On Localization and Standardization in Brand Name Translation

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Abstract

Based on the assumption that the "free translation – zero translation" continuum is the linguistic realization of "localization – standardization" continuum of marketing strategy adopted by multinational corporations in the process of globalization, the present research classifies the translation methods used by the 10 most popular American companies and their brands in China in 2012 and attempts to testify the hypothesis in a quantitative way.
Key words: Localization; Standardization; Globalization; Commercial translation

INTRODUCTION

A. Definitions of Terminology

There were no such concepts of localization and standardization in traditional Chinese translation studies. Thanks to the fast growth of GDP and international trade, the term of localization in translation has been discussed and researched from the perspective of economy, culture, and literature studies (Wang & Sun, 2007; Sun, 2008). "Globalization and localization contradict each other in the process of information communications, featuring different perspectives of observing the world. However, the two concepts co-exist and evolve at the same time" (Sun, 2008). Thus Sun (Ibid) combines the two concepts and introduces a new term - "glocalization", i.e., globalization plus localization.

We hold the view to be self-evident, that terms and concepts shall be accurate and clear, and they must abide by the principle of economy and be compatible with the existing theoretical frameworks. The concept of globalization (illustrated by Figure 1) covers the domains of commerce, technology, culture, and language.

Figure 1 demonstrates that globalization is displayed by localization and standardization in the field of commerce (Agres & Dubitsky, 1996; Domzal & Unger, 1987; Omelia, 1995; Stout, 1997; Weisz, 1994). It turns out to be localization and internationalization in technology (Localisation Resources Centre, 1997). In cultural level, globalization is manifested by domestication and foreignization (Venuti, 1995). Thus, on the linguistic level (realized by translation), there is a continuum ranging from free translation to zero translation, which constitute the commercial localization and standardization. While on social level, homogenization heterogenization take effect simultaneously (Sun, 2008).

B. Literature Review

Localization could be understood as the process of marketing which facilitates the acceptance of a commercial product or service in a certain country or area. In the past twenty years, localization developed rapidly and has become a major service in translation industry in the era of information technology (Cronin, 2003, p.13). Translation activities are crucially important for multi-national corporations. Topping (2000, p.11) also emphasizes the significance of translation for overseas marketing and sales. Standardization stresses the consistency of information and international brand image (Levitt, p.1983). de Chernatony，Halliburton and Bernath (1995) believe standardization and adaptation

shall be equally emphasized in making international marketing strategies. Caller (1990) and Wolfe (1991) discuss the continuum between full standardization and full localization in brand naming.
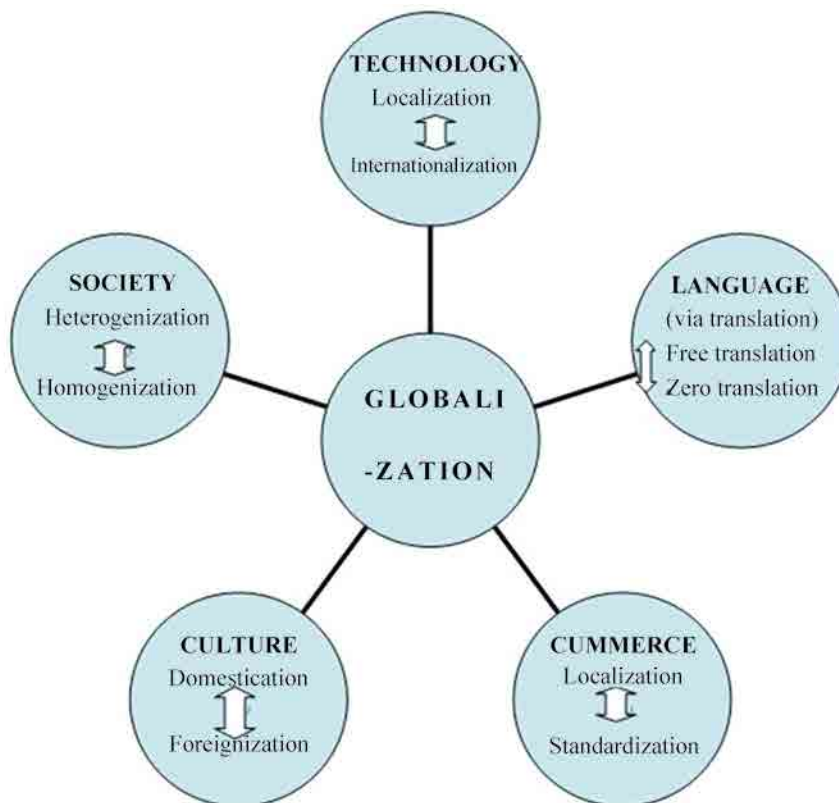

Figure 1
Domains of Globalization

C. The Current Study

Previous researches implicate that the commercial localization and standardization are generally realized by translation in the domain of language. The current study attempts to discuss the distribution of the continuum of full standardization and full localization in pragmatics based on language facts extracted from ten American companies and their brands.

