

English-Chinese Translation Strategies for Advertisement Slogans

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Abstract

In China, the advertising business is now playing an immeasurable role in promoting sales of commodities and prospering economy. An advertisement slogan is a form of logo that sums up specialty, benefit, and marketing position. Not only is it necessary but also urgent to study the advertisement slogan and the English-Chinese advertisement translation. In this regard, the present study aims to examine the strategies of the English-Chinese advertisement translation. First, background and importance of the present study are introduced. Second, the advertisement slogan including its concepts and features are explained. Third, principles and strategies of the English-Chinese advertisement slogan translation are presented. Finally, the strategies of the English-Chinese advertisement translation are suggested.

Key words: Advertisement slogan; Translation strategies

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INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

In modern society, with the development of technology and diversity of the mass media, advertisement has pervasively influenced on daily life. Every day, people are exposed to a large number of advertisements whether they like them or not. Advertisement slogan, as an important

and attractive part of an advertisement, has aroused more attention of the advertisers. There are a lot of questions to be researched such as definition and features of the advertisement slogan. Some points need to be considered in English-Chinese advertisement translation namely, principles and strategies of the English-Chinese advertisement slogan translation. Importance of the present study lies in the following aspects. The advertisement slogans are important in transmitting messages concerning products, services or ideas to the target audience. The advertisement slogan language is simple, blunt, and different from characteristics of other parts of the advertisement. The importance is attached to the analysis of the advertisement slogans' features. In addition, foreign products increasingly pour into China's markets, and compete with the homemade products, whereas the Chinese products increasingly flow abroad. Under such international economic situation, an examination of translation features of the advertisement slogans is of great importance for effective advertisement. Besides, the present study makes advertisers more conscious of the ways on how they use language when drafting the advertisement slogans. It also shows the way people feel about adverts and clarifies them through spelling out the exact objectives of the adverts.

1. FEATURES OF ADVERTISEMENT SLOGAN

1.1 Concept of Advertisement Slogan

The first step is to know the definition of advertisement before understanding the advertisement slogan. In English, the word "advertise" has its origin in "advertere" in Latin, meaning "to inform somebody of something", "to bring into notice" or "to draw attention to something". This definition was given a long time before the advent of radio and television. In the past, the nature and scope

of advertisement were considerably different from those in the modern times. The definition indicates that the ultimate objective of the advertisement is to sell the products.

An advertisement slogan is a short phrase used to help form an image and identity. Similarly, Hatim (2001) notes that slogan is a short and laconic phrase that a company uses over and over in its advertisement. It is especially useful to reinforce the product identity. The slogan can be proved to be more powerful than a logo. People can remember and recite the advertisement slogan, whereas they are unlikely to doodle over the logo. That is to say, the purpose of the advertisement slogan or tagline is to leave the key brand message in the mind of the target. The advertisement slogans are often treated as trademarks in many countries. Using symbol is merely an assertion of advertisers that they treat the line as a trademark although it does not assure any legal right. For legal protection, the line must be registered by the appropriate government trademark office, which confers the right to use the registered symbol, and then they get full protection of law against poaching.

1.2 Features of Advertisement Slogan

The present study analyzes the features of the advertisement slogan from four aspects including lexical, sentence structure, social and psychological, and rhetorical.

1.2.1 Lexical Features as Coinage for Novelty

New words and phrases coined by imitation or free compounding are invariably encountered in the advertisement slogans. New original words are created to attract addressee's attention and to meet their needs for curiosity and novelty. The newly-made words and phrases suggest that the product or the service being advertised possesses peculiar qualities as well as the value of novelty. Many words in the advertisement slogans especially in trade names are newly coined words, or deliberately misspelled and abbreviated for novelty.

Coined words are new and memorable. They are kind of smart words that have a special meaning in the specified context. The coined words raise interests in the advertisement slogan receivers, make them ponder upon the meaning, and marvel at the smart idea of the admen; by so doing, they recognize the brand.

