

Application Study on Trademark Translation Based on Functional Equivalence

Xiangwen Sun^{a*}, Ying Tan^b and Chang Gao^c

School of Foreign Languages, Northeast Electric Power University, Jilin, China

^a sunxiangwen@neepu.edu.cn, ^b 1048217048@qq.com, ^c 102623445@qq.com

*corresponding author

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Abstract: Good trademarks require different translation theories to be applied according to different trademarks. This essay puts Nida's theory into the practice of trademark translation, which can optimize the function of trademarks from the source language that plays an important role in advertising so as to fulfill the final goal. Under the guidance of Functional Equivalence, this essay introduces four translation approaches and four translation principles. It is believed that this essay could help to improve the target text accuracy of trademark and to enhance the internationalization of trademark.

1. Introduction

As we all know, every individual has a specific mark, and a product also has. A smart trademark can make people arouse the interest in it. The translation accuracy of a trademark is the very theme to be examined in this essay. Due to China's open-door policy and the economic globalization in recent years, many Chinese commodities have been exported into the global market, and a large amount of commodities produced in other countries have been imported into Chinese market. Therefore, the businesses should think it over whether their products are popular with potential customers in foreign markets. Accordingly, it is apparent that excellent trademarks and good translations conduct an advertising effect and facilitate promoting the sales. Under such circumstances, this essay does its level best to help translators acquaint with trademarks, comprehend the theoretical basis, and offer suitable translating methods of trademark translation. Of course, the final aim is to facilitate to enhance the accuracy of trademark translation and to promote the globalization of trademark.

2. A Survey of Trademark

2.1. Introduction of Trademark

Based on the essays concerning trademark, it is generally believed that blacksmiths making swords in the Roman Empire is the first people who used trademarks. There has been a famous trademark, such as Löwenbräu, which has been using its lion mark since 1383. Registered trademarks refer to the trademarks registering with the government. There are some noted registered trademarks in some countries.

United Kingdom: In 1876, The Bass Brewery's Red Triangle for ale was the first trademark to be registered under the Trademark Registration Act 1875.

United States: In 1884, *Samson* is the first trademark which was registered in US, and has been using till today. In 1923, the fictitious character *Tarzan* was registered as a trademark by Edgar Rice Burroughs. In 1980, the number of registered high-tech trademarks was no more than ten thousand in the United States, but the figure surpassed 0.3 million in 2011^[1].

Trademarks of China have a long history of thousands of years. In the ancient poem of "*How to solve the worry? Only Du Kang*", written by Cao Cao, "*Du Kang*", a name of the liqueur maker in Eastern Zhou Dynasty, was in fact the first trademark in China^[2].

Along with the manufactory expansion and economic development, more and more trademarks

came into being. After the Industrial Revolution the capitalist economy developed prosperously, and in the meantime, trademarks gradually altered their features and purposes. In the past, a trademark was merely a name or symbol to distinguish a product from another; nowadays it turns into an important and indispensable tool to make wide advertisement, compete for sales and expand markets.

2.2. Classification of Trademarks

According to etymon, meaning and form, trademarks can be classified into three kinds.

According to etymon, brand names are categorized into three kinds: proper names, common words, and coined words. Proper names are words from person's names, geographical names, names of mythology figures or names of significance. It is believed that the adoption of the proper names could increase the confidence of the products such as "Ford" (car), "Nike" (sportswear), "Li Ning" (sportswear), etc. Compared with proper names, common words can imply more information concerning the products, and can give the purchasers more association. Nouns, adjectives, and even verbs can all be chosen as a trademark such as "Safeguard" (soap), "Nissan" (car), "Lenovo" (computer), etc. It is a common method that word-building rules and anagrammatic spelling are used to formulate coined-word trademarks. Since they are coined, there is less possibility to have two appear in the market such as "Pepsi" (soft drink), "IBM" (computer), "BMW" (car), etc.

According to meaning, trademarks can also be classified into three kinds: trademarks revealing products' information directly, indirectly and absently.

Trademarks which directly reveal products' information cover a large percentage, for consumers could tell products' usage, characteristics, capability from their trademarks, such as "Duracell" (cell), "Timex" (watch), etc. in English, "Mengniu" (milk), "Shimu" (furniture) in Chinese^[3].

