

*Improvement of Environment for Tourists in Japan from the World Complying  
with ISO Standards on Translation and Interpreting Services*

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**Abstract**

The purpose of this paper is to make an appropriate suggestion of environment improvement that visitors to Japan from the world can tour around Japan without feeling stressed in public transportation, accommodation facilities, historical cultural sights, restaurants and retail stores. This paper sets the following research question: How do service providers realize good communication services on multilingual translation/interpreting in complying with unified international standards? The survey on acceptance environment of tourists to Japan from the world in 2016 which was conducted by Japan Tourism Agency showed that many people were unsatisfied with "inadequate multilingual displays in facilities and lack of communication with facilities' staff." This paper believes that the following communication services are required in the current areas of tourism based on the survey results and views on the current status of translation and interpreting as follows: 1. Provide multilingual communication services on translation such as bulletin boards complying with unified international standards, which supplement unknown information for visitors to Japan from the world, without lack of information or mistranslation. 2. Provide oral multilingual communication services in interpreting in compliance with unified international standard without lack of skills. The feature of this paper is providing the necessity of international standards with commonly understanding quality control adopting a PDCA cycle in translation and interpreting services based on the survey results of Japan Tourism Agency.

Keywords: visitors to Japan from the world, multilingual communication services on translation, oral multilingual communication services in interpreting, unified international standard

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## **Introduction**

The purpose of this paper is to make an appropriate suggestion of environment improvement that tourists to Japan from the world can tour around Japan without feeling stressed in public transportation, accommodation facilities, historical cultural sights, restaurants and retail stores. Thus, this paper sets the following research question: How do service providers realize good communication services on multilingual translation/interpreting in complying with unified international standards?

Japan Tourism Agency conducted the survey on acceptance environment of tourists to Japan from the world in 2016. The results showed that many people were unsatisfied with "inadequate multilingual displays in facilities and lack of communication with facilities' staff."

In this paper, Chapter 1 explains the definitions of translation and interpreting before discussion about tourists' satisfaction with translation of sign boards or oral communication in multi-languages as interpreting. Chapter 2 explored previous works on tourists' satisfaction, translation of sign boards or oral communication including interpreting for tourists from all over the world. Chapter 3 mentioned background of the above discussion citing the survey results conducted by Japan Tourism Agency (JTA). Chapter 4 analyzes that what kind of appropriate solutions against problems does this paper suggests from the viewpoints of translation and interpreting. And further, Chapter 5 provides readers with information about global standards on translation and interpreting before concluding this paper.

This paper believes that the following communication services are required for meeting satisfaction of tourists from other countries to Japan: (1) Provide multilingual communication services on translation such as bulletin boards complying with unified international standards, which supplement unknown information for visitors to Japan from the world, without lack of information or mistranslation. (2) Provide oral multilingual communication services in interpreting in compliance with unified international standard without lack of skills.

The feature of this paper is providing the necessity of international standards with commonly understanding quality control adopting a PDCA cycle in translation and interpreting services based on the survey results of Japan Tourism Agency.

### **1. Definition**

Before discussing about environment improvement on translation and interpreting that tourists to Japan from the world can tour around Japan, some definitions for key words in this paper will be required. First, this paper defines tourist as "a person who is travelling or visiting a place for pleasure" following the Oxford English Dictionary. (OED 2010)

Next, this paper defines translation that is "set of processes to render source language content into target language content in written form" as stated in 2.1.2 of ISO 17100:2015 Translation services -- Requirements for translation services. (ISO:2015)

This is one of the global standards on translation issued by International Standard Organization (ISO).

Moreover, this paper defines interpreting (/interpretation) that is “rendering spoken or signed information from a source language to a target language in oral or signed form, conveying both the register and meaning of the source language content” as stated in 3.1.2 of ISO 18841:2018 Interpreting services -- General requirements and recommendations. (ISO, 2018) This is also one of the global standards on interpreting issued by International Standard Organization (ISO).

## **2. Previous Works**

According to Nakamura, “traveler” includes movement by business, visiting family members and friends and sightseeing of places. Nakamura defines “tourist” who conduct sightseeing is a part of “traveler.” He summarizes that tourism consists of various elements including transportation, information, target facilities of sightseeing and tourists. (Nakamura 2019) In this paper the author, however, wants to add an element, comfortable environment of the destination for tourists from the viewpoints of languages and communication.

The International Federation of Translators (FIT) which is the oldest association for translators and interpreters in the world was established in 1953 and obtains “Category A status” as an organization from the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO). In the Translator’s Charter, FIT declare, “translation has established itself as a permanent, universal and necessary activity in the world of today” and “by making intellectual and material exchanges possible among nations it enriches their life and contributes to a better understanding amongst men.” (FIT 2011) This paper, however, would like to add the influence of translation to readers especially tourists who travel or visit places coming from all over the world.