Coinage of this kind is nowhere to be found in dictionary but they seem familiar to audiences in appearance. One can guess their meanings through context without dictionary. When customers come across the newly coined words, their interest is stimulated, and they want to go on reading and taking action; the aim of the advertisement slogan is reached. However, the coinage must be well based on after-taste and implication, and stress the novelty and uniqueness of the products, without which the coinage can produce little effect and may be meaningless. For example, eggsactly is how to

sell eggs. In this advertisement, "eggsactly" is the coinage of "exactly". In form, they echo each other with "eggs"; this is a typical coinage. It has a deep impression on the consumers.

1.2.2 Features of Sentence Structure

As a particular branch of language, the language of the advertisement slogans is concise and attractive. The advertisement slogan is one sentence that distinguishes the advertisements from texts. It usually has its own features in sentence structure such as frequent use of simple and elliptical sentences as well as frequent use of imperative and comparative sentences, etc.

Nida (2004) holds that the advertiser prefers to use short and simple sentences than complex sentences. Slogans are usually short sentences that may or may not be accompanied by a longer informative text. They also consist of subject, predicate, and object that may be accompanied by an explanatory supplement. Besides, the slogan is normally expanded or clarified in the advertisement text body where simple and elliptical sentences or their fragments are used.

Moreover, the elliptical sentences are the most common features found in the language of the advertisement slogans. They can be sub-grouped into the simple elliptical sentences and the compound elliptical sentences. The most often omitted part of sentence is verb but other parts of sentence such as subject and object can also be left out. The simple elliptical sentences are widely used in the newspaper advertisement slogans. One of the functions of the advertisement slogans is that of persuasion, i.e., to persuade consumers to take immediate action. Imperative sentences have a meaning of claiming, calling, and commanding. Similarly, the goal of the advertisement is to persuade and urge consumers to accept its product or service and take action. The imperative sentences are most widely used in the advertisement slogans because they perform the function of direct persuasion and exhortation. According to Nida (2004), there is at least one imperative sentence in every four sentences in the advertisement texts. Although there are just a few words in the advertisement slogan, the advertisers use every opportunity to urge the potential customers to act, buy, and consume. The slogan is their last battlefield to get people moved. Fanta's "Share the fun" is a solid example.

In a competitive society, how to get high sale is really an art. A comparison of the products in the advertisement slogan shows the advantages of the advertised product over others of the same kind. The copywriter is inclined to use the comparative sentence in the advertisement slogans; the comparative sentences abound in the advertisement. They are used to express that some products are better than they used to be, or that they are better than competing products or those consumers are better off if they use some products than if they do not. The comparatives

are also used in the advertisement slogans to say that consumers can get more of something for their money than they used to be able to, or to get more of something than before for less money than they used to have to pay (Newmark, 2001).

1.2.3 Social and Psychological Features

More attention is put to collectivism, whereas the western society puts more attention to individualism. Such a cultural difference usually leads to the difference in the oriental and the western advertisements. For example, as Chinese have a tendency of following suit, the Chinese consumers always believe that the more people buy a product, the better quality it has. When they choose commodities, they usually buy what is favored by most people. Such kind of psychology is taken advantage by the Chinese advertisers. Based on this appealing point, the Chinese advertisements tend to focus on group behavior. To be exact, they try to persuade consumers into purchasing the advertised product with the masses. There are many examples in daily life that stress the group behavior such as “I like I choose” and “love by common people”. However, it is just contrary to the western advertisements. Because of the individual orientation in the western culture, what prevail in their advertisement are such words as independence, uniqueness, and privacy. The example includes “where elegance is a tradition”. In this advertisement slogan, “where” refers to the hotel. It reflects the uniqueness and stresses the privacy and the independence.

1.2.4 Rhetorical Features

Rhetoricians maintain that any proposition can be expressed in a variety of ways (Newmark, 2001). The promise of rhetoric is that there exists a system for identifying the most effective form of expression in any given case. According to the efficiency of expression, a rhetorical approach to the advertisement slogan language lies on some premises such as the variations in the style. Therefore, the term expectation is chosen to overcome the difficulties associated with defining figures as abnormalities.