Trademarks indirectly revealing products' information always exhibit products in a more implicative way so that consumers could associate trademarks with products, such as "Rejoice" (shampoo), "Pleasure" (perfume), "Safeguard" (toilet soap) in English,

Other trademarks reveal no products' information, i.e. trademarks with no interrelationships with products, such as, Kodak (film), Exxon (petroleum), MAXAM (cosmetics), etc, and some even become world-famous trademarks.

As for the form, trademarks can be classified into trademarks composed of symbols, letters and words, such as "999", "502" (symbols), "XO" (letters), etc^[3].

2.3. Characteristics of Trademarks

A trademark is a recognizable sign, design or expression which identifies products or services of a particular source from those of other companies. "A trademark, either in Chinese or in English, should possess sense of beauty in form, pronunciation, and meaning, which means brevity, sonority, originality and novelty. This is the major principle to design, select, evaluate and even translate a trademark."^[4]

Brevity is the basic requirement of a brand name. By doing this, customers' attention can be easily caught. Firstly, trademarks should be concise in spellings and pronunciation, which makes themselves eye-catching and easy to be remembered such as "Lux" (shampoo), "CHUNGHWA" (cigarette), etc. Secondly, odd and complex words should be avoided in a trademark. "Coca Cola" was once translated into "Kela" and "Kedao Juela" in Chinese phonetic alphabet, which both leave us an obnoxious, even nauseating feeling.

Sonority refers to the distinct syllables of trademarks. Trademarks should be easy to read and to hear for customers. Pleasing poetic syllable patterns may add to the memorability of a trademark. A roller coaster named "Super Duper Looper" may sound a little silly, but it leaves us a deep impression. Other trademarks like "Coca-Cola", "Kit-Kat", "Adidas", and "Clean & Clear" are all good examples^[3].

An outstanding brand name should be novel and unconventional in pronunciation, wording and meaning. For example, "Up2U" (cosmetics) is articulated the same as "up to you". This trademark combines the novel elements of network language by using abbreviation and numbers phonogramically.

2.4. Functions of Trademarks

Trademark generally influences greatly on the trade, for it can connect the manufactures and consumers closely. An appropriate trademark can normally indicate large information about the products, draw the potential customers' attention, and foster the sales, among which the most crucial function is to facilitate consumers to buy the target product.

Informative function is most essential, which requires the trademark to be informative sufficiently. Appropriate trademarks generally offer some essential information about the products to the potential customers, such as their ingredients, functions, values, and whom they are suitable for. For example, "Jinshangzi" in Chinese phonetic alphabet means a voice of gold and sings beautifully in Chinese successfully, which indicates that the main function of this medicine is to solve the problems of throats. "Zhuanshi" in Chinese phonetic alphabet (a trademark of watch) indicates that the watch of this kind of trademark is as precious and brilliant as a diamond. Both "Haohaize" in Chinese phonetic alphabet (underwear for kids) and "Baobao" in Chinese phonetic alphabet (carriage for babies) transmit the information to target consumers that these products are mainly suitable for children^[4].

Aesthetic function refers that the trademarks can provide the customers with a sense of beauty, and some kind of aesthetic feelings. The form beauty is general made up of the beauty in the aspects of phonetics and graphics. The content beauty is normally related with the beauty in the aspects of semantics and images. The aesthetic effects brought by the appropriate trademarks can have people remember them easily, which can achieve the goal of promoting the target products.

Expressive function refers that the trademarks can communicate some basic information about the commodity, such as its basic functions, characteristics, applications and so on. For instance, "Benz" (trademark of automobile) was translated as "Benci", "Pingci" in Chinese phonetic alphabet at one time, but the most successful translation text in Chinese is "Benchi" in Chinese phonetic alphabet, which not only has the similar sounds to the trademark "Benz" in the source language, but also remind the target customers that it is a trademark for automobile^[3].

Imperative function, which is also named as vocative function, refers that an appropriate trademark can provide the consumers with the applicable values of some commodities, draw their attention, and urge them to buy the commodities. For instance, "Jipin" in Chinese phonetic alphabet (trademark for computer) refers that the quality of the product is superior and perfect, which can create more persuasive effects as it can convey the value of the computer to the target consumers.

3. Contents of Functional Equivalence

In 1969, E. A. Nida, an American translation theorist, put up the widely accepted translation theory of Functional Equivalence Theory. Some translation theories chiefly emphasize the agreement between the original language and object language, whereas Nida stresses on audience's response in his Functional Equivalence theory. According to Nida, the target texts do not only achieve the equality with the original words' meanings, but also are in agreement in semantics, and style in the aspects of the surface lexical meanings and implied cultural meanings^[5].

