

Research on the Trademark Translation from the Perspective of Culture

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Keywords: trademarks; translation principle; translation methods; intercultural differences.

Abstract. This study focuses on the trademark translation from intercultural perspective. By comparing cultural differences between China and western countries and analyzing a number of successful cases of translation of trademarks some suggested measures are put forward that the translation of trademarks should reflect the merits and the characters of commodities, and the connotation of goods ought to be revealed by various translation strategies.

1. The Definition and Functions of Trademarks

1.1 The Definition of Trademarks

Trademark is defined as a kind of linguistic symbol that contains certain connotations and conveys the unique information and culture of commodities.

In a dictionary, trademark refers to something (such as a word) that identifies a particular company's product and cannot be used by other companies without permission. Trademarks are made up of two concepts: (1) a device (as a word) pointing distinctly to the origin or ownership of merchandise to which it is applied and legally reserved to the exclusive use of the owner as maker or seller; (2) a distinguishing characteristic or feature closely associated with a person or thing.

1.2 The Functions of Trademarks

Trademarks are designed to protect proprietary branding and other content from being used by competitors.

Trademarks provide protection for words, phrases, symbols, or logos that are used (or are intended to be used) for business purposes. In practice, they secure the way businesses differentiate their products from other products and brands in the marketplace.

To some extent, trademark is related to the share which a foreign company holds in the competitive market. For example, the famous brand Nike whose products take up thirty to forty percent in American market and fifty percent in Chinese market. Compared with Nike, another well-known brand Adidas ranks behind with twenty percent in the marketplace. Excellent trademark translation helps to dominate the market and obtain great benefits.

2. Cultural Differences in Trademark

2.1 Vocabulary Difference

Vocabulary conveys some relative cultural connotation besides its own concept meaning, and is influenced by different cultures. Trademark translation, as a linguistic art, has to be appropriately interpreted.

In order to clarify the difference of vocabulary, the author provides some examples in the following table.

Table 1. For example

红	红豆 (clothes)	红梅 (ingredient)	红叶 (umbrella)	红牛 (drink)	红塔山 (cigarette)
黄	黄河 (beer)	黄箭 (chewing gum)	黄金搭档 (health-care products)	黄山 (cigarette)	黄海 (tyre)
蓝	蓝带 (beer)	蓝天 (toothpaste)	蓝月亮 (detergent)	天之蓝 (wine)	
青	青岛 (beer)	青蛙王子(makeup)	青花瓷 (wine)	北大青鸟 (company)	竹叶青 (tea)
白	白雪 (stationery)	立白 (washing powder)	大白兔 (candy)	脑白金 (health- care products)	
黑	黑妹 (toothpaste)	黑牛 (cornmeal)	白加黑 (cold medicine)	黑人 (toothpaste)	

In China, red represents happiness and warmth and prosperity. In some western countries, people address Christmas day as red double happiness. They paint the town red and roll red carpet for someone. Red is one of the beloved colors for Chinese. But in some western cultures red also covers the meaning of ruthless, catastrophe, potential danger, war and death. Such as red hands, red revenge, a red battle, his business is in the red.

The word Yellow is closely related to Chinese history. From Chinese perspective, people consider themselves as the offspring of YanHaung (two Chinese ancestors), yellow has been given the concept of power, dignity and holiness, it can also be interpreted as a symbol of a nation , such as 黄河 translated as the yellow river, the yellow race refers to a group of people. However, in western culture, yellow is a derogatory term which indicates timid, contemptible, sickly, such as He has a yellow streak in him.

2.2 Thinking-pattern Difference

Western people are more straight-forward than Chinese because of the historical roots. It is clear that China is a country with various and abundant culture, and that Chinese people have been accustomed to the doctrines of Confucius and Mencius, which has an great impact on the Chinese cultural system. Let's take old for example. Chinese people prefer to use 老(old) to show their respect for elders and this value concept can be found in plenty of trademarks. for example, 老干妈(old nominal mother-food products), 泸州老窖(a kind of alcohol produced in Luzhou), 老冰棍(a kind of Popsicle), 王老吉(drink), 老北京(shoe). Chinese consumers can easily get into an agreeable feeling.

On the contrary, in western culture, old means weak, fragile and dying, thus these brand names are rarely found. They prefer energetic, young and innovative ideas so they would choose trademarks what can make them feel young, such as Madienform (women underwear).