2.3 Aspects to Consider in English-Chinese Advertising Slogan Translation

1.3.1 Different Outlooks of Value

Values are the defining expressions of culture. They are expressed in words, and deed what is important to a culture. For example, some cultures value individual freedom, whereas others value duty to the society at large. In this regard, values usually have the following characteristics: Values are comparatively few in number; they are enduring or difficult to change; values are not tied to specific objects or situations; they are widely accepted by the members of a society.

Values are cultural bedrock and enduring; they cannot be changed quickly or easily. Values are very different

from attitudes; they cannot be changed by a single advertisement campaign, or even a single advertisement. Think of cultural values as very strong and rigid foundation on which mutable attitudes rest. In addition, attitudes are influenced by values as well as by many other sources. It is obvious that the advertisement slogan has to be consistent but cannot be changed easily or quickly. What advertisers and translators need to do is to make the advertisements consistent with the values of people. If they are not, they are likely rejected.

1.3.2 Different Psychological Structures

The advertisement slogan is defined as “the set of association and behaviors on the part of a product’s customers, channel members, and Parent Corporation that permits the brand to earn greater volume or greater margins than it could be the brand name and that gives the brand a strong, sustainable, and differential advantage over competitors.” This concept refers to the basic idea that how to enhance the product’s value for consumers, trade, and firm when it is associated or identified over time with a brand name. The advertisement slogan can be viewed and analyzed from the perspective of the consumers, the distributors, and the firm owning the brand or the financial markets. However, ultimately, the source for any brand value is the final user: The more positively he or she perceives the product, the higher the consumer’s product awareness and loyalty allowing the firm to command larger margins, higher market share, and other competitive advantages. That is to say, the high advertisement slogan implies that the consumers have a lot of positive associations with the product name over and above those of the product itself.

Difference in psychology to certain product attributes and variation in motives for buying can be explained by the underlying cultural values that vary through the product category. For example, a generic motive is purity for mineral water; it is social status for soft drinks and alcoholic beverages. For cars, motives vary between safety, social status, design, and being environmentally friendly; all are based on different cultural values. When the consumers are loyal to a product category, they may associate certain decision with market drinks under the same brand name.

1.3.3 Different Social Environment

Different social environment includes geographical environment, cultural customs, and habits. The difference of the geographical environment affects thinking style so as to have some effects on the translation of the English-Chinese advertisement. In addition, people’s behaviors are determined not only by their needs and motivations but also by their surroundings and the contexts in which they make decisions. People in different cultures can do the same thing for different reasons or motives, and people in different countries may do different things for the same reason. Many global standard products or product features

assumed to be culture-free are bought for different reasons across different cultures.

1.3.4 Different Aesthetic Standards

Rhetorical device is an effective technique to express exactly, vividly, and impressively. The advertisements rely on this to bring out its ideas of products, to transmit information, and to promote sales. However, the target buyers do not always accept all the advertisements; they hold a passive and picky attitude to them. Under this circumstance, using appropriate words can make the advertisement more accurate and convincing. In this regard, creating desire becomes very necessary to achieve this purpose. The advertisement makers have to adopt some rhetorical devices. The rhetorical devices can make the advertisement language more vivid, elegant, attractive, and persuasive. Simile, metaphor, personification, repetition, pun, rhyme, parody, contrast, hyperbole, and rhetorical questions are frequently used in the advertisement. Because of different aesthetic standards, different English-Chinese advertisement translations are impossible.

2. PRINCIPLES AND STRATEGIES OF ENGLISH-CHINESE ADVERTISEMENT SLOGAN TRANSLATION

The establishment of communication between people belonging to different speech communities has long been an important form of linguistic performance. In fact, translation is a kind of attempt to overcome barriers in international communication. Nowadays, it comes as no surprise that translation increasingly becomes important as a medium of the international communication. This development is favored by the circumstance that in spite of all its creative productivity, the era seems to be essentially one of reproducing, inventorying, processing, and conveying information.