Nida has started to utilize Functional Equivalence instead of Dynamic Equivalent in his work of *From One Language to Another*. The definition of translation is that the receptor of translation should understand the text of translation, so much so that they call it understanding the original receptor how must the original text be understood.

In the 1990s, Functional Equivalence was further refined and divided into different degrees of sufficiency based on cognitive and empirical elements, from the smallest to the largest effectiveness in his culture and translation^[6].

3.1. Application of Functional Equivalence in Trademark Translation

Nida held that translation involves the production of the natural equivalence closest to the source language information in the recipient language, first in the sense and second in the style^[5]. Thus,

this paper attempts to explain the utilization of Functional Equivalence in trademark translation in terms of meaning and style. Since language is a part of culture, translation from one language to another could not be done ideally without adequate knowledge of cultures of two languages involved, so we'd like to consider the Functional Equivalence of the receptor culture and style.

3.1.1. Cultural Factor

Culture refers to the totality of traditions that are born in a society and passed down from generation to generation. Therefore, it refers to the norms, values and standards of human behaviour. It includes the unique ways in each society that make the world order and make it understandable. In the aspect of the lexicological point of view, associative meaning is a secondary meaning that complements conceptual meaning. Translation not only refers to literal translation, but also to convey the same cultural associations^[3]. Most consumers buy with their emotions rather than their minds, and the associative meaning of brand names is closely related to a person's values and beliefs. For example, "Heimei" in Chinese phonetic alphabet (Chinese trademark for toothpaste), which literally has the meaning of "black sister", is easily accepted by Chinese, but the English equivalence may insult coloured audience.

3.1.2. Stylistic Factor

Style is a latent factor hidden in words and can be only experienced by readers' common sense. If the source text belongs to "the spring snow", so is the target text'. To make it, one should acquire a deep understanding of the original text, and what is more important, try to make progress in translation. For example, "Marlboro", was first designed for the female. At that time, its market share covers less than 0.25 percent. Therefore, "Marlboro" was compelled to retreat from the cigarette market. In 1954, it is transformed to male cigarette, with a masculine cow boy image. "Welcome to Marlboro Country" is starting to look like a popular slogan. There are more examples followed, such as "Laorentou" in Chinese phonetic alphabet (men's shoes), "Jiaoshuang" in Chinese phonetic alphabet (women's sanitary napkins), etc.

4. Trademark Translation

4.1. Approaches to Trademark Translation

To some degree, translation is to transform the original texts into the object texts. According to Nida's Functional Equivalence, the four chief approaches of trademark translation mentioned below are widely applied.

Transliteration takes the sound of the original texts as its base, that is, some object words or languages that sound identical or familiar to the original texts are selected for translation. Sometimes, some English trademarks apply Chinese Pinyin directly. Most of these trademarks are coinage and proper names, and they have no specific meaning in the object texts, such as Mao Tai in Chinese phonetic alphabet (alcohol), WAHAHA in Chinese phonetic alphabet (drink), Haier (electric) in Chinese-English translation; Ford--"Fute" in Chinese phonetic alphabet (automobile), Nike--"Naike" in Chinese phonetic alphabet (sports wearing) in English-Chinese translation^[3].

In the process of Chinese-English transliteration, interpreters apply those consonant or euphony words or phrases to make the target texts clear and rhythmical. In the process of English-Chinese translation, short words (phrases) with definite senses are adopted, such as "Jin", "Long", "Mei", "Jia", "Fu", "Kang", "Li" in Chinese phonetic alphabet to satisfy the Chinese consumers' psychological inclination.

Transliteration can main trademarks' sounds in source language, integrating the sounds and senses, duplicating the trademarks text's vocative function. For instance, "Rongshida" in Chinese phonetic alphabet (electrical equipment) was transformed into "Rongshida" directly, while the original implication "the glorious and prosperous career" would be lost. In contrast, another target text "Royalstar" not only maintains the basic sounds but arouses consumers the implication, which is reliable and excellent. This translated text can leave the consumers deep impression and is

beneficial for advertising the target products.

