

基于功能对等的商标词翻译研究

孙美玮 ● 著



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前言

《基于功能对等的商标词翻译研究》是一部研究商标词翻译的专著。商标词在企业文化及促进消费的过程中起着非常重要的作用。随着全球化的发展,越来越多的产品不再局限于国内的市场,而是走向了国际市场。产品能不能在这个国际市场上取得较好的效益,除了要求产品本身要有较好的实用价值和优良品质之外,还要看它给人的第一印象如何,而给人留下深刻的第一印象的关键就是商标。但是,一个商标在本国的受欢迎程度并不代表它在其他国家也能取得同样的效果,这就需要译者对商标进行恰当的翻译。对于译者,恰当得体的商标翻译是一个不小的挑战。然而,商标词的翻译不是简单的语言转化,它也是一种跨文化交际活动,它融合了多方面的知识,比如翻译理论、语言、文化、价值观念、宗教习俗、心理学、美学等。因此,对商标名翻译的研究,从某种意义上来说,就是一种文化范畴的研究。

在中英文商标互译的实践研究中,笔者注意到了一个奇怪的现象,即对英语商标汉译比较成功,而对中文商标的英译却错误频出。因此,考虑到目前研究的局限性和中文商标翻译研究的重要性,作者从语言文化的角度出发,提出用奈达的“功能对等”理论来指导中文商标英译的实践,并总结出多种基本翻译法以便更好地进行中文商标的英译,使读者特别是商标译者对中文商标词的翻译有个全面的了解,以收到较好的市场效果。

本研究以尤金·奈达的“功能对等”理论作为商标翻译必须遵循的基本原则。尤金·奈达是西方翻译理论界的代表,他的“功能对等”理论对翻译研究有着重大影响及指导意义。他认为,翻译是在译入语中用最切近、最自然的对等语再现原语的信息。本书在“功能对等”理论指导及大量英汉商标实例分析的基础上,总结出以下几种常用的基本翻译方法:(1)音译;(2)直译;(3)直译和音译相结合;(4)调整法。在商标翻译实践中,译者应灵活运用这些翻译方法,以期用最切近、最自然的对等语再现原始商标的信息,引起消费者的有益联想,激发他们的购买欲望。

总之,笔者希望通过对英汉商标翻译的系统论述为英汉商标翻译者提高商标翻译质量提供一定的帮助和指导,同时希望有更多的这方面的成果问世。

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Chapter One

Introduction

1.1 Background of the Study

The Chinese people don't really realize the importance of trademarks until the adoption of open and reform policy. Because more and more products are not only traded in domestic market, but also in different countries, since China has entered into WTO for many years, Chinese companies are exposed to the international market and meet fierce competition. Gradually, they have come to realize that trademark is one of their most valuable assets. Generally speaking, a good trademark should provide something about the product's characteristics—its benefits, use and so on. It's better to be simple in form and clear to spell, easy to pronounce, recognize and memorize. The most important is that it can improve its images and stimulate the potential consumers to buy products, which can bring a great number of sales and profits. Consequently, Chinese enterprises begin to make efforts to design their effective trademarks, especially the English versions. So the translation will play more and more important role in international communication. Whereas, in a different cultural background and advertising market, how to translate

the trademark accurately which are admitted and accepted by potential customers is an essential question that the translators and marketers can't neglect. Trademark translation, in a broad sense, is a kind of translation; in a narrow sense, it is a special cultural transmission. A commodity's trademark is similar to human's name, which helps to differentiate one product from others and express many connotations and hopes. Meanwhile, it can protect a product's legal rights. The translated trademark is the second name of commodity in other country which should has the same function, so its importance is self-evident.

1.2 A Review of Studies on Trademark Translation in China

Trademark has quite a long history in China, and it was translated into Chinese since the day when foreign products and services entered into China. The first trademark appeared in the Northern Song Dynasty of China, which has its true sense in the world. In recent years, many translators have done many studies on trademark translation. But their researches still have some deficiencies. Until the 1980s, when China adopted the opening-up policy, the import of foreign goods began to increase year by year. However, until the 1990s, intensive researches on such translations appeared when China speeded up its economic integration with the world. From that time, many books and articles on trademark translation have been published. For example, Fan Yanbo (1992) wrote an article named "On the Chinese-English Translation of

