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TRANSLATING URBANONYMS: ISSUES AND SUGGESTIONS

Abstract: The study investigates the language difficulties of the Linguistic Landscape (LL) optimization for the establishment of a convenient system of navigation for foreign tourists. Particular attention is paid to existing evaluation guidelines for the translation of urbanonyms. The study reveals a systemic approach in translation as well as errors and inconsistent practical implications resulted in Linguistic Landscape of different cities. The results on the analysis of the translated urbanonyms implemented during the preparation for 2018 FIFA World Cup.

Keywords: Linguistics, Linguistic Landscape, Translation, Urbanonyms, Navigation, Cross- Cultural Communication

INTRODUCTION

A study of a city as a communicative space is among the topical avenues of humanitarian research and there is a mounting interest towards theoretical and practical issues of formation and functioning of Linguistic Landscape (LL). This term itself came into scientific use in the end of the XX century while investigating the peculiarities of the practical, public implication of characters in bilingual and multilingual cities [1]. Linguistic Landscape is basically defined as follows: “The language of public road signs, advertising billboards, street names, place names, commercial shop signs, and public signs on government buildings combines to form the LL of a given territory, region, or urban agglomeration.” [2]

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The attractiveness of Russia for foreign tourists is increasing, which ensued from choosing the country as a venue for international conferences, international competitions and such important events as the 27th Summer Universiade in Kazan, the XXII Olympic Winter Games in Sochi, 2018 FIFA World Cup Russia. It is noteworthy that at present regional cities of Kaliningrad, Saransk, Nizhny Novgorod and etc. are becoming more famous in the event industry, and therefore, foreign tourists are discovering new routes and directions in Russia alongside with familiar ones.

In terms of tourists’ rising interest the key problem is inventing an efficient and comprehensible system of urban navigation. Each visitor should easily fathom how to reach the place, which transport to use and etc. A foreign tourist may be willing to experience, however briefly, the quotidian routine of the local people, to see ‘how people live’—which is only possible through establishing personal contacts—in other words, through realizing the popular humanitarian values of cross-cultural communication [8]. Improving the LL for a better perception by foreigners arises from the aforementioned communication demands. However, the experience of Russian scientists in the contrivance of the comfortable LL for foreign visitors is yet to be gained.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

A contemporaneous city is full of various denominations. Each public transport stop, all the streets, business centers and malls have their own unique names. In relation to the complex of proper nouns within an urban space T. V. Shmelyova applies the term “onomasticon of a city” [9]. Substantially, we can define all proper nouns of high frequency within a city as being part of the onomasticon of the city. Proper names of such spatial objects as streets, squares, parks, bridges, buildings, public transport stops and metro stations, districts and neighborhoods are also included. In terms of the aforementioned material, researches traditionally use the term “urbanonym” [10].

Modern science has defined several approaches to translating proper names: transcription, transliteration, transposition, loan translation, transplantation, explication [11]. Despite the detailed description of all approaches, many difficulties arise in practice. The juxtaposition of two official documents issued in Moscow and Kaliningrad during the preparation to 2018 FIFA World Cup Russia gives strong evidence of the statement. The results of the comparison are given below (Table 1).

The results of the comparison indicate that there are only several versions agree, e.g. univocal terms such as “street”, “square”, “avenue” whereas translations for “embankment”, “lane” and “alley” vary. It is noteworthy that the option “river road”, proposed in Kaliningrad, is not widely-used either in Russia or abroad. It may be also associated with the eponymous picturesque road in the USA.

To substantiate the analysis of the aforementioned translation, we will take translated versions of urban denominations made in 2018 in Ekaterinburg. Initially an attempt to propose guidelines for translators was made by E. M. Bozhko, A. O. Ilner, L. I. Korneeva [12]. Using the principles of translation and transliteration of urbanonyms made by toponymy committee of Saint-Petersburg the authors proposed the following:

- to differentiate between key and secondary urban objects;
- to use loan translation for translating key objects;

to use full or partial transliteration while translating names of secondary objects. TABLE I. Translating Urbanonyms in Moscow

Russian Terms	The Recommended Versions of Translation	
	<i>Moscow</i>	<i>Kaliningrad</i>
улица	street	street
площадь	square	square
проспект	avenue	avenue
набережная	embankment	river road
переулок	side-street	lane

As another option we suggest using full transliteration in some cases with loan-translation given in brackets. As a rule, this allows foreign tourists to ask local people for help. However, the possibility of self-reliant navigation round the city has not been considered yet. Juxtaposing the two translation options—“*Bus Station*” and “*Avtovokzal*”—we can see that the first translation is more familiar and understandable for visitors rather than the second one. Moreover, the

unification of translation in the streets, itineraries and on electronic maps will make tourists remember the name and will establish a better connection between the physical object and its mental image.

CONCLUSION

Currently urbanonyms translation is of utmost importance. As the analysis of Ekaterinburg experience showcases, even within a city the translation of the same denominations may differ. That proves the absence of any systemic approach. The reasons may lie in the insufficiency of comparative research both in theoretical and practical realms. We therefore suggest setting unified standards of translation with universal English for all Russian cities. Following those rules countrywide, specialists would create comfortable LL, which would have a positive effect on attracting tourists from all over the world.

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