Still, there is no theory of translation in the technical sense of a coherent set of general principles in understanding the nature of translation (Nida, 2001). However, these principles are stated in terms of how to produce an acceptable translation. In fact, translation is essentially a very complex phenomenon concerning a number of different disciplines such as linguistics, psychology, sociology, aesthetics, semiotics, etc.

The principles of the English-Chinese advertisement translation include the following aspects: Faithfulness, attractiveness, and acceptability. Faithfulness: Yanfu proposes the famous triple principle of translation namely, faithfulness, expressiveness, and elegance. In aspect of faithfulness, he believes that translation keeps the same meaning or idea of the original text, and does not distort or go against the original one. One of the main functions of the advertisement is to provide product information

including brand name, price, size, performance, and characteristics. Therefore, it becomes extremely important for consumers to be able to understand all the information. When there is a divergence between the advertised product and its counterparts, how to transform its unique features into the selling point becomes a vital issue. In particular, those advertisements containing a large amount of information require clear and relative explanation. From a dialectical perspective, the international advertisement can be viewed as an entity composing form and content. The first translation principle, faithfulness, is just proposed from the advertisement content point. That is to say, the translated copy provides as much necessary information as possible. The product information in the original copy is transmitted into the target copy completely and thoroughly. A translator cannot delete or omit any messages at his will but is based on the information in the original copy. Of course, it does not mean that the translator can add any information freely. If the original copy contains no such message, the translated one is just the same with it. In short, faithfulness is the life of a translation.

Attractiveness: This principle of the English advertisement translation is suggested from the point of the advertisement form. According to the theory, difference lies in all levels of the two cultures such as morphology, syntax, grammar, rhetoric means, and ways of thinking (Newmark, 2001). A translator has to painstakingly try to put more emphasis on the spiritual likeness than on the formal likeness in order to convey the original idea in the target language (Nida, 1993). It is worth noting that few advertisements actually get real. Consumers often scan stories and advertisements in the newspaper but with limited concentration. Less than half of all the advertisements are paid attention to what is noticed on a "thinking" level. Therefore, one of the biggest challenges for the advertisers is to get consumers to notice their messages. Besides, the advertisement has to break through a cluttered environment and catches consumers' attention in a positive way in order to have impact. In fact, how to make the advertisements appear enchanting is not only the advertisers' task but also the task of the translators. If the original copy of the international advertisement is quite eye-catching but the translated copy is not, the translation is judged as a failure.

Acceptability: The principle of acceptability is proposed from cross-culture communication point. It usually refers to the principle of similar or equivalent response or effect and the principle of dynamic equivalence (Nida, 1993). It generally becomes super-ordinate both in translation theory and practice. According to Nida (1993), language is above all a multi-functional tool of communication. Linguistic utterances have to be receptor-oriented in order to be communicatively efficient. This principle is imperative not only for intra-lingual but

also for inter-lingual communication. Scholars generally agree that when it comes to communication, there are few truths applicable to all human beings. However, one of the few truths is that the interpretation of any message depends on the perception of the person receives it. The wider the gap in backgrounds and experience between communicators, the greater the chance will be. The receiver's interpretation differs from the sender's intention. These cultural values influence on consumer behavior. To be more specific, people buy such products to move important cultural meanings into themselves and to communicate these meanings with others.

Based on the above-mentioned principles, the following strategies, literal translation, condensation approach, imitating the common structure, using rhetorical language, and paying more attention to target culture are discussed.

2.1 Literal Translation

Based on functionalist approaches, the choice of translation strategies rests with the intended function of the target text. However, this theory does not exclude the possibility of faithfulness that is also a reasonable expectation in many cases. This manifests that literal translation, as long as it can effectively realize the advertiser's purpose, may be accepted as a feasible strategy as well.