Trademarks of Export Commodities”, and He Chuansheng (1997) published a book *Brand Name English*, but they only contain some basic knowledge of trademark. Later on, many more articles about trademark translation have appeared. Among the articles about trademark translation, there are three authoritative translation journals in China—*Chinese Translators’ Journal*, *Shanghai Science and Technology Translators’ Journal* and *Chinese Science and Technology Translators’ Journal*. These journals are always considered as high level journals and enjoy the biggest readership among both translators and translation scholars. Most of these articles have been dealing with the strategies and methods of trademark translation. Among all the studies, some translators have touched on the importance of culture in their essays. Zhu Xiaojun (1999) approaches trademark translation from the cultural differences, considering it very important to learn the Western customers’ aesthetic conception and their response to the translated trademarks. Jiang Lei (2002) thinks that trademark is a part of one company’s image which should stress on the expressive function and favorable association. He also puts forward the idea that overlooking cultural differences would cause pragmatic failures in the process of trademark translation. Hu Kaijie (2001) lays an emphasis on the importance of a suitable change of cultural connotation. Tang Degen (1997), Bao Huinan (2001), Xiao Hui and Tao Yukang (2000) all realize that the translator should take culture differences into consideration in trademark translation.

Though the previous researches have served as a starting point and have made enormous contributions to the research of trademark translation in China, they are still not enough. Therefore, considering

the incomplete research and the necessity of Chinese trademarks translation study in the current situation, this book attempts to make a systematic study on Chinese-English trademark translation from the perspective of cultural differences, and introduces some Chinese-English trademarks translation strategies based on Nida's "functional equivalence" so as to provide a fine help for future study.

1.3 The Layout of the Book

The book is divided into five parts. Chapter One is the introduction which contains background of the study and review of studies on trademark translation in China. Chapter Two explains the theory foundation, involving the relationship of language and culture, Nida's functional equivalence theory and its necessity on trademark translation. Chapter Three analyzes the cultural differences of Chinese-English trademark translation in detail. Generally speaking, the differences contain religious beliefs, customs and habits, thought patterns and concept values, consumer concept, consumer psychology and aesthetics psychology, cognitive differences. Chapter Four analyzes trademark and its translation, from the perspective of cultural factors, introducing some basic information and translation strategies of trademark. In Chapter Five, the author comes to a conclusion and illustrates the limitations of this book. Trademark translation is a comprehensive subject, covering language, culture, beliefs, psychology and so on, besides translation methods. For translators, it is necessary to adopt proper methods so as to achieve the equivalence of trademarks in the largest degree.

Chapter Two

The Theoretical Foundations

◆ 2.1 The Relationship between Language and Culture

Translation is the inter-lingual communication (Nida 2001). In order to have a better comprehension of the process and essence of translation, it is always necessary and beneficial to understand the relationship between language and culture on the whole.

Culture is an abstract concept, which almost includes everything in the world. It has permeated into every corner of a society, and it also influences the translation of trademarks. Thus, considering target consumers' acceptance and their culture background is necessary when translators translate trademarks.

According to *The New Dictionary of Cultural Literacy*, culture is involved in attitudes, values, morals, law, art, beliefs and customs that distinguish one group of people from another. As early as 1952, American famous anthropologists Alfred Louis Kroeber and Clyde Kluckholm (1961: 181) had compiled a list of 164 definitions. Their lengthy (165th) contribution was as follow:

Culture consists of patterns, explicit and implicit, of and for

behavior acquired and transmitted by symbols, constituting the distinctive achievement of human groups, including their embodiment in artifacts; the essential core of culture consists of traditional (i. e., historically derived and selected) ideas and especially their attached values. On one hand, culture systems may be considered as products of action, and as conditioning elements of future action on the other hand.

The word “culture” comes from the Latin “cultus”, “cultivation”, and “to till”. Generally speaking, it refers to human activity. In academic study, “It refers to the total pattern of beliefs, customs, behavior, objects, and techniques that characterize the lifestyle of human being.”

And then, what is language? An outstanding scholar, Leonard Bloomfield (1914) said, “Language is the medium by which people interact with each other and obtain some information from each other, which is regarded as a tool by human being to recognize and describe the world, and language is also the carrier and container of different cultures.”

Language is the most important communication tool of the human being. In some sense, without language, it would be difficult to communicate each other. However, any kind of language is always linked closely with a certain culture.

Language is a part of the culture and reflects a certain culture, and plays an important role in culture. Some sociologists regard it as the basement of culture—no language, there is no culture. Inversely, culture also influences language. In other words, language reflects the characteristics of a nation, which not only involves the nation's

history and cultural background, but also contains the nation's customs, living habits, beliefs and thought patterns and so on. Language and culture influence and interact with each other. If people want to study a nation's language, they should also understand its culture; and, if people want to understand a nation's culture, they are sure to learn its language. Therefore, in the process of translation, it is important to understand and deal with the relationship between culture and language.

