

A Study on the Principles and Strategies of Brand Translation From a Perspective of Functional Equivalence

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Abstract

With economic globalization, trades all over the world have become more frequent, commodities have circulated more rapidly, and diversified consumer demands have been also met. The public has come to realize the importance of brand effect in stimulating consumption and exploring market. The promotion of advertisement on the product is beyond the reach of other forms and has been favored by the public. With the continuous emergence of foreign products, advertisements tend to have more diversified forms and plentiful connotations. In this context, it's especially important to study on the principles and strategies in foreign brand translation. From a perspective of functional equivalence, this article proposes the "Three Aesthetics" principle and association principle in brand translation, has an introduction to the commonly used translation methods, and puts forward examples to further discuss the feasibility to implement foreign brand translation under the guidance of functional equivalence.

Key words: Perspective of functional equivalence; Foreign brands; Translation principles; Countermeasures

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INTRODUCTION

During commercial operation, a brand can rely on its appeal to promote consumers' understanding on the products, and achieve the ultimate goal of constituting

buying behavior. Normally, a brand's name is short, but concentrates the producers' wisdom, a wealth of culture and reflects the consumers' psychologies. Therefore, in brand translation, it's rather difficult for a translator to have a certain literary beauty as well as meeting the requirements of cultural and value orientation. Meanwhile, as a special form of propaganda, a brand must have the advertising function, so its translated name must fully attract the attention of consumers, stimulate their wonderful association to buy, and achieve the same or similar propaganda effect of the original brand name.

Nida's "functional equivalence" theory, which emphasizes that a translation's semantics and pragmatics must reach a friendly and natural equivalence of the source language, has an important guidance to brand translation. Therefore, it can be considered as the optimal evaluation criterion of brand translation, and direct brand translates into a higher level of theoretical exploration.

1. PRINCIPLES OF BRAND TRANSLATION

In order to achieve the equivalence between source language and the translation, reduce translation errors, translators need to follow certain principles in translation.

1.1 The Dialectical and Unified Principle of Restoration and Creation

As a special form of advertising, brand has an important role in commodity promotion. When translate the name of a branded commodity, we need to consider several aspects. Firstly, branded goods, though are not mainstream consumption goods in people's lives, can greatly affect people's consumption views after creating brand superiorities, can form an exemplary consumption situation and have a positive role in promoting market economy. Thus, when translate a brand, the translator should consider its social driving force, try to achieve a good social cognitive effect with functional equivalence

theory, and promote the development of the brand industry. The second is humanity propaganda. In addition to quoting literal meaning, translators should also fully explore the inherent human connotations which are related to the appeal of the translation. Due to the differences in Chinese and foreign cultures, expression forms and habits, translators should analyze the intrinsic cultural values of the brand according to the brand's function and guiding direction, extract the equivalent semantics and style suitable for promotion in order to achieve good propaganda and social reaction.

In addition to promoting consumption, brand name translation should also serve the purpose of cultural exchange. Based on this, brand translation cannot purely quest for accurate translation but also pay attention to the readers' reactions. This requires the translator to have a strong ability to apply language, and not rigidly stick to the formal expression while emphasizing the restoration of the source language. Therefore, in a brand translation, the translator should demonstrate the artistic taste of the source language, and make appropriate adaptations to fulfill economic and cultural exchanges.

1.2 The Principle of Organically Combining Equivalence and Aesthetics

From the above description we have learned that the brand name should be short, so the translation must have a certain commercial quality as well as artistic taste to convey the humanity effect. A clearly themed, vividly imaged and concise brand is easy to reach the network effect, and achieve the desired consumption index for the manufacturer. A good brand translation should not only achieve equivalence in semantics and pragmatics, but also have a certain aesthetic value and an ideal unification of sound, form and meaning, and maximize the practical application of translation.

2. THE STRATEGY OF FUNCTIONAL EQUIVALENCE IN BRAND TRANSLATION

This text and cultural conversions in brand translation achieve the artistic creation of equivalent value. In order to achieve functional equivalence, translators need to address two aspects, namely, equivalence in semantics and equivalence in pragmatics.

2.1 Equivalence in Semantics

Language equivalence is the basic principle of translation, and is an important means to complete the representation of source language. Nida's translation theory of functional equivalence emphasizes that translation should be natural, truly reflect the contents of source language, and on this basis achieve humanistic modification. Semantic equivalence can take a variety of translation methods to get this point, such as literal translation, adaptation translation and so on.