Further, the International Association of Conference Interpreters (AIIC) which is a global wide non-profit organization in 1953 representing professional conference interpreters declares that interpreting is oral activity. Consequently, AIIC explains interpreting “makes use of particular linguistic resources: the original speaker's ideas are transmitted as spoken words, with a particular rhythm and intonation, making use of rhetorical devices and gestures.” (AIIC 2012) The author would like to add the perspective from the beneficiary of interpreting services which are minutely mentioned above that orally provided interpreting activities improve communication between the original speaker and the listener of transmitted ideas in a certain language respectively.

## **3. Backgrounds**

Japan Tourism Agency (JTA), News/Press Conferences announced New Tourism Strategy to Invigorate the Japanese Economy in 2017. According to JTA, which aims to realize Japan as a "world-class tourist destination," tourists feel that Japan should promote a more welcoming environment for its tourists by providing them with “communication with the staff of facilities, etc.,” followed by “free public Wi-Fi” and “multilingual displays.” (JTA 2017)

Before the above announcement, JTA conducted a survey of overseas travelers visiting Japan about the welcoming environment and summarized its results in the Survey of International Visitors in Japanese as shown in the following figure. (JTA 2016)

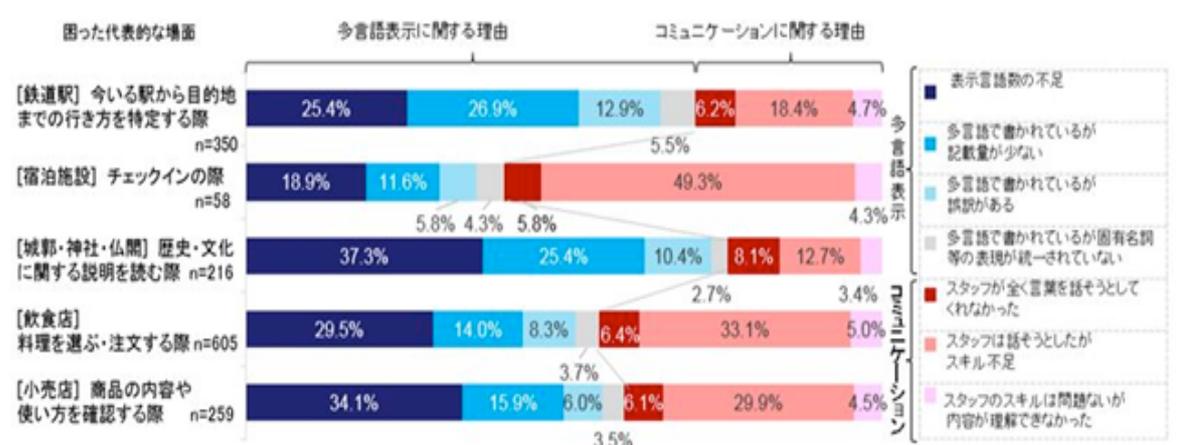


Figure 1: Questionnaire survey of international visitors: Troubles on multi-lingual signboards and communication (JTA 2016)

The followings are summary of the survey results conducted by JTA:

- (1) Smaller number of multilingual sign boards compared to the number of Japanese sign boards (Insufficient translation from Japanese to other languages)
- (2) Smaller volume of information in multilingual sign boards (Inaccurate translation or unknown information for international visitors)
- (3) Mistranslation in signboards
- (4) Facility staff don't communicate with international travelers (No interpreting)
- (5) Lack of communication skill of the facility staff (Lack of Interpreting skill)
- (6) International travelers cannot understand the explanation (Lack of understanding of cultural background)

Responding to the above survey results, JTA announced the New Tourism Strategy to Invigorate the Japanese Economy in May 30, 2016. The Strategy aims at realizing Japan as a "world-class tourist destination." To implement this Strategy, it is necessary for Japan to promote a more welcoming environment so that international visitors and tourists can comfortably enjoy sightseeing with no stress. (JTA 2017)

JTA listed the survey results conducted on March 30, 2016. According to the survey, the number of troubles "unable to communicate with the facility staff" is the largest. The next trouble is no place to use "free public wi-fi system." The third trouble is "lack of multilingual information." Among 19 troubles, the first and third trouble are related to interpreting and translation.