1. TRAINING DATA COLLECTION

According to Sparks (Sun, 2008), the process of globalization means each individual localized society is replaced by standard Americanized society. To some extent, globalization could be equated with Americanization. McIntyre & Stockdale's (2012) study finds out the top ten most popular American companies in China. Thus the current analysis plans to extract data from the brand names of the ten companies (as illustrated in Table 1), which have huge influence and high degree of reorganization in Chinese market.

Table 1
Chinese Versions of Company Names

Rankings	Companies	Chinese versions	Industries
1	Yum!	百胜	fast food
2	General Motors	通用	automotive
3	Microsoft	微软	PC operating systems
4	Boeing	波音	commercial aircrafts
5	Nike	耐克	sportswear
6	Coca-Cola	可口可乐	soda
7	Procter & Gamble	宝洁	hair care
8	Intel	英特尔	semiconductor
9	Starbucks	星巴克	coffee
10	Apple	苹果	tablets

We find that altogether 64 brands of the 10 companies are sold in Chinese market by searching their official websites. It is crucially important to distinguish the concepts of brand and product. For example, Mexican Twister and Dragon Twister are two products sold by KFC China, but they can not be called brands because the brand name is KFC. In fact, Yum! Corporation owns the brands such as KFC, Pizza Hut, Dong fang ji bai, and Little Sheep. The latter two brands were originally built up by Chinese companies and later purchased by Yum! Therefore, they shall be excluded from the training data. In this way, we have 62 brand names for sample analysis.

2. STATISTICAL RESULTS

2.1 Chinese Names of the Ten Companies

There is a mapping relationship between the continuum of "free translation – literal translation – transliteration + semantic connotation – transliteration – zero translation" in the language domain and the continuum of "localization – standardization" in the commerce domain. The translation strategies of the company names are analyzed according to this criterion and the statistical results are demonstrated in Table 2.

Table 2
Translation Methods of Company Names

Translation Methods	Companies and Chinese Names		Numbers	Percentage of Total	Continuum
Free translation	Yum!	百胜	2	20%	Localization
	Procter & Gamble	宝洁			
	General Motor	通用汽车			
Literal translation	Microsoft	微软	3	30%	
	Apple	苹果			
Transliteration + semantic connotation	Coca-Cola	可口可乐	1	10%	
Literal translation + transliteration	Starbucks	星巴克	1	10%	
	Boeing	波音			
Transliteration	Nike	耐克	3	30%	
	Intel	英特尔			
Zero translation			0	0%	
					Standardization

The percentage data in Table 2 reveals that 50% of the ten companies prefer to localize its company names in Chinese market. None of them adopts zero translation in providing Chinese names. It could be concluded that the localization is a more regular strategy in translating company names.
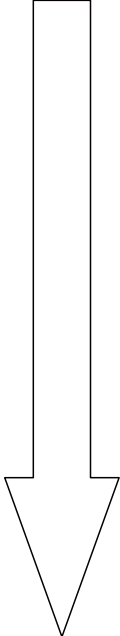
2.2 Brand Name Translation

We follow the same criterion (the continuum of "free translation – literal translation – transliteration + semantic connotation – transliteration – zero translation") and classify the 62 brands into 6 categories (see Table 3) and the statistical results are presented in Table 4.

Table 3
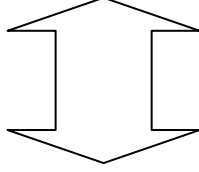**Translation Methods of Brand Names**

			Localization
	Pizza Hut	必胜客	
	Sprite	雪碧	
	Smart	醒目	
	Minute Maid	美之源	
	Oceana	海肌源	
	Rejoice	飘柔	
Free translation	Head & Shoulders	海飞丝	
	Vidal Sasson（VS）	沙宣	
	Safeguard	舒肤佳	
	Whisper	护舒宝	
	Naturella	朵朵	
	Oral-B	欧乐-B	
	Ariel	碧浪	
	Duracell	金霸王	
Literal translation	Ice Dew	冰露	
	Coca-Cola	可口可乐	
	Fanta	芬达	
	Nike	耐克	
	Converse	匡威	
	Umbro	茵宝	
	Opel	欧宝	
Transliteration + semantic connotation	Olay	玉兰油	
	Pantene	潘婷	
	Wella	威娜	
	Gillette	吉列	
	Pampers	帮宝适	
	Tide	汰渍	