The literal translation is mainly used to deal with some advertisements with simple sentence structures and understandable semantic meanings. That is to say, if the text is translated literally, the target text can convey both the "superficial" meaning and the essence message of the source text. Actually, there is no lack of such successful authentic examples around. Following indicates some of the examples of effective (almost literal) translation. Nike, just do it. It can be translated as 'naike, xiangzuojiuzuo'. The source text "just do it" is expressed in a simple sentence to pass on information that people who wear Nike sportswear can do anything they like. When it is translated into Chinese, the slogan becomes "xiangzuojiuzuo"; it equally delivers the information that the original text intends to convey. Besides, the source text is an imperative sentence and the target text preserves this feature as well. Therefore, both the source text and the target text make a hit in stimulating customers' purchasing desire.

2.2 Condensation Approach

Four-character Chinese idiomatic phrases are considered as part of culture. This special habit of expression is valued, and it follows that if such four-character phraseologies are used, more competent is felt in the advertisement translation. There are two reasons accounting for this. First, four-character Chinese phrases have their distinctive advantages over others including succinct in language, impact in form, rich in meaning, and melodious in reading. Second, proper four-character

Chinese phrases in proper places are as much for the faithful representation of the source language meaning as for the lure of readers' interest. The condensation of advertising ideas into the four-character Chinese phrases adds luster to the target language. This makes it more expressive without inflicting any harm on the meaning. In the advertisement translation, it is often workable in slogan.

2.3 Imitating the Common Structure

Imitation means selecting or copying some idioms or fixed expressions familiar to the target readers to transmit the message of the source text. The specificity of commercial advertisements determines that the translator exhausts every possible means to fulfill the intended function of the target text at its best. Therefore, imitation finds its basis.

2.4 Using Rhetorical Language

It provokes no opposition that translation at its best should be as much for the stylistic or rhetorical features of the original as for the form and content. Although translation mainly translates meaning, it is only a minimal translation. If the stylistic or rhetoric flavor of the original is retained, the translation can be identified as a maximal translation. In the translation of the advertisements, the translated version may also stand out the rhetoric features used in the original. Different from other stylistics, the advertisements are often characteristically filled with figures of speech designed to draw attention.

For example, Kodak is Olympic color. It can be translated as 'ked ajiushiaolin pi ke se cai'. In this example, it makes full use of rhetorical language, i.e. metaphor.

2.5 Paying Attention to Target Culture

The translators make the translation adapt to cultural and language habits of the target text in order to meet the needs of potential consumers and enhance product selling. In the advertisement translation process, the translator sometimes completely uses his/her creativity to make the translation more like the target text suiting the taste of the target text readers. The English advertisement focuses on factual information about the function of the additive and why it functions. Take 'Connecting people', as an example; it can be translated as "yirenwei ben". Idioms and proverbs are familiar to most potential customers in a society where there is no difficulty to be popularized. The creative use of the idioms and the proverbs give them new meaning making them memorable and attractive. This is not simply and straightly translated into "lian xi ren lei" but creatively translated into a four letter idiom "yirenwei ben"; it matches our culture.

CONCLUSION

At present, advertisement as an industry is playing an increasingly important role in social development. Not

only is it supposed to be appealing but also it is used as a tool for manufacturers so as to improve their products' marketability. Creating the advertisement slogans is the outer embodiment of the advertisement of a company's cultural spirit. When creating the advertisement slogans, it is necessary to establish a new image of the company and to incite customers' expectation through crediting customers with effective expression, cultural difference, and useful strategies. They have to make a lot of promotions for their products in foreign markets in order to survive in the fierce global market. In this situation, the advertisement translation increasingly shows its importance. The present study dealt with the strategies of the English-Chinese advertisement translation. It also introduced the concept and features of the advertisement slogan and analyzed the principles as well as some points to be thought in the English-Chinese advertisement translation. Finally, the strategies were put forward.

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