

The Strategy of English to Chinese Translation of Advertisements from the Perspective of Nida's Functional Equivalence Theory

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Abstract: With the rapid development of economic globalization, advertising has become one of the most significant ways in transnational marketing. The quality of advertisement translation will directly affect the sale of products. On the basis of a review of advertisements, this thesis intends to explore the methods of English to Chinese advertisement translation under the guidance of Nida's functional equivalence theory.

Key words: advertisement translation; functional equivalence theory; translation methods

1. Introduction

Since globalization has already penetrated into every aspect of our society, more and more people are interested in products or services from other countries and advertising is one of the most important means to promote products and services or to introduce ideas. Therefore, the English to Chinese translation of advertisements is of significant research value.

With the rapid development of high-tech products such as artificial intelligence, translation is no longer as difficult as it used to be. However, there are many differences in Chinese and English, which will lead to the difficulty in advertisement translation. So, an appropriate translation theory and proper translation methods are required to improve English to Chinese translation. As functional equivalence in translation means that the target text should achieve the closest natural equivalence to the source-language message, which meets the requirements of advertisement translation, this thesis will study the methods of English to Chinese translation of advertisements under Nida's functional equivalence theory.

2. Functions of Advertisement

According to the American Marketing Association, advertisement is defined as "The non-personal communication of information usually paid for and usually persuasive in nature about products, services or ideas by identified sponsors through the various media." Here are some of its main functions.

Marketing function. As modern father of advertising, David Ogilvy once said, "Advertising is merely an efficient way to make a sell." Marketing function is the most primary one among all the functions of advertisement. It means advertisements should aim at increasing the sale of a product or promoting public influence.

Communicative function. Advertising is a business tool to carry a certain message to the consumers for the pure goal of business--gaining profit. It is communication. Advertising delivers a package of information to the consumers and at the

same time, influenced by the consumers' choices.

Persuasive function. It means that advertisements must gradually catch the audiences' attention, stimulate their desire, and then push them to purchase subconsciously.

Social function. A fruitful advertisement influences the society greatly. It affects one or more generations of people in their ways of living, the clothes they choose to wear, the restaurants they go to just because of the slogans or phrases from the advertisements at that time. This, in a sense, can reflect the features of an era.

To summarize, advertisements have different effects in the modern society, while communicative function is considered as the most fundamental one among all the functions. Apart from the functions above, there are also aesthetic functions, educational functions and so on. Therefore, we must take those functions into consideration and reflect them during translation.

3. Researches on the Translation of Advertisements

Peut-on Traduire la Langue de la Publicite was the first article that mentioned advertisement translation, written by Pierre Hurbain. In this article, he illustrated that there could be many translation versions for one source text, and the translator was responsible for selecting the most appropriate version, which would take a lot of work to reach. At that time, equivalence was the focus of the translation research, which could be understood as "submitted to lexical, grammatical and stylistic analysis, it is established on the basis of text type and social function" (Venuti, 2000). Since then, the rise of advertisement translation is on the way.

In 1997, *Advertisement: A Five-stage Strategy for Translation* written by Smith and Klein-Braley was released in translation as intercultural communication. The article further developed the taxonomy of translation methods. The comparison of different English and German advertisement translation examples was a good way to analyze methods of advertisement translation.

In 2000, Malhieu Guidere published *Translating Ads*. His book concentrated on advertisement translation and used many examples with the emphasis on the text itself. What's more, scholars started to take cultural factors into consideration since then. De Mooij (2004) indicated that consumer was the primary consideration. Meanwhile, he put forward cultural factors behind consumers in the specific translation, which was considerably difficult in translation.

Generally, studies on advertisement translation in China have experienced three stages: emergence, development, and in-depth study. During the emergence period, people could only have access to articles about advertisements and advertisement translation from some professional magazines at 1980s. Then, a study on how to translate the four-character phrase of Chinese into English was published. It said that some translation methods, such as liberal translation, rhetoric translation and creative translation, could be used to cope with four-character phrase. In the development period, scholars and researchers began to focus on the translation principles, the source text information, and the consumers' psychology and so on. They proposed their own point of views, and then made in-depth research in their own study. In the book *Theoretical and Practical Approach to Advertisement Translation* (Li Kexing, 2010), some translating principles, methods are introduced.

To conclude, China has witnessed the changes of studies on advertisement translation for thirty years. Thanks to many Chinese scholars' great effort, many fruitful results are achieved. However, there are still many limitations in English to Chinese advertisement translation, which requires much more in-depth study afterwards.

4. The Concept of Equivalence

"Functional Equivalence Theory" put forward by Nida attempts to offer a new perspective to advertisement translation. It is believed that "the relationship of the target language receptors to the target language text should be roughly equivalent

to the relationship between the original receptors and the original text." (Nida, 1993).

