

On the Chinese-English Translation of Advertising Slogan from the Perspective of Functional Equivalence Theory

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Abstract. Nowadays, advertising slogan has been used by various corporations as an aid to promote their products. As advertising slogan is crisp, concise, and direct, it has been viewed as the identity of a corporation. With the tide of globalization, the translation of slogan is much more important in for the corporation in world economy. This paper introduces the functional equivalence theory, which consists of two points: the receptor' response and content over form. And the main function of the advertisement is vocative function, evoking the customers' purchasing desire. At this point, Functional Equivalence Theory is suitable to guide the translation of advertising slogan, for it aims to achieve the equivalent or similar response between the receptors of the source text and those of the target text. What's more, the application of this theory in Chinese-English translation is also discussed from many different respects base on the specific examples of slogans' translation. At last, three useful strategies are proposed: literal translation, parody translation and creative translation.

Keywords. advertising slogan; translation; functional equivalence theory; strategies

1 Introduction

Nowadays, advertising slogan has been used by various corporations as an aid to promote their products. As advertising slogan is crisp, concise, and direct, it has been viewed as the identity of a corporation. Many household products or brands step into people's life with the help of wonderful slogans. Therefore, to the domestic corporations who are making efforts to sell their products in the foreign market, appropriate translation of their slogans is a key project. However, owing to the differences in language and culture between Chinese and English, advertisement translation is not an easy task. An outstanding Chinese advertisement which succeeds in domestic market may fail in foreign market if we translate it without considering the cultural background of the target customers. Thus, appropriate advertisement translation is crucial. The translated text must transmit the information and spirit of the source language in a correct way so as to evoke the receptors' interests in the product and bring about purchasing behavior further. That's to say, the receptors' response is the key to the success of an advertisement for the commercial interests of an advertisement. The aims of the advertisement just fit a translation theory called Functional Equivalence, which takes the response of the target receptors in the first place and pursues a kind of equivalence in the response between the receptors in the target language and the receptors in the source lan-

guage. At this point, it is suitable for advertisement translation, so is advertising slogan.

2 The functional equivalence theory

Functional Equivalence is put forward by Eugene A. Nida, who established his own system of translation, the core his translation theory is "Functional Equivalence". As for the theory of Functional Equivalence, there are mainly two points.

1) The receptors' response.

To Nida, translation is a tool of communicating. He emphasizes communicative function and takes receptors' response into consideration. Functional Equivalence requires the translated text to adjust itself flexibly to make the receptors understand the information correctly. What we should notice here is that the response of the receptors is not merely in terms of comprehension of the message in the receptor language, for communication can also be expressive and imperative(Nida,2004). Take the advertisement translation for example, the purpose of the translated text is not only to make the target customers understand the contents correctly. Advertisement translation aims to stimulate the desire of purchasing and facilitate the action of buying the product. Therefore, the translated text should trigger the expressive function and imperative function. That is to say, the translated text ought to enable the customers to learn the feelings and attitudes

of the producers through the advertisement and respond to it in action.

2) Content over form.

Because Nida emphasizes the receptors' response, he stresses that content should come first at the beginning, which has been misunderstood by some people. For them, according to the principle of Functional Equivalence, the work of translation is to translate the content regardless of the form. Thus, various examples of free translation is said to be following "Functional Equivalence". However, the principle that content is prior to form does not mean that form should be ignored. "He has mentioned more than once that if it is possible to convey the same content in the receptor language in a form which closely resembles that of the source, the translator should endeavor to keep the form." (Ma Huijuan, 2003). Nida also explicitly pointed out that information not only contained the ideological content, but also the form, for form also expressed meaning. Changing form was changing meaning. Nida listed five conditions of changing forms (Li, 2004). Hence, the form should also be taken into consideration when translating the text. If the translated text which is faithful to the form can not achieve the equivalent response in the target audience, then the form should be given up to turn to the content.

3 The application of functional equivalence theory in Chinese-English translation of advertising slogan

3.1 Functional equivalence in lexical level

As to lexicon, Chinese advertising slogan has its own characteristics. For instance, in Chinese advertising slogan, four-character-phraseology is very popular for its short structure, deep connotation, artistic aesthetic and high summarization, such as "国酒茅台, 相伴辉煌 (茅台酒); 鹤舞白沙, 我心飞扬 (白沙集团)". While in English advertising slogan, short sentences are common without four-character-phraseology. Therefore, when translating Chinese advertising slogan into English, we should stick to Functional Equivalence to employ the structure in target-language to adapt to its trait. One translated text for "国酒茅台, 相伴辉煌 (茅台酒)" is "Good and vigorous spirit." (Huang Li, Jia Heping, 2009). And not only it highlights the high quality of the wine but also reflects the great spirit of Chinese people.