Americans and Mexicans stick to the direct way of communication. They say what they mean and tell what are on their minds. Students ask questions in class. Koreans prefer indirect way of communication. They do not say what are on their minds and rely more on implications and inference. They think that asking too many questions in class means disrespectful to the teacher or mean that they have not studied hard enough. Another example, an American woman received a letter from a recently married Japanese friend. The Japanese woman wrote in her letter, My husband is not very handsome. Your husband is much more handsome than mine. The American woman was very

surprised at what her friend wrote. In the U.S, a statement like this about one's spouse would be considered very disrespectful. If an American woman talked about her husband, people might think that they did not have a good relationship. Westerners focus more on abstract and logical thinking, while Chinese people value literal meaning. This fact can be proved from some well-known trademarks, Pepsi-cola百事可乐, Coca-Cola可口可乐, Colgate高露洁, Rejoice飘柔. In terms of translation, alliteration is used as a kind of rhetorical device whose advantage is to make its brand name sound ups and downs and full of rhythmic sensation, as well as a sense of beauty. That is why these commodities could attract thousands of consumers.

2.3 National Psychology Difference

Consumer psychology refers to the mental or psychological activities of consumers in their realization, adjustment, and control of purchasing and consuming actions according to their own needs and abilities under the influence of the general social environment of consumption and economy. (顾文均, 2002) It is a consumer's mental activity when he /she is purchasing or preferring a special type of service or commodity. The formation of this mentality may be affected by personal factors. e.g. emotion, interest, hobby, memory, personality, will and most of all his family and social cultural environment, which make great impact on him throughout his life. Consumer's different cultural environments can, to some extent, determine his/her psychological reaction to the connotative meaning of a brand name.

For example, 芳芳 (a kind of export make-up from China) is translated into FangFang. In China, 芳 means the fascinating fragrance of flowers, as well as beauty and elegance of women. However, in English, it means the long teeth of wolves and poisonous teeth of snakes. Therefore, foreign consumers may link the trademark to animal's teeth as soon as they hear the product, which destroy their consuming appetite. 凤凰 represents good luck and nobility in Chinese traditional culture, while in some English-speaking countries, phoenix refers to rebirth after death. Of course readers may combine phoenix with risk and bad fortune. Another example can illustrate the vocabulary difference. 白象 is a brand of battery which is well-known in China, but few people are acquainted with it in international market, this brand is translated into white elephant, indicating something expensive but unavailable. Apparently, savvy customers will not purchase the commodity.

3. The Methods of Translation in Trademarks

3.1 Transliteration

3.1.1 The Choice of Action Verbs

Linguistic researches find that Chinese is a language which is dominated by dynamic words, while English is mainly led by static vocabulary. A paper diaper specially designed for babies, its trademark is Pamper and is translated into 帮宝适. There is no doubt that parents are eager to keep their children comfortable, healthy and active. Therefore as soon as they see the name of this product, they have this good imagination in their mind. Babies become more comfortable and parents are more joyful. Successful trademark translation contributes to these effects because 帮 is chosen to help consumers to get familiar with the function of this commodity so they will obtain the related meaning: Babies are fragile and only with the help of adults can they grow up healthily and delightedly.

A conclusion can be drawn from above examples. In the process of trademark translation, a translator should focus on consumers' needs and their preferences. Besides, he/she ought to choose word carefully so that the product is more beloved or get popular in target market.

When an English trademark is translated into Chinese, proper word should be carefully selected. At the same time, translators should take consumer's national psychology into consideration so as to achieve the objective of marketing. Benz (a brand name of car) is originally translated into 本茨, which is similar to its pronunciation without specific meaning. But it fails to inform consumers of the commodity in any way. After a long time, it is changed into 奔驰 which combines paraphrasing and transliteration. It precisely and appropriately reflects the advantage of the car. Consumers are likely to associate the car with a racing horse and have appetite of purchase. Pif Paf is a brand name of

pesticide, whose pronunciation can both refer to sound of spraying insecticide and crackleling when some disgusting mosquitoes are dropping. The Chinese name of it is 必扑 which combines onomatopoeia and pun. 必 can be understood as 必定. 扑 is interpreted into 扑灭, which presents the powerful function of this insecticide vividly. There are some similar trademark translation, such as Ronstar 浓思他 (insecticide), Pentium 奔腾 (microprocessor), Legslon 利肝灵 (medicine), Motorola 摩托罗拉 (mobile phone).

3.1.2 The Choice of Dynamic Adjectives

Dynamic adjectives show human's characters of emotions and psychology are evaluated and determined by people's mind. The use of dynamic adjectives can enrich the process of transliteration. For one thing, these adjectives present the features of products. For another, they provide consumers with a sense of comfort from the commodity. Safeguard (soap), its Chinese brand name is 舒肤佳. In translation, the choice of 舒 and 佳 go with the Chinese tradition of choosing auspicious words. It also expresses the effects of soap ingeniously, implying that this soap can protect your skin and keep it smoothly. Rejoice 飘柔 has the same effect in translation, Chinese consumers link the lexical meaning to themselves and have a good mood after using this product, because their hair will get smooth. 飘柔 belongs to dynamic adjectives which offer a good imagination for people.