Literal translation is a translation method that is widely applied in trademark translation ^[7]. An obvious characteristic of this method is faithful to the literal sense of trademark in the original language. This approach is usually utilized for some fancy trademarks with tangible and hidden meanings. For instance, the car trademark "Bluebird" is often transformed directly as "Lanniao" in Chinese phonetic alphabet, which originates from comes a fairy tale by Maurice Maeterlinckz in Belgium and was named "Bluebird", signifying "future happiness". Later, it was utilized as a trademark for cars, which can disclose some characteristics, information, quality and culture of the commodity. Therefore, consumers can obtain agreement in form and implication, and realize the information function equivalence of these trademarks in original and object markets. Paraphrase translation is also known as liberal translation, which is a technique for translating trademarks to achieve functional equivalence between the original and object texts by recapitulation of the meaning in the object text. For instance, the English text of "Haixin" in Chinese phonetic alphabet is "hisense" ^[8], which not only maintains the Chinese language characteristics of simplicity and sound, but also produces a highly meaningful image of the commodity among English speakers. Chinese homonyms and Chinese Pinyin are usually applied to translate English trademarks. Some Chinese trademarks can apply similar-sounding English words meaning elegant direct translation, such as "Quanshun" in Chinese phonetic alphabet (automobile)--Transit, "Yazhi" in Chinese phonetic alphabet (clothing)--Elegance, etc. These target texts can successfully actualize the equivalent speech function of the source trademark.

According to the specialty of English, it is easy to create many new words by adding prefix or suffix, acronym and purposive misspelling to create many new words. Although the shape of the new word is different from the original word, the meaning still exists. New words are not only lively and interesting, but also effective in spreading product information.

4.2. Principles of Trademark Translation

The translation of trademarks should follow some principles. Due to the different religious, economic and cultural backgrounds between the western countries and the eastern counties, the thought patterns and values of people in different countries are quite different. The translation of trademarks from original language to object language should follow a set of appropriate principles.

4.2.1. Respect for the Target Consciousness

The national psychology can be affected by its culture, so interpreters must have an overall understanding of the object culture and respect it. For instance, in Chinese culture, petrel is a symbol of bravery, but in the Western world, it is not popular, because in their minds, petrel is a person whose presence inspires discontent and quarrels among social groups, which shows that the quality of trademark translation is closely related to the sales of commodities.

4.2.2. Revealing Idiosyncratic Culture of Source Language

In Chinese trademarks, some widely used words can indicate idiosyncratic culture. Chinese people respect dragon, phoenix, and turtle, so some objects are named with some specific words. For example, "Xiongmiao", "Haiyan", "Kongque", "Honghshuangxi", "Hongdou", "Changcheng", "Jinliufu" in Chinese phonetic alphabet, etc. are all widely adopted Chinese trademarks, which can transmit positive cultural meanings. When translating these Chinese trademarks, their cultural connotation should be put into consideration.

4.2.3. Meeting Consumer's Psychological Preference

Some foreign commodities are very popular in China, such as "Kekou Kele" (Coca-Cola), "Jinlilai" (Goldlion), "Shufujia" (Safeguard), "Huipu" (Hewlett-Packard) in Chinese phonetic alphabet, etc. as the companies with these famous trademarks understand that Chinese people would like to be in pursuit of good fortune and the commodities trademarks with such words can enjoy their preference. Therefore, foreign manufacturers have made their products adopt these "good" words to meet Chinese customers to achieve their promoting sale goals ^[9].

4.2.4. Choosing Plain Words as Trademarks

Trademarks should be plain and vivid, so that potential and actual customers can easily keep the names of the commodities in their minds, such as POSCER (Japan--clock), Ford (automobile) of English trademarks and “Panpan” (door), “Dabao” (cream) in Chinese trademarks.

In short, the trademark is the language medium to reveal the commodities. The translated trademark in the target language should also accomplish the same functions as the source texts, including arousing the customers’ interests, desires, memory and actions. A successful translation should be able to capture the attention of the target audience, activate their interests and desires, devote themselves to keep the commodities in their minds, and put the desire to buy into action.

5. Conclusion

Trademark not only is the symbol of a commodity quality and image, but also means its copyright. Thus, interpreters should not only take them into account when translating trademarks, but also pay more attention to them. However, it is difficult to translate trademarks well into the target language. In the commercial society, with the development of international trade, trademark is the first aspect of a commodity, for trademark translation directly affects the commodity’s image and sales.

At present, the competition of products is increasingly violent, trademark cannot be ignored, and more and more people have attached importance to it. The enterprise must give equal importance to the quality of the agreement and the trademark. There are many ways to translate trademarks, but they are not the rules that must be applied flexibly in the process of translation. It is proved that the unification of these methods can best express the lingering charm of the original trademark.

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