Literal translation, by definition is to faithfully express the meaning of source language and reproduce its inherent connotation, therefore it is quite practical and widely used in brand translation (Yang, Yin, & Chen, 2015). For example, Benze, translated as Ben Chi, the Chinese characters for gallop, can be described as a stroke of genius; Natural beauty, Zi Ran Mei, means that the cosmetic can bring a natural beauty; Free Bird, Zi You Niao, means the costumes can bring a relaxed and comfortable feeling. These concise translations convey the deep connotations, and the simple and plain narrations reflect people's subjective pursuit of the value of goods, therefore, have a good "popularity" in brand translation.

Adaptation translation is another practical translation method other than literal translation. Nida's theory of functional equivalence emphasizes the priority of content to form, therefore, although it is very important to accurately convey the meaning of source language, translators still need to deepen connotations and adjust forms to create an aesthetic appreciation value. Du Kang, one of Chinese wine brands, renowned as "a wine for tribute and fairies", has been tightly bound with Chinese scholars and poets since the ancient times and praised in their poems for drinking. If transcription is used, it can be translated as Du Kang, but such a translation is a merely alphabet connection without any substantive significance to Westerners, not to mention the special attitude of the ancient Chinese culture on wine. However, if there are appropriate changes it would be different. Du Kang—Dionysus of China can highlight the important position and culture of this wine in China's wine industry.

2.2 Pragmatic Equivalence

The purpose of translation is to make people understand and accept. To achieve this goal in brand translation, we need to comply with the principle of pragmatic translation, strengthen the role and effects of translation, highlight the character of publicity, and create conditions for a best advertising effect (Zhao, 2012). For example, Ke Kou Ke Le, English as Coca-Cola, is processed from coca leaves and kola nuts. The translation uses double rhyming to make it more catchy in pronunciation. If analyze from a semantic point of view, Ke Kou refers to the delicious taste of the drink, and Ke Le expresses the mood after drinking. The approach combining virtuality and reality can stimulate consumers' desire to explore and thus constitute consumption. As another example, Xue Bi, Sprite, means demon or naughty people in English. In order to avoid the association of ghost, but create a refreshing feeling and bring people into a fantastic state, the use of clear and bright snow to represent the taste of the drink is more appropriate.

In brand translation, whether it is straight or euphemistical it must be consistent with the translation

principles. A translation cannot deviate from the original intention, cannot pursue excessive formal innovation but fail the coherence and harmony in semantics and pragmatics, resulting in detraction of the intrinsic value of translation (Li, 2013). A successful brand translation should not only effectively convey the meaning of source language, but also take into account the practical utility of the linguistic meaning, try to reach integration of aesthetics and information transmission, stimulate consumption psychology, and achieve the equivalence between the recipients and the information.

3. CULTURAL CLASHES BETWEEN FUNCTIONAL EQUIVALENCE AND BRAND TRANSLATION

Brand name contains rich cultural connotations and reflects the Western aesthetics, values and ideologies, etc. In addition to considering the meaning of the source language, we should also take into account the internal culture, and only by doing this, we can translate a brand ideally and achieve a successful brand translation. Bicycle, one of the first “four major possessions” in China, was a status symbol in the past. The Phoenix bicycle manufactured in Shanghai was renowned throughout the country and had an irreplaceable position in those years (Feng, 2013). Is it appropriate to literally translate it as phoenix? Phoenix enjoys a high reputation in China’s history and culture. It’s often used in association with dragon, such as Long Feng Cheng Xiang (dragon and phoenix bring prosperity) and Long Fei Feng Wu (dragon-flying and phoenix-dancing like calligraphy), etc.. However, in the Anglo-Saxon countries, phoenix means eternal life, which can find the basis in Greek mythology. The saying goes that the phoenix burns itself, and rebirths from the ashes. If it’s literally translated as phoenix, it would be understood as “be saved from death” by the Westerners, not just a slightest deviation from the original intention. Therefore, if we ignore the role of culture, we will engender non-equivalence in semantics and pragmatics between the target language and the source language, and will have difficulty to produce a good advertising effect.

Translation is not a simple meaning conversion, but a complex conversion process for context and semantics, and has a strict requirement on the understanding of cultural differences and expression of semantic forms. Nida’s theory of functional equivalence can effectively constrain the use of semantics and pragmatics, help achieve an equivalent effect in language conversion, allow the readers to accept, stimulate consumption, and promote brand translation to a further development.

4. THE APPLICATION OF FUNCTIONAL EQUIVALENCE THEORY IN ADVERTISEMENT TRANSLATION

With the continuous improvement of people’s aesthetic views and visual requirements, the advertising industry has also ushered in new challenges and opportunities. Besides meeting consumers’ particular demands, advertisement should also stimulate consumers’ purchasing psychologies to achieve consumption and derive economic value (J. F. Li & X. H. Li, 2013). In addition to promoting the reputation of the product, continuous innovation will become an important means to enhance the brand value.