3.2 Functional equivalence in syntactic level

On Syntactic level, Chinese advertising slogan is usually characterized by flowing chunks, with several phrasal group or some loose words. However, English advertising slogan is usually a complete short sentence with tight structure. For instance, "We're not in the computer business. We're in the results business (IBM)", which is translated into Chinese "唯我电脑, 成效更高" (Pan Qinghua, 2008). The translated text is conforming to the features of Chinese advertising slogan--refined brevity, which can rapidly catch people's eyes. If we translate

word by word and work out two Chinese sentences, it must be lengthy and insipid, without aesthetic and emotional appeal.

3.3 Functional equivalence in rhetorical level

In the view of rhetoric, both Chinese advertising slogan and English advertising slogan make use of various rhetoric to beautify their slogans to make them more vivid and charming, such as simile, pun, personification, antithesis, repetition and so on. However, in Chinese advertising exist some rhetoric which does not exist in English, such as anadiplosis, palindrome, and mosaic. For examples, "车到山前必有路, 有路必有丰田车" (anadiplosis, which means the repetition of the word which is used at the end of a sentence and then used again at the beginning of the next sentence.) (Pan Qinghua, 2008). "轻松上网, 易如反掌 (网易)" (mosaic, which means dividing a phrase into single characters, and then put the characters into different sentences respectively, with each sentence including a character in the phrase.) (Pan Qinghua, 2008). When translating such Chinese advertising slogan, we should not stick to the form and have to create appropriate text to transmit the information. Here is a good translated text for Toyota—"Where there is a way, there is Toyota." (Gao Hongmei, 2009), which comes from the famous English idiom "where there is a will, there is a way." and successfully conveys the spirit of Toyota.

3.4 Collectivism vs individualism

China emphasizes on collectivism and the interests of the community come first. Collectivistic cultures have a great emphasis on groups and think more in terms of "we". On the contrary, the capitalist countries think highly of individualism and they take personal interests prior to the benefits of the community. People from individualistic cultures tend to think only of themselves as individuals and as "I" distinctive from other people. All of these are reflected in the advertisement. For examples:

Chinese advertising slogan:

大家好才是真的好。(好迪洗发水)

中华永在我心中。(中华牙膏)

English advertising slogan:

Just do it. (Nike)

Make yourself heard. (Ericsson)

From the above examples, we can feel that Chinese advertising slogans incline to lay stress on the benefits of groups to touch the customers while English advertising slogans prefer to stand out their focus on the interests of the individual to attract the customers.

3.5 Authority vs fact

In Chinese advertisement, authority sometimes is stressed in a piece of advertisement. Words like "国优、部优、省优、昔日宫廷秘方, 皇家独享" are frequently emerg-

ing to highlight the special status of the product to convince the consumers of the quality. In China, feudal dynasty has reigned Chinese people for thousands of years in the history and thus the hierarchical notion has taken its root deeply in the mind of Chinese people. They are more likely to be influenced by the authority in their life. The products certificated by the government or related to the authority in history have greater advantages to compete with the other products and win the acceptance of customers. On the contrary, western countries are advocating the truth of "All men are created equal", thus, they view authority as a common thing and they prefer to enjoy personal life and free choices. They believe in themselves. Therefore, the English advertisement seldom stresses the authority when recommending the products.

3.6 Past orientation vs future orientation

In the conception of time, China is different from western countries as China belongs to past-oriented culture and most of western countries belong to future-oriented culture. With a long and splendid history, Chinese people tend to believe strongly in the traditions and they may quote respected philosophers and leaders from the past as a guide for action and decisions in the present. Whereas, most of western countries are future-oriented. Westerners like to look forward and expect the future to be grander and nicer than present. There are also some countries which are present-oriented. People of Philippines, Mexico, and Latin America belong to present-oriented culture. For them, the future is vague, ambiguous, and unknown and what is real exists in the here and now, and the present should be cherished and enjoyed (Zhang Ailin, 2008). This different view of time is also reflected in the advertisement. In Chinese advertisement, words like "百年老店"、"宫廷配方"、"老字" are frequently leaping to our eyes, which can easily convince the customers who are past-oriented. English advertisement such as "To me, the past is black and white, but the future is always color.(Hennessy Wine)", "Generation next.(Pepsi)", and "The future's bright-the future's orange.(Orange)" can be illustrations of the westerners' future orientation. So that is another factor we should take into consideration when translating Chinese advertising slogan.