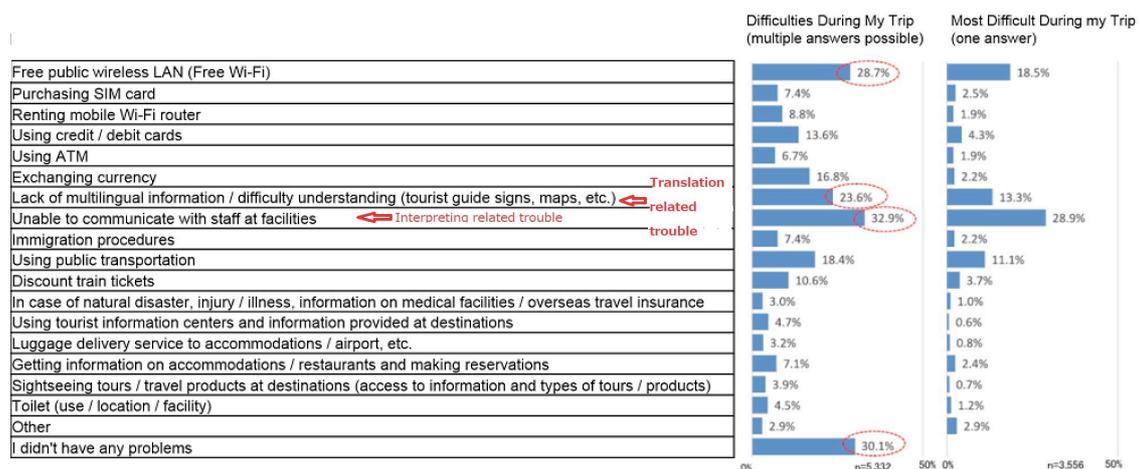


Figure 2 Questionnaire survey on needs and satisfaction levels of language support, communication environment and public transportation (JTA 2017)

Then, who solve the above troubles, especially on translation and interpreting the international tourists suffer from?

#### 4. To solve troubles of international tourists on translation and interpreting

This chapter will discuss how to solve troubles related to interpreting and translation mentioned above which international tourists encounter when they travel around Japan. As for the trouble on wireless LAN which is the second highest rank of trouble, JTA needs to set the public wireless Lan facilities in collaboration with local electric companies. The author discusses the first and third one, namely interpreting related troubles and translation related troubles and suggests the appropriate solutions.

There are mainly three points on the highest rank of trouble, namely “Unable to communicate with staff at facilities” which belong to interpreting troubles as follows:

- (1) Facility staff don't communicate with international travelers (No interpreting)
- (2) Lack of communication skill of the facility staff (Lack of Interpreting skill)
- (3) International travelers cannot understand the explanation (Lack of understanding of cultural background) (JTA 2016)

The author proposes the following solutions to the above troubles:

- (1) Increase the number of staff members who communicate with the international travelers, guests or customers in multi languages.
- (2) Increase the number of facility staff members who has appropriate communication skill in multi-languages or train the facility staff to improve their communication skill in multi-languages.
- (3) Provide appropriate explanation with consideration of different cultural background between staff and international travelers, guests or customers.

To actualize the solutions mentioned above, the facilities adopt interpreting service providers which comply with interpreting global standards including ISO13611 and ISO18841 for training their staff members in multi-languages.

Further, there are mainly three points on the third highest rank of trouble, namely “Lack of multilingual information/ difficulty to understand tourist guide signs, maps, etc.” which belong to translation troubles as follows:

- (1) Smaller number of multilingual sign boards compared to the number of Japanese sign boards (Insufficient translation from Japanese to other languages)
- (2) Smaller volume of information in multilingual sign boards (Inaccurate translation or unknown information for international visitors)
- (3) Mistranslation in signboards

The author proposes the following solutions to the above troubles:

- (1) Increase sign boards in multi-languages thoroughly translated from Japanese into the target languages.
- (2) Enough (same) volume of information in multilingual sign boards (Accurate translation with clear information for international visitors)
- (3) Appropriate translation without any mistranslation in signboards.

To actualize the solutions mentioned above, the facilities in charge of multi-language sign boards adopt translation service providers which comply with translation global standards including ISO17100 and ISO18587 for increasing appropriate signboards in multi-languages.

## **5. Global standards on interpreting and translation**

To provide appropriate interpreting and translation services, ISO has developed global standards on interpreting and translation as follows:

- (1) Interpreting  
*ISO 13611:2014 Interpreting - Guidelines for community interpreting (ISO13611:2014)*: This standard “was developed in response to a worldwide need to accommodate linguistic, cultural, and ethnic diversity of people who interact via oral and signed communication.” (ISO 2014)  
*ISO18841: 2018 Interpreting services - General requirements and recommendations (ISO8841:2018)*: This standard "responds to the need to provide general service requirements for the provision of quality interpreting services." (ISO 2018)
- (2) Translation  
*ISO 17100: 2015 Translation services - Requirements for translation services (ISO17100:2015)*: This standard "specifies requirements for all aspects of the translation process directly affecting the quality and delivery of translation services." (ISO 2108)  
*ISO 18587:2017 Translation services - Post-editing of machine translation output – Requirements (ISO18587:2017)*: This standard "restricts its provisions to that part of the process that begins upon the delivery of the MT output and the beginning of the human process that is known as post-editing." (ISO 2017)

The author recommends using ISO global standards mentioned above as significant index and evaluation base of provided interpreting services or translation services, since they are globally equivalent standards on interpreting and translation.

## **Conclusion**

To solve the troubles of international tourists to Japan and give them comfortable tourism environment to enjoy sightseeing and without any stress, service providers need to provide them with appropriate services on interpreting and translation which satisfy international tourists.

Such interpreting and translation shall be complying with global standards on interpreting and translation for example, *ISO13611:2014*, *ISO18841:2018*, *ISO17100:2015* and *ISO 18587:2017*, since international travelers come from all over the world.

Then, appropriate staff communication services with correct interpreting and precisely translated signboards will satisfy tourists who visit Japan from all over the world.

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