Four requirements should be met in advertisement translation, namely, arouse attention, generate interest, produce desire, and put into action (Li, 2014). Taking into account the specific propaganda function of advertisement, the translation should be easy-to-understand and impressive, not only meet semantic equivalence, but also achieve functional equivalence.

5. THE EQUIVALENCE PRINCIPLE AND APPLICATIONS IN ADVERTISEMENT

In addition to the propaganda purpose, advertisement translation should also be capable to persuade his readers. In advertisement translation, semantics and culture should both be addressed to achieve functional equivalence between the two languages, and only by doing this, propagation effect and marketing purpose can be achieved in advertisement translation.

5.1 Semantic Equivalence

Semantic equivalence is essentially an exchange on the meaning of two languages, and the translation can reveal the content and structure of the source language (Wu, 2013). For example, good to the last drop. Every drop is so fragrant that I can’t get enough. — Maxwell House coffee; the relentless pursuit of perfection. An unremitting dedication to perfection. — Lexus sedan; the globe brings you the world in a single copy. A global view in the magazine in my hand. — *Globe* magazine. From these examples it can be found that there are some differences between the translation and the original text, not an entire equivalence, which requires the translator to have a good ability to use language and convert words so as to convey the connotations and reach the sales purpose (Tang, 2013). As another example, the cards that many people like to play, would be puke if literally translated, but in English puke means to vomit. In order to avoid embarrassment and misunderstanding, people usually use playing cards instead. Therefore, in advertisement translation, translators should consider its relevance when achieve semantic equivalence so as to avoid ambiguity.

5.2 Rhetoric Equivalence

In advertisement translation, in order to enhance the aesthetic effect and persuasion, a lot of rhetorical devices would be used (Su, 2013). For example, the advertisement of Moore cigarette: I am more satisfied. Ask for Moore. I'm more satisfied with Moore Cigarette, give me another Moore. This advertisement cleverly uses a pun rhetoric. More mean further or added, and it's also the name of the advertised commodity when capitalized. It is easy to leave a deep impression.

In order to introduce freshness to attract customers, advertisers will create new words to enhance the advertising effectiveness. For example, Guinness advertisement: My Goodness! My Guinness! The Goodness and Guinness in the sentence have the same alliteration and rhyme, are catchy, easy-to-remember and easy-to-popularize.

5.3 Social and Cultural Equivalence

In advertisement translation, colloquial language and common expression cannot be literally translated, but be expressed in conjunction with the local language habits and cultural backgrounds in order to express the true meaning and achieve semantic and pragmatic equivalence (Liu & Zhou, 2015). For example, China Unicom advertisement: China Unicom binds Chinese together. If literally translated as China Unicom links China with Chinese knot, knot, it cannot represent the solidarity but lead to misunderstanding with "knot". However, if adjusted as "China Unicom binds Chinese together", the target language would be concise, clear, and fulfill the original purpose of communication.

6. AESTHETIC REFLECTION OF BRAND TRANSLATION

6.1 Aesthetic Theory

Aesthetics belongs to the philosophical category, which starts from people's aesthetic consciousness, brings them aesthetic experience of the realities, and development studies on aesthetic creation, aesthetic development and aesthetic laws. Aesthetics is a philosophy exploring the significance and nature of beauty embodied in objects, therefore, it's also referred to as a "philosophy of artistic beauty".

6.2 Translation Aesthetics

American translator Susan Bassnett and British scholar Andre Lefevere have coauthored *Cultural Construction* to propose translation aesthetics and take an in-depth study in this field (Zhang & Yang, 2012). Translation aesthetics pursues the unity of sound, form, meaning and beauty, promote the entire process of translation as beautiful, and pay attention to the aesthetic experience of recipients. Such an approach largely contributes to

the wide acceptance and understanding of translation so as to achieve the purpose of publicity and marketing. In brand translation, in addition to following the functional equivalence principle, translators should also try to reflect the aesthetic value and enhance the appreciation of translation.

6.2.1 Phonological Aesthetics

Phonological aesthetics refers to the lively rhythm and harmonious nature of translation to meet people's aesthetic demands (Hu & Liu, 2013). In order to achieve phonological aesthetics, alliteration, rhyme, assonance and other methods can be adopted in the translation process. For example, Coca-Cola contains an alkali with a narcotic component of cocaine. It's bound to cause some suspicions if translated literally. However, if it's translated in double rhyming and retained with the alliteration "K", it would be gracefully rhymed and avoid the embarrassment of literal translation to reach phonological aesthetics.