Transliteration	Starbucks	星巴克
	intel core processor	智能英特尔酷睿处理器
	intel xeon processor	英特尔至强处理器
	intel atom processor	英特尔凌动处理器
	Glacéau Vitaminwater	酷乐仕维他获得醒元素
	Clairol Professional	伊卡璐丝焕专业美发
	BRAUN	德国博朗
	Boeing	波音
	Chevrolet	雪佛兰
	Buick	别克
	Cadillac	凯迪拉克
	KFC	肯德基
	SEBASTIAN	塞巴斯汀
	CLAIROL	伊卡璐
	Camay	卡玫尔
Literal translation + transliteration	iMac	
	MacBook	
	iPod	
	iPad	
	iPhone	
	IOS7	
	OS X Maverick	
	Intel Next Unit of Computing	
Zero translation	Nike Golf	
	Air Jordan	
	SK-II	
	Windows 8.1	
	Windows RT 8.1	
	Windows 7	
	Windows Vista	
	Windows XP	
	Microsoft Office	
	Surface	
	Windows Phone	
	NUC（Next Unit of Computing）	

Standardization

Table 4
Application of Translation Methods

Translation Methods	Numbers	Percentage of Total	Continuum
Free translation	14	23%	**Localization**
Literal translation	1	1.5%	
Transliteration + semantic connotation	12	19.7%	
Literal translation + transliteration	6	10%	
Transliteration	8	13%	
Zero translation	20	32.8%	
			Standardization

The statistical results in Table 4 demonstrate that 31.25% brand names adopt the method of zero translation, which is higher than the sum of free translation and literal translation (23%+1.5%=24.5%). Compared with other companies, technology companies (e.g. Microsoft, Apple, Intel) prefer to use zero translation method, which is illustrated in Table 5.

Table 5
Application of Zero Translation

Rankings	Companies	Numbers	Percentage of Total	Industry
3	Microsoft	9	45%	PC operating systems
10	Apple	7	35%	tablets
5	Nike	2	10%	sportswear
8	Intel	1	5%	semiconductor
7	Procter & Gamble	1	5%	hair care

On the other side of the continuum, three companies (P&G, Coca-Cola, Yum!) apply free translation and literal translation in translating their brand names.

Table 6
Application of Free and Literal Translation

Rankings	Companies	Numbers	Percentage of Total	Industry
7	Procter & Gamble	10	66.7%	hair care
6	Coca-Cola	4	26.7%	soda
1	Yum!	1	6.6%	fast food

3. DISCUSSION

Two key factors influencing the process of brand name standardization and localization are discussed by de Chernatony (1993), i.e., the essential concept of a brand name, as well as the use of a brand name. The empirical data of the current study demonstrates that multi-national corporations often take the factors of industry orientation and targeted consumers into consideration while selecting localization or standardization translation strategies.

Table 5 shows that all tech companies such as Microsoft, Apple and Intel apply the strategy of standardization in order to maintain the information consistency, highlighting their brands' core orientations, whose targeted consumers usually possess technology and English knowledge. Code mixing of English and Chinese (e.g. "只要从Apple Store零售店购买Mac，仅需￥498即可享受为期一年的One to One服务。") is a common phenomenon in Apple China's advertisements. The brands of Nike Golf and Air Jordan also don't have Chinese names, which are also determined by their targeted consumers and orientations. The standardization of Nike could also be proven in its marketing. For example, Nike's advertising slogan "Just do it" is directly used in Chinese market without translation.

On the other hand, in Table 6, three companies (P&G, Coca-Cola, Yum!) offer products of hair care, soda and fast food, whose mass consumers require that their products and services must have the nature of "simplicity" and "memorability" (Francis, Lam, & Walls, 2002). 15 brand names in Table 6 adopt free and literal translation strategies. What's more, their Chinese versions are quite brief thanks to the double-syllabic (7 brands) and triple-syllabic (8 brands) are quite popular in pragmatics. Customers could easily memorize the brand names and the brand localization is successfully realized in this way.

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CONCLUSION

The empirical evidence in the current study has revealed that huge multi-national corporations often apply the strategy continuum of "standardization and localization" in the process of overseas marketing and expansion. In translation activities, the corresponding strategy is the continuum of "free translation – literal translation – transliteration + semantic connotation – transliteration – zero translation". Industry orientation and targeted consumers are the crucial factors in making the proper translation strategy. We assume that future study could gather more data with the aid of sociolinguistics tools such as interview and questionnaire survey.

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