

E-C Translation Strategies of English Advertising Puns

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Abstract: Advertising plays an important role in building brand image. Advertisements often use rhetoric to attract audience's attention and stimulate consumption desire. As an effective rhetorical and linguistic means, pun often appears in pronunciation, semantics and other aspects. Translators will encounter various problems in phonetics and semantics in the process of translation. Meanwhile, cultural differences increase the difficulty of translation and affect the accuracy of translation. This paper mainly introduces four different translation strategies: literal translation, free translation, loan translation and annotation. Translators should adopt appropriate translation method according to the characteristic of different puns and strive to convey the information of the original text completely and accurately.

Keywords: Advertising; Puns Functional Equivalence Cultural; Difference

1. Introduction

With the development of economic globalization and international trade, more and more Chinese brands enter the international market to compete with foreign brands. To participate in international competition, it is necessary to establish a good brand image. As a means of mass communication, advertising plays an important role in promoting products and establishing brand image. Advertising often uses rhetorical devices to attract customers' attention. Pun is a common linguistic rhetoric in advertising. The proper use of advertising puns not only makes advertising language more vivid, humorous and interesting but also high-lightens the characteristics of the advertisement. Also, advertising pun plays a vital role in attracting the audience's interest and triggering consumer's thinking.

The translation of advertising English has become an important practical style. Advertising English has attracted the interest of many translators with its unique language style. In the process of translation, translators should adhere to correct translation standards, take account the characteristics and style of advertising English, and choose appropriate translation methods, so as to show the unique language charm of advertising.

This paper mainly discuss the translation of English advertising pun from the perspective of Functional Equivalence Theory and it contains five parts. The first part is introduction. The second part discusses Functional Equivalence Theory, including its historical development and basic principles. In the third part, the author talks about English advertising pun. This part mainly discusses the basic concept of advertising pun and different kinds of advertising pun. In the fourth part, the author introduces four translation strategies of English advertising puns. The last part is conclusion.

2. Functional Equivalence Theory

Functional equivalence theory is a famous translation theory proposed by an American, Nida, E.A. His main academic activities revolved around the translation of the Bible. In the process of translation, Nida developed his own translation theory. This set of theories, that is functional equivalence theory, has brought about a new revolution in the field of translation and has great guiding significance for the subsequent translation work.

2.1 Historical Development of Functional Equivalence Theory

Nida (1964) put forward that every mature translation method should take semiotics as its basic rule

of symbol encoding and decoding. In 1986, Nida changed “dynamic equivalence” into “functional equivalence”(functional equivalence theory), the historical development of which can be divided into three stages.

The first stage is the idea that descriptive linguistics of functional equivalence theory is based on modern linguistics. Nida introduced linguistics into translation studies. Starting from the essence of linguistics, he makes an objective and accurate analysis of the signified meaning and associative of words by applying the theory of semantics. He pointed out that there is a large similarity between various language structures, and that deep structures had more in common than surface structures. Therefore, in the process of translation, the transformation between deep structures can guarantee the faithfulness of the translated text he smoothness of the translation as much as possible to the greatest extent. Faithfulness and smoothness create conditions for the equivalence of readers’ responses, which makes it possible to realize functional equivalence.

The second stage is the idea that Functional equivalence theory is based on information theory. Translation is an activity that transform the information expressed in one language into the information in another language. The purpose of translation is to convey the information of the original text and to play a communicative role. Only when the target readers get the same amount of information as the original readers, can the relationship between the target language receiver and the target language information be basically the same as that between the source language receiver and the source language information. The receptivity of the source and target language readers differs, especially if the source and target language belong to different cultures. So in order to make the target readers get the same information as the original readers,the form of the original text can be changed appropriately so that enhance the understanding of the translated text.

The third stage is the idea that Functional equivalence theory is based on social semiotics. Nida believed that semiotics is the most comprehensive system for analyzing meaning^[1](Nida, 1993). In his work *Language Culture and Translating*, Nida pointed put that the social semiotics studies all codes and symbols of human society, and focuses on the most comprehensive and complex symbolic system used by human beings--language. Therefore, no translation method is as comprehensive as social semiotic translation in terms of decoding and coding.

2.2 Basic Principles of Functional Equivalence Theory

There are three types of target language culture and source language culture in translation and holds that these three relations are determined by the distance between language and culture. There are two basic orientations of translation: equivalence consists of two different basic types, formal equivalence and dynamic equivalence. The former focuses on the form and content of information, while the latter is based on the principle of equivalence.

In order to reduce ambiguity and confusion, Nida replaced “dynamic equivalence” with “functional equivalence”, the former focuses on a dynamic relation, while the latter emphasizes that communication between languages and cultures can be carried out by searching for translation equivalents and reorganizing the form and semantic structure of information in an appropriate way. To reduce the difference between the original language and the target language and accurately reproduce the culture of the source language and eliminate cultural differences. The translator should follow these three steps.

Firstly, the translation should not only conform to the semantic meaning of the original text, but also reflect the cultural characteristics of the original text. However, different languages belong to different culture, there may same similarities between them, but can’t be exactly same. Therefore, it is impossible to create a perfect translation that fully reflects the cultural connotation of the source language, and the translators can only try their best to reproduce the culture of the source language.

Secondly, if the translator can not take into account both meaning and culture, he/she has to give up the formal equivalence and reproduce the meaning and culture of the source language by changing the form of the source language in the target language. For example, the English idiom “white as snow” can be translated into “baifaruxue”in Chinese. However, in the southern part of China, there is almost no snow. In their perception and cultural background, there is no concept of “snow”. So how can the translator overcome this difficulty? In translation, the translator can eliminate the cultural difference by changing the form of words. Therefore, this idiom can be translated in Chinese as “white as mushrooms” or “white as egret hair” .

Thirdly, if the change of form cannot solve the cultural differences, the translator can adopt the method of “recreate” to overcome the cultural differences, so that achieve the meaning equivalence between the source language and target language. “Serious damage” refers to the transformation of the deep structure of the