6.2.2 Connotation Aesthetics

In the pursuit of connotation aesthetics, translators must have a true experience of the beautiful connotation of the original context, must use a virtual-real combination to allow people to feel the inherent atmosphere only from literally, and make them produce a wealth of associations to form a long-term and deep connotation aesthetics (Li, 2013). Nestle, for example, comes from the Qing-Dynasty poet Zhang Hua's description to the sunset in eight views of Mountain Tong. In dusk, all social behaviors and natural behaviors end in a relaxing scene. The term Nestle is used to create a tranquil and comfortable atmosphere, stimulates consumers' imaginations and desire to buy the good.

6.2.3 Cultural Aesthetics

Brand translation will have a positive impact in cultural dissemination and development. For cultural awareness, people can learn it through a variety of ways, such as texts, digital images, movies and magazines, etc.. These different forms of culture dissemination show rich text contents as well as their own characteristics (Liu & Zeng, 2015). On this basis, the exploration on cultural differences will lead to a further spread of culture. As a carrier, brand translation is able to meet people's needs to understand different cultures and produce economic values when integrated with different cultural characteristics. Lancome, for example, has been successfully integrated with Chinese cultural elements. Orchid flowers occupies an important position in China and has been commonly used as a metaphor for young girls. When it becomes the name of a cosmetic brand, it has not only created people's expectations on the use efficacy and reached a good publicity purpose, but also achieved the requirement of linguistic elegance and helped deepen people's impression on the brand. As another example, Uriage, a cosmetic brand, was originally the name of a hot spring in France

which has the effect of treatment of skin diseases. When it's cited in the brand translation it can fully reflect the cosmetic's functions.

7. CONSUMER PSYCHOLOGY AND THE TRANSLATION PRINCIPLES FOR LUXURIES

Due to expensive prices, luxuries are non-necessities of life, therefore, they can only be owned by a part of people, which limit its use. Luxuries' charm lies at the expensiveness. In order to obtain the favor of the high-spending group in China and maintain a long-term supply and demand relation, foreign luxury brands normally adopt a more conservative direct extension strategy after entering the Chinese market (Zhan & Xu, 2015). For the Chinese consumers, it is about economic power and status symbol to buy luxury goods. When people are divergent in the pursuit of high-spending goods, they will unconsciously guide their consumption orientations and form fixed consumption behaviors. Regarding this divergence, the translation is required to meet people's psychological needs and stimulate them to set off for high-end products.

Due to the psychological impact of the cultural values of luxury brands to consumers, the translation is bound to differ from ordinary brand translations. In following Nida's functional equivalence theory, luxury brand translation also has its own characteristics.

7.1 Reflect the Brand's Cultural Characteristics

The cultural value of luxury is the major force boosting consumption. The translators should fully recognize the unique connotations of a brand in order to demonstrate the cultural value behind it. For example, the products under the brand Chanel include clothing, jewelry, cosmetics and perfumes. Each product can be called as a benchmark, especially perfumes and clothing, which have received love and pursuit from women all over the world. LV bags are considered a symbol of taste for Chinese consumers. If it's translated with a strong Chinese flavor, the value of the original culture would be greatly reduced.

7.2 Highlight Cultural Aesthetics

In addition to praising the product itself, people are also unstinting in the praise for the extravagance. People do not pay much attention to the use value of a luxury, but attach more importance to the glory brought by the brand. Christian Dior and Chanel almost lead the consumption orientation of modern females (Xu & Ye, 2012). Because of the acoustic aesthetics brought by the good phonology, the translated brand names own an elegant feature with the rich cultural heritages. Therefore, consumers would be attracted by their unique qualities and acoustic aesthetics, produce a better association and form a desire to buy.

7.3 Produce a Sense of Distance

For most people, luxuries are "best viewed from a distance". Although the consumer group is limited, some people's desire to chase luxury articles has also been stimulated. In order to maintain the superiority of a luxury, the translated name of a luxury brand is necessary to create a sense of distance with ordinary brands. Founded in 1839, Patek Philippe has been endurable for its noble art style and expensive materials. Patek Philippe only announces a new handmade product each year, at the price of 30 million yuan. In order to get the watch, a people must be patient as well as having a strong economic strength, because the watch normally takes 8-10 years' craftsmanship to deliver to the customer's hands. The luxury degree of this watch can be seen in this way. The translated name of Bai Da Fei Li, although hard to pronounce, forms a sense of distance to the masses.

CONCLUSION

Foreign brand translation requires to meet the semantic and pragmatic equivalence in cultural collision. The translators need to have a better understanding of cultural differences, be innovative and measured in translation skills, and make the target language easy-to-understand and acceptable in order to achieve a good sale. For translation of different brands, due to their particular characteristics and functional differences, the principles and strategies to follow are also different, which requires the translators to have a good understanding of the characteristics of the products before make an ideal and impressive translation, and then form a consumption driving force.

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