3.7 Awareness of the connotation of some words

Owing to the different thinking patterns and values of eastern and western people, it is likely that to the same object, they hold distinct ideas. For example, the famous brand of battery "白象" was once translated into "white elephant" to be exported abroad, which caused a huge mistake. In China, "象" share the similar sound with "祥", which means something auspicious and happy. Yet, in western culture, "white elephant" symbolizes something very expensive but useless. Someone has suggested translating the brand into "Bishiny", in which "bi-" means "double", and "shiny" means "bright". Not only the compound word sounds like "baixiang", but also it implicates the quality of the product. And as a means of cross-

cultural communication, advertising translation should conform to the target-culture to avoid unnecessary misunderstanding. Dealing with such problems, "faithfulness" should be got rid of and Functional Equivalence ought to be employed. Another example is "大宝 SOD 蜜", a household cosmetic brand in China. "SOD" here refers to a kind of biological component in the product. However, in English dictionary, "sod" refers to somebody or something boring and unpleasant. If we make a literal translation as "Dabao SOD", we are challenging western culture and it may keep the consumers away from the product. We can create another translated text without mentioning "SOD" to pursue the equivalence in function. The suggested one is "Dabao facial cream".

4 The strategies of effective translation

4.1 Literal translation

Literal translation means that if the slogan is composed of factual information without linguistic transformation and cultural background, we just need to translate the source text originally and that is to say, keep the original message form, including construction of slogan, meaning of the original words, metaphor of the original and so on. The translated text would be fluent and easy to be comprehended by target language readers. To such kind of advertising slogan, we can adopt this strategy. For examples:

- 1) 给我一个机会，还你一个惊喜。(嘉亨印务)
Give me a Chance, and you'll have a big surprise.
(HuangLi, Jia Heping, 2009)
- 2) 一切皆有可能。(李宁服饰)
Anything is possible. (HuangLi, Jia Heping, 2009)
- 3) 中国河南—功夫的摇篮。
Henan in China - the cradle of Chinese Kungfu.

In these three examples, the source text is simple sentences without linguistic manipulation and cultural background. Though Kungfu is the quintessence of Chinese culture, it is quite popular all over the world. Therefore, there is no need to give it extra explanation. To such kind of slogans, literal translation can transfer the information to the target-readers and it achieves functional equivalence.

4.2 Parody translation

Parody translation is widely applied in the translation of Chinese advertising slogan. It makes use of the epigrams, maxims, and proverbs in western culture to translate Chinese slogan in their forms or structures to minimize the distance between the producers and target customers. For examples:

- 车到山前必有路，有路必有丰田车。(丰田汽车)
Where there is a road, there is Toyota. (Gao Hongmei, 2009)
- 随身携带，有备无患；随身携带，有惊无险。
(速效救心丸)
A rescue in need is a rescue indeed.(Chen Yi,2009)

中原之行去哪里？郑州亚细亚。（亚细亚商场）

While in Zhengzhou, do as the Zhengzhouese do.
Go shopping in the Asian Supermarket. (Li Jie, 2009)

谁跑到最后，谁笑得最好。（某轮胎）

He laughs best who runs longer.

The first example is imitating cleverly the famous proverb “Where there is a will, there is a way.” in western countries. And there is no doubt that westerners will remember Toyota easily. The aesthetic function and vocative function work. The second example is making best use of the well-known proverb “A friend in need is a friend indeed.” The third example is drawing on the proverb “While in Rome, do as the Romans do.” The fourth example is imitating the English proverb “He laughs best who laughs last”, which reflects the good quality of the tyre. Parody translation is a translating method based on the target-culture and by the means of making use of the proverbs, songs, and sayings which are familiar to the receptors to make it easier for the receptors to accept the slogan willingly. It is a successful application of Functional Equivalence.

4.3 Creative translation

To some advertising slogans, there exist no culture-loaded words. However, if we translate it literally, the translated text may also confuse the target receptors. Under this circumstance, creative translation can be used. Creative translation requires the translator to possess wide knowledge, fertile imagination and extensive thinking. For examples: “心随我动，大洋摩托。”(大洋摩托) If we translate this advertising slogan literally into “The mind follows me, Dayang Motor”. The target readers may feel confused of the meaning of “the mind follows me” As far as I am concerned, we can recreate a style to express the spirit connoted in the source text. Here is a suggested translated text: “Da Yang Motor always comes into your mind deeply.” which impresses the receptors the charm of the Dayang Motor.

5 Conclusion

Nida’s Functional Equivalence stresses on the target language orientation and target culture orientation and puts the receptors’ response in the first place. This theory is especially applicable in the translation of the texts which are practical. And the main function of the advertisement is vocative function, evoking the customers’ purchasing desire. At this point, Functional Equivalence

Theory is suitable to guide the translation of advertising slogan, for it aims to achieve the equivalent or similar response between the receptors of the source text and those of the target text.

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