Chinese belongs to the Sino-Tibetan language family, and English belongs to the Anglo-Saxon language family, so there are many differences between the two languages as well as the cultures. From the geographical location, China and Britain are far distant and separated by vast oceans. There exist many differences in many aspects between the two countries, including climates, languages, living habits, social customs, historical background and so on. The particular culture of a nation is concretized and passed down through generations in the form of words and language. Thus, the cultural information shows many differences in the process of transmitting because of the influences of various factors.

Language as a part as well as the carrier of culture, it will certainly prove these differences. We have always thought that translation merely occurs between languages for many years. On one hand, this issue unleashed the word vs. sense debate in traditional theory and lied at the concept of equivalence. It is evident in dictionary definitions of translation. On the other hand, the Encyclopedia Britannica's contribution on translation does give cause for optimism; unlike the traditional way in linguistics (which

endeavored to draw a sharp dividing line between language and “extra-linguistic reality for a long time”), language should not be regarded as an isolated phenomenon but as an main element of culture, while cultures are far more complicated than languages. A person can acquire a language in a few years through arduous efforts and proper ways, but it takes at least 20 years to become adequately acquainted with a culture (Nida 1998). “Language is essentially bound up with culture. It expresses, embodies, and symbolizes cultural reality.” (Kramsch 1998: 3) Bronislaw Malinowski (as cited in Ogden & Richards), one of the first anthropologists, puts forward that language could only be understood in a certain cultural background. In 1923, he coined the term “context of situation” and realized that people could fully understand the “connotation” of a language when these two contexts (situation and culture) were implicitly or explicitly clear to the interlocutors and hearers. In 1911, a famous linguistic anthropologist, Franz Boas (1986: 7) broached the subject of culture and discussed the connections between language and the native environment. His main point was simply put as follows: “The form of the language will be molded by the nation of that culture.”

Furthermore, Sapir (1949: 207) introduced his article on “Language, Race and Culture”. He proposed that “Language is unique to human being, a symbol system with arbitrarily created that communicates thoughts, feelings, and desires. It does not exist apart from culture”. In addition, recently, NLP (Neuro Linguistic Program) has also taken the point that connotation in communication is culture-bound: “We know what things mean in our culture and the process of individual upbringing”.

From the above mentioned, we can realize that culture is omnipresent and even mysterious and hard to acquire by the outsiders. An individual, who was born and brought up in a certain culture environment, can not completely understand that culture unless making great efforts. Furthermore, an individual who masters a certain language doesn't mean master the culture which the language belongs to.

In a word, Chinese language and English language belong to two distinctly different cultures because there are many differences in many aspects such as geographical location, living habits, social customs, religion, social and historical background, etc. So when translators translate the Chinese trademark into English, they should take the cultural factors into consideration.

2.2 Nida's Functional Equivalence

2.2.1 An Overview of Nida's Functional Equivalence

In the 1980s, some translation theories like Eugene A. Nida's functional equivalence theory were introduced into China. Nida has established his position as a specialist in translation after translating the *Bible*. In the process of translating the *Bible*, he found that there were socio-cultural differences among different countries and nationalities, and the need to make adjustment to the scripture is really essential. Later, this led to intercultural enlightenment. According to him, the concept of open-mindedness can improve human communication and understanding. Nida points out that translator should base on the establishment of cultural equivalence

between the target language and the source language. He also puts forward that translators always apply his own personal values formed in his own culture and neglect the cultural differences in the translation, which is almost unavoidable; however, in order to translate accurately, a translator should firmly avoid personal factors.

Nida (2003) thinks that anything that can be said in one language can certainly be said in another. But to achieve an absolute equivalence in translation may be only ideal for all translators, because absolute equivalence in translation is impossible. In another book, he points out that “In such a translation, it is not so concerned with matching the receptor—language message with the source language message, but with the dynamic relationship, the translation should be substantially the same as that which existed in the original language” (Nida 2003).

In 1964, Nida puts forward two fundamental types of equivalence in the process of translation, namely, “formal equivalence” and “dynamic equivalence”. Formal equivalence is text-oriented, which concentrates on the information itself both in text and form, while “dynamic equivalence is based on readers’ response, it is another important contribution to translation research” (Ma 2003). Dynamic equivalence “shows a high degree correspondence between the source and target languages and embodies rather effective translating so that it can produce in receptors the capacity for a response very close to what the original readers experienced” (Nida 1993). Also, in another book *The Theory and Practice of Translation* (Nida 2003), he puts forward a more exact definition of dynamic equivalence, namely, “Dynamic equivalence is defined in terms of