When translating an English trademark, we should take Chinese ideograph into consideration to make good use of its significance and present the best of products. John-son's (强生) adopts the associative Chinese ideograph and keeps the similar pronunciation. People are likely to connect it with the meaning "keep babies healthy". Obviously, it arouses the consuming appetite of young parents. From these English brand names, we can draw a conclusion that dynamic adjectives not only exist in Chinese lexicon but also formed by different monosyllable words, such as Carrefour 家乐福 (supermarket) Goodyear 固特异 (Tyre), Holsten 好顺 (beer), Pizza Hut 必胜客 (fast food chain), L'Oreal 欧莱雅 (make-up) Dole 都乐 (drink), Audi 奥迪 (car), Nokia 诺基亚 (mobile phone).

3.2 Free Translation

Free translation is a commonly used method in the translation of trademarks which is based on the connotation of commodity and convey its information. There are a great number of English trademarks named by flowers, birds and rare species. Panda 熊猫 (car), Sea-Gull 海鸥 (watch), Gold-Star 金星 (watch), Apple 苹果 (mobile-phone), Monkey 猴王 (cigarette), Camel 骆驼 (shoes), Jaguar 美洲虎 (car), Crown 皇冠 (car), Ivory 象牙 (soap). The above brand names are easily understood and meet the requirements of public's aesthetic standard.

Successful trademark translation has become the company's intangible asset. If free translation is adopted in trademarks, it's pragmatic meaning should be accepted by the consumers in target market. Moreover, the translated version of the original trademarks should adapt to the consumers' beliefs, customs and habits. For example, Hong Kong Gold Lion 金利来 (Man's clothing) has turned to be a world famous brand and it takes a great share in clothing market. The translator combines Gold (money, fortune and reputation) and Lion (come home in Chinese), which symbolizes that money and reputation will follow you. It is a best choice for successful men. There are other examples, such as Forget-Me-Not 勿忘我 (perfume), True Love 真爱 (perfume), Green Giant 绿巨人 (canned vegetables).

3.3 Combination of Transliteration and Free Translation

This method is commonly used when either transliteration or free translation cannot express the original meaning of products. To some extent, this access refers to the adoption of transliteration or free translation on brand names, and then organize them in an appropriate order. Transliteration is not perfect, which may not satisfy the specific needs of consumers. For example, the famous car brand Volkswagen which is translated into 大众. It not only matches the Chinese customs but also attract public interest and is much better than 伏克斯瓦根 which is obscure and nobody knows what it means. Another brand Mickey Mouse (toy), Mi sounds like Chinese 米, and Mouse refers to 老鼠. There are

more examples such as Disney Land (迪士尼乐园), Nippon Paint (立邦), Unilevel (联合利华), Nescafe (雀巢), Euro Doda(梦达) .

“Trademark is more crucial than the product” is a maxim which western advertising designers would abide by. So they make every effort to come up with trademarks which are full of vigor and vividness, humor and uniqueness. In a word, what drives them to rack their minds is the motivation that makes a deep impression on customers and takes up larger share in the competitive market. Take a well-known brand name of clothing for example, Forever Young indicates people can keep young forever if they put on the clothes. These trademarks are more likely to be translated by the method of the combination of transliteration and free translation.

3.4 Conversion

Conversion is a method used in translation and interpretation as a result of the differences between the two languages in terms of grammar and usage. Conversion is used to make the translation natural and smooth in the target language without reducing or changing the meaning of the original.

Rejoice means happiness and delight. When this trademark is translated into Chinese 飘柔, the original meaning has disappeared. Chinese customers enjoy this product because they believe that this shampoo can make their hair smooth. The famous brand of computer 联想 whose logo is 人类失去联想世界会怎么样, so 联想 is essential. NOVO is a Latin word which means innovation. Le means legend传奇. So Lenovo is the combination of NOVO and LE which means innovation and legend. There are many others like Sprite (雪碧), Mild Seven (万宝来), Goldlion (金利来), Warrior (回力) etc. If conversion is appropriately used in the translation of trademarks, it helps the brands set up good image in global commerce and trade.

4. The Principles of Translation

4.1 The Principle of Culture

Trademarks are supposed to meet the psychological needs of consumers and match the habit and custom of selling districts. At the same time, it ought to respect the moral value of different countries. It is true for advertisement and public media. For example, a pen named 白翎 from shanghai is translated into White Feather. But in western country, gamecocks with white feather at the trailing end are usually regarded as timid and inferior. When people give away this pen to other people, it may imply that other people are timorous, so it will not sell well in western countries. A clock named 金鸡 is translated into Golden Cock. It does not accord with western culture and belongs to forbidden words in English. It can't promote the commodity, and may damage the image and reputation of the manufacturer and supplier.