As functional-equivalence translation is reader-oriented, a translator must pay great attention to target language receptors' response. In the previous research, translations are normally judged by the comparison of form between the source text and the target text. But functional equivalence translation theory mainly focuses on the expressiveness of the target language and the target receptors' response much more, which is different from the formal equivalence theories.

Nida points that whether a translation is appropriate was determined by "the reliability of the text itself, the discourse type, the intended audience, the manner in which the translated text is to be used, and the purpose for which the translation has been made" (Nida, 1993). Rather than a fixed standard, functional equivalence theory allows different views of appropriateness for a qualified translation. With different standard in those aspects given above, Nida believed there was a minimal and maximal level for a qualified translation and all the translations between the two levels can be regarded as acceptable.

In a word, functional equivalence theory provides the translators with many inspirations in dispose of tough situations between the source text and the target text. Different from many other translation theories, functional equivalence theory not only finds an ideal translation version and allows the lowest standard, but also covers a range of diversity in translating as well.

5. Advertisement Translation Methods

5.1 Direct translation

In some cases, functional equivalence can be achieved only by direct translation. Direct translation is also named as literal translation. It does not require the translator to analyze the associative meaning of the source text from culture, convention or psychological elements and no or little adjustment to the source text is needed. Direct translation is generally used in the translation of corporate values, or the brochures of products on sale.

Example 1: We lead, others copy. (Ricoh Copier)

Translation: 我们领先, 他人仿效。(理光复印机)

The first example is a description of Ricoh Copier and its status in this field. Here, culture and linguistic divergences does not exist or slightly exists between source and target languages, which leads to no misunderstanding to the target receptors, so the translator can employ a direct translation strategy. The advertisement uses contrasting rhetorical devices to highlight the brand's leadership in the field, which aims at attracting passengers.

5.2 Liberal translation

In contradiction of literal translation, liberal translation means that the translated text should keep the content or indication of the source text and change or even give up its form. This kind of translation requires the translator's creativity much more. Here are some examples.

Example 1: Shine with the star together. (Mercedes-Benz)

Translation: 点亮你的未来。(奔驰)

Example 2: Ask for more. (Pepsi)

Translation: 渴望无限。(百事可乐)

The first one is an advertisement on the Mercedes-Benz website. The original text is "Shine with the star together", but the translator adopts a liberal method and translate it into “点亮你的未来” without directly translating into “和星星共同闪耀”. This is obviously related to the purpose of advertisement translation. Mercedes-Benz is a symbol of reputation in the eyes of consumers. Possessing Mercedes-Benz promises a bright future. Translation must cater to the psychological

demand of consumers, so that this advertisement translation can achieve better results.

The Pepsi's slogan is quite distinctive. In 1998, it made its own slogan "Ask for more". Pepsi calls on young people to make "a new generation's choices", that is to drink Pepsi. Pepsi's dynamic slogan quickly won the recognition among young people. In line with Pepsi's spirit, it is translated to “渴望无限”. It is full of insight. On the other hand, it conforms to young people's ambition. What's more, Chinese people appreciate four-character phrases or poems in advertisement. In this case, the liberal translation is necessary.

5.3 Flexible translation

Flexible translation is the mixture of direct translation, liberal translation, focused translation and some other ways of translation, which includes addition, parody and condensation, etc. In a general way, if the original English text does not vary greatly compared with the Chinese translation in rhetorical skills, the Chinese translation should try to maintain the original text's "aesthetic values". (Li Changshuan, 2009). Here are some examples.

Example 1: Good to the last drop. (Maxwell coffee)

Translation: 滴滴香浓，意犹未尽。（麦斯威尔咖啡）

The spread of the advertisement brought the brand great influence and reputation among the world. It means that even the last drop of taste is very good and the coffee leaves a deep impression on people. The translation not only shows the excellent quality of the coffee but also leaves the audience room for imagination. It requires the translator to transform the sentence structure of source language to that which Chinese consumers are familiar with. Some phrases or idioms which are common in China can be used.

6. Conclusion

This thesis is a study of advertisement and the methods on English to Chinese advertisement translation from the perspective of functional equivalence theory. The author discusses three translation methods that can serve as guidance in advertisement translation: direct translation, liberal translation and flexible translation. When used appropriately in different situations, they will produce attractive and convincing advertisements in the target language, achieving the functional equivalence in translation. As the economy develops rapidly, more foreign advertisements will flood into China, and new problems will arise at the same time. However, the author believes advertisement translation will be improved with the efforts of the translators and translation researchers and that more practical methods will be discovered.

Conflicts of Interest

The author declares no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

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