sea (as in oil). With the aim of ST and the explanation of the word *recoverable*, it is obvious that the use of the word for this sign as in figure 2A by the translator is inappropriate and regarded as a lexical error. The TT *'recyclable'* which is from the verb *recycle* (use again after processing) better fulfils the purpose intended.

Inconsistencies in the translation of public signs may confuse especially internationals who cannot read the Chinese characters and may consequently lead to lawlessness. It is obvious in this case that the translation rendered did not consider the target receiver. The author, therefore, suggests that the English rendition of the same Chinese signs should follow standardize translations across the city.

### Cultural translation errors

Cultural translation errors according to Nord (1997), occurs due to a translator's inability to sufficiently decide on the replication or adaptation of cultural-specific customs. This inadequacy in a decision is mostly caused by ignorance on the part of the translator about the target recipients' culture in terms of communicative expressions, rights, needs and desires or maybe resulting from insufficient understanding of the target text's purpose. Cultural translation errors are linked to the problem of deciding if a source-culture convention should be modified to the target-culture customs or not (Nord, 1997). A confliction in the translated text with the customs and norms of the target culture may result in the target recipients finding the message transmitted incomprehensible or inappropriate, thus preventing TT from achieving its intended purpose. Let's consider the translation in the image below.



Figure 3. Cultural translation error.

Studies have shown that in western cultures, respect of privacy and right of individuals are held in high esteem and this is reflected in actions, words, communication and even management. It is therefore considered the sole choice or right of an individual to decide what to do with their body at any given time even though their actions or decisions have to be in alignment with the rules and regulations of their country. It will then be obnoxious to command an individual from a western culture to keep their feet within an area as in the image above, though this may be an acceptable norm in Chinese culture where collectivism (focus on the achievement of the collective good) is heightened over individualism. One can only appropriately persuade the target receiver instead infringing on their rights. Let analyze the source text in figure 3 above.

ST: 请站在警示线内 (qing zhan zai jingshi xian nei)

TT1: keep feet within the yellow line

TT2: please stand within the warning line.

TT3: please stand within the demarcation.

TT1 of the above ST is the English rendition of the Chinese in the image whiles TT2 and TT3 are the literal translation and suggested translation of the source text respectively. Following the skopos of the translation and considering all the translation decisions available, taking into account the target receivers' culture, it is more appropriate for ST to be translated as TT3 instead of TT1 since it does not command the recipient on how their own body should be handled.

### Linguistic translation errors

Most situations of linguistics translation errors may be attributed to a translator’s incompetence with the source or target-language (Nord, 1997). Nevertheless, translators who are linguistically competent but are not meticulous enough during the translation of public signs and texts can also commit such unpardonable errors. Therefore, a person must be highly proficient with adequate skills and knowledge about any target language forms before engaging in translation in that target language. Linguistic translation errors have been classified by some scholars of translation of public signs and public text to include spelling errors, grammatical errors and lexical errors.

**Spelling errors**

Spelling errors found in the C-E translation of public text and signs though may be considered a minimal offence can extensively jeopardize Zhengzhou's image and consequently that of China at the international front because of the wrong impression it might create to the target recipients about the country. It was observed during the study that most of the public text and signs had lots of minor errors. For example, in the text informing people on how to use the fire extinguishers, “距离 (ju li)” was written as “fistance” instead of “distance”; “湿毛巾” (shi maojin) as “wet to wel” instead of “wet towel”; “内科” (nei ke) “internal medicine” was incorrectly written as “internal Nledicine”. Another inscription found on a shop read “极乐音乐培训 (ji le yin yue pei xun)” Translated as “Husic”. From the Chinese version of the inscription, it is believed the place is a music training centre or school, but the English translation only captured "music" which was even spelt wrongly as "Husic". As can be deduced, most of these spelling errors were due to typing mistakes, spacing problem, capitalization problems and others which resulted from the negligence on the part of the translator from double-checking their translations before releasing the final work to the public for consumption. Figure 4 below are some images to buttress our explanation. It is important to state however that these images collected from Zhengzhou had been edited to show the issue raised by the author.



Fig 4 Images with spelling errors

**Grammatical errors**

Words are the bearers of meaning. Thus the organization or arrangement of words in a particular language have been termed to be the grammatical structure of that language. Grammatical errors in the translation of C-E public signs and text occurs when a translator violates the acceptable grammatical rules of the target language. Inclusive of these errors is the wrong use of tenses, prepositions, word order, punctuations, subject-verb agreements, syntactic forms or articles by the translator who may sometimes not be aware of these errors which sometimes creeps in unconsciously. To resolve a grammatical error, the translator must either add or remove particles or change an entire order of words in the translated text to enable him to get the acceptable structure for sentences in the target language. The images below are examples of C-E translations with the auxiliary “is” omitted before “not” in the figure 5A; definite article “the” omitted before ‘handrail’ in the figure 5B and the preposition “to” left out after ‘attend’ in figure 5C.



Fig. 5. Grammatical errors

Although not a focus under grammatical error, it was also observed that part of the ST in figure 5A above; 手推车 (shou tui che) translated as “push chair” is a noun in which babies are pushed therefore should not be spaced but should be rendered as one single word; *pushchair*.

### Lexical errors

If a Lexicon is the list of all words in a particular language, then lexical errors in translation are the wrong choice of a word or usage of a word in the context that is not appropriate. Correction of lexical errors in C-E translation of public signs or text can be resolved by replacing a wrong word with an appropriate one without necessarily altering the word order of the TT.



Fig 6. Lexical translation error

Figure 6 above is a notice at the international students' dormitory of one of the universities in Zhengzhou. The ST in the picture reads;

ST: 请不要随便吐痰 (qing buyao sui bian tu tan)

TT: please don't spit casually!

The word “随便” (sui bian) in the ST could be translated in English as ‘casual, random, careless, anyhow, arbitrary’. Therefore, the choice of ‘casually’ by the translator though one of the meanings of “随便” (sui bian), yet it is inappropriate in this context since the sentence does not conform to the habitual usage or expression in the target language. The possible renditions of ST with skopos of the targeted text in mind should be; “please do not spit about anyhow” or “please do not spit indiscriminately” (TT1). In this case, even though the translator has options to choose from, the most suited rendition, is “please do not spit indiscriminately” and it is an acceptable form of expression in the target language.

### Pragmatic translation errors

Pragmatic error is defined by Wang (2007) as “Words, expressions, sentences or even paragraphs that, though grammatically acceptable, do not fit the given situation or fail to express the intended meaning of the writer, or cause misunderstanding or displeasure of the targeted reader. Pragmatic errors violate certain principles of communication and consequently cause failure or disharmony in intercultural communication.” Pragmatic translation errors occur when the translator lacks pragmatic competence of the target language and are caused according to Wang (2011) by the failure on the part of translators to differentiate between culture-specific target language recipients from ST recipients. These errors are usually not recognized by the target recipients but can be rectified by people with pragmatic competence and who are comparing the final translation (TT) with ST as stated in the translation brief (Nord 1997; 1991).

### Sources of Errors

Following the same analogy as errors in second language acquisition, errors in translation, have also been classified by scholars to be originating from interlingual and intralingual transfer sources:



### **Interlingual transfer**

Errors in translation from an interlanguage source are those resulting from the transference of similar language forms or rules from the translator's first language to the target language during the process of translation. These errors which includes transferring lexico-semantic elements grammatical, phonological, morphological forms or features from one's native language to the target language may occur at various levels of learning (Shekhzadeh & Gheichi, 2011) and as a matter of fact, during translation too.

### **Intralingual transfer**

Errors as a result of intralingual transfer occur not from the transference of linguistics elements in a language but from the inability of the learner and the translator for that matter, to master or have native - level command over the target language. In order words, the target language was partially learnt. Therefore, these errors in translation may be resulting from an element or item in the target language having an influence on another in the same language and according to Shekhzadeh & Gheichi (2011) are mostly caused by the lack of knowledge of the rules or exceptions to the rules in a language, thus overgeneralization of the rules.

### **Other Sources of Errors**

Apart from the above-mentioned sources of errors in the translations of public signs, there are other factors which contribute to the production of errors in public signs. These other sources include the lack of supervision by administrative authorities responsible for ensuring the production of quality translations of the English renditions of Chinese public signs and texts. Once supervision is poor or lacking, some translators and sign-makers may tend not to be meticulous in doing their jobs, leading to errors in public signs and text which in turn may cause the country its reputation. Also, some translators of Chinese public signs lack cross-cultural awareness so may fail to take into consideration the culture differences and so produces translations based on mechanisms, features, norms and expressions that conforms to patterns in Chinese that are apart with those of the target language, accounting for the pragmatic and cultural translation errors we see in the signs produced.

### **Ways to Achieving Error-Free Translations of Public Signs and Texts**

As clearly stipulated in our theoretical framework, a good translation work is not the sole responsibility of the translator but all parties including the initiator, translator, the public and designated institutions and authorities involved in the translation procedure. Below are some possible ways to resolving the problems existing in the translation of public signs and text in the community of Zhengzhou:

#### **Possession of translational competence by the translator.**

Observations of the data collected on the translation products of public signs and public texts in Zhengzhou reveal that most of the translations might have been done by translators who lack competence in the target language or by persons who do not have translational competences. Therefore, to achieve C-E translations of public sign devoid of error and which aligns with the standards, translators, as posited by Pym (1990), must possess translational competence; the ability of translators to generate multiple types of TT's for a particular ST and then confidently select one from the series proposed as the translational product of ST depending on the target recipients and the skopos of TT. Translators must accumulate a rich vocabulary, memory, and work ethic of both Chinese and English language and culture, to be able to produce good translation. It is also necessary for translators to choose a specific domain of translation e.g. law, trade, health etc., and to continue learning to become more acquainted with the subject matters, style of writing and patterns of thought in that domain in order to become experts in that domain.

#### **Cultural Sensitivity**

Cultural knowledge cultivation is vital to accurate translation and very crucial to fully comprehend a text's original meaning. It is important that we recognize and respect the target culture. People can easily mistranslate and misrepresent the meaning of a text if they fail to understanding cultural differences in translation. As gap bridgers between two distinctive languages and cultures and the facilitators of communication between two unique groups, translators must have an in-depth knowledge regarding the diversities of cultures in addition to possessing language competence in other to produce quality translations that will transmit information free from pragmatic, cultural and linguistic errors. By understanding both the source and target cultures, translators have the denotative and connotative information, and a broader grasp of semiotic systems and cultural codes to understand the meaning of vocabulary and idioms.

#### **Adopting the principle of compromise**

The author of this study suggest that, for translation of C-E public signs and text to be devoid of certain errors, the translator must focus on not only the skopos of the TT and its recipients but should also consciously adopt the principle of compromise which allows for a translator to compromise the cultural features which are unique to ST, poetic nature of ST which may

sound beautiful and pleasing to the ear and ST's linguistics features or forms to fully capture and make way for the expression of TT's purpose. It should be noted that compromisation is not an erosion of ST's unique features in terms of comparison but an avenue for the production of meaningful and purposeful TT's.

### **Public Education**

To build a positive image of china globally, promote quality translational work and deepen the populace knowledge and understanding of translational action, there is the need for the creation of a translational awakening and awareness in all the actors involved in the translation process in the country. Observation of the errors in the translation of public signs and text in Zhengzhou confirms an assertion by Liu (1998) that entities, groups and individuals who utilize translational services have little or no knowledge about what translation involves, what part they ought to play in the process and what makes up a good or bad translation. It is therefore crucial that the government, or provincial department responsible for monitoring translational activity in the country, launches some awareness creation presentations, seminars or conferences where experts and professional translators are invited to give concrete talks on translational activities to enlighten people to know, appreciate and empower them to initiate, correctly prepare the translation brief and appraise translation works.

### **Enforcement of the Standards and Ethics of Translation**

Every field of study or domain has its standards and ethical rules that govern it and translation action is no exception. In order to ensure quality translational work, promote sanity in the English translations of public signs rendered in Zhengzhou and the country as a whole, laws and conventions regarding the act must be enacted and enforced at all level with perpetrators of translational errors sanctioned. To be able to achieve this, an organization responsible for overseeing translational activities in the country should be created with offices in all the cities to ensure that translational works in public signs and text and any other endeavour conforms to standard forms. There should also be accreditation of people who possess translational and pragmatic competences in foreign languages based examination in China to enable them to obtain the requisite license to engage in translational jobs. The public should be educated to understand the importance of employing the services of an accredited translator so that sanctions such as the payment of fines can be imposed on both commissioners and translators who fail to follow the ethics of the profession or who violate or breach any of these laid down measures. Translators must also demonstrate a high level of responsibility by following the ethics of translation at all levels of their job by paying attention to every detail of their work to ensure that the standards are kept and the message is well carried across in the English translations without any distortions.

### **Conclusion**

In order to find out the strategies employed by translators, outline the errors in translation associated with public signs in this study and to contribute to how error free translations can be achieved in China, in addition to contributing to existing literature in the field of translation, this study analyzed C-E translations of public signs and public texts which play a crucial role in the image building of a country and in providing information to its foreigners concerning all facets of life. An elaborate discussion of the theoretical framework of the study; the skopos theory with its principles of translation was clearly outlined since this theory favours the translation of non-literary work and allows the translator some room to focus on achieving the function or purpose of the target text. Then, using images collected from vantage places highly patronize by foreigners in Zhengzhou city, C-E translation errors of public signs and text classified under cultural translation errors, linguistics translation errors, inconsistencies in translation and others were thoroughly discussed with a brief explanation of how these translational errors which included interlingual and intralingual sources of errors including those from other sources came about. The author also suggested ways to attain an error-free English translation of the Chinese ST's and improved English versions for some of the Chinese public signs and texts with errors.

A general observation of the translation situation of public signs and texts posted especially in the hospitals, hotels, restaurants, shopping malls, immigration (permit ) offices, museums and other places that are meant for the public in Zhengzhou city shows that awareness of the presence of foreign nationals in this city is on the low, in that, most of the city's public posts or signs have not been translated, even though they carry important information which internationals who are not competent in the Chinese language should be in the know of. The author of this study believes that, with the rate at which China is developing and expanding in every facet of its economy and the numerous scholarship packages made available by the government to be assessed by foreign national, more and more internationals will come to Zhengzhou for studies and for other purposes. Therefore, suggests that action be taken to mitigate the problem of lack of English translation of public signs and texts especially at places highly patronize by foreigners to make life convenient for them and also to promote social order in the city.

It is noteworthy to mention that, due to the largeness of the size of the city, the limitation of time and logistics, this study could not investigate the translation of public sign situation of every nook and cranny of the city, therefore future researches need to expand their tentacles to include the entire city and not only selected areas accessed by internationals. The study also failed to carry out a success- protest analysis of the C-E translations of public signs and text and suggest that, future studies should pay attention to this areas.

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