Trademarks convey and reflect culture. In order to avoid the failure on the translation of trademarks and the conflicts of diverse cultures, it is virtual and necessary to look into the national culture, habit and social custom of different countries.

4.2 The Principle of Aesthetics

It is recognized that beauty is the perceptual form of idea. Beautiful things are the combination of appearance and content. When translating poem into English, the translator should consider the beauty of rhyme, the beauty of style and the beauty of connotation, as well as the beauty of format. If a name of trademark contains the good rhyme and content , it may create a feeling of intimacy and increase the purchasing desire of consumers. For example, 舒肤佳(soap) is translated as Safeguard, Consumers are likely to connect the trademark with the skin-protecting products. Another instance, 7Up is a trademark of soft drink, Up means to clean up the mind and make one cheer up. In addition, westerners prefer number seven, so the Chinese name 7喜 satisfies the favor of westerners. 海尔 is translated into Haier, which is similar to a word Higher, and this trademark is the combination of phonetics and meaning.

4.3 The Principle of Innovation

There is significant artistic feature in the name of trademarks. Consumers have deeper impression on some commodities because the artistic effects of trademark play an important role in commercial

activities including advertisement. Without innovation in the translation of trademarks, no one will take interest in these products. Therefore, only when new trademarks are constantly created can the products attract the attention of consumers. Translators are to be unique and innovative, and continuously cultivate and develop their imagination. Pentium is a brand name of chip produced in Intel Company. Apart from the prefix Pent, this word is meaningless. However, its Chinese name 奔腾 depicts the new trend that Electronic Science and Technology age is coming. CPU is called 狗剩 translated from English word Godson. Although this trademark is graceless, it is unique and easy to remember. Hisens (海信) is the combination of high and sensitivity. Freshtech (飞科) is the combination of Fresh and Technology.

4.4 The Principle of Legality

In order to protect the patent of trademark, China published Trademark laws of the People's Republic of China in 1982. Provision⁸ stipulates that such things shall not appear on trademarks as the national flag, national emblem and similar content. The translation of trademarks must obey the law of trademarks. For example, Opium (a kind of perfume for man) is translated into 鸦片. When it was introduced into China, manufacturers hoped that men would get addicted to it like opium once they use the product. However, this perfume is fiercely criticized and prohibited by China Commercial and Industrial Bureau because in Chinese history, western powers invaded China with the opium as a tool. From Chinese perspective, the insulted and shameful history is the immortal pain in their memory. The French company neglected the cultural connotation of China and disrespect the national psychology of Chinese. So the breach of Trademark Law of the People's Republic of China caused the failure of this trademark.

4.5 The Principle of Equivalence

According to Eugene Nida, a minimal, realistic definition of functional equivalence could be stated as the readers of a translated text should be able to comprehend it to the point that they can conceive of what the original readers of the text have understood and appreciated it.

Functional equivalence indicates that an ideal translation should be able to produce the equivalent function in terms of message and response to both the target and the original receptors.

Nida's functional equivalence is commonly used in trademark translation because trademarks are bound to present some messages or details of products. The informative, aesthetic and imperative functions are most associated with trademarks. In terms of cultural connotation, the translated trademark should reach certain equivalence and present their functions once more.

A well-translated trademark ought to reflect the features of products and the functions of the original trademark. Without a clear concept of the various functions of communication related to the participants in the communication process, a translator is likely to miss a number of features in the source language text and hence fail to reproduce the equivalent features in target language. In order to achieve functional equivalence, the translator must take trademark's communicative functions into consideration.

5. Conclusion

From the perspective of culture, this dissertation mainly discusses the translation methods of trademarks: transliteration, free translation, combination of transliteration and free translation, and conversion.

By analyzing the successful and unsuccessful examples on trademark translation, the author provides some suggestions that the consuming habits and psychologies should be taken into consideration in the process of translation. It is believed that the outstanding translation should demonstrate the advantages of commodities and the connotation of products ought to be reproduced by various translation strategies.

Trademark translation of s is a complicated task. It requires translators to have a good knowledge of history, custom, habits, and national psychology of the target-language. There are plenty of cultural barriers, but translator can overcome them by using various techniques properly.

Though this thesis is far from comprehensive and perfect due to the author's limited knowledge and experience in trademark translation, the author hopes that it might encourage those who are interested to further study in this field and make greater contribution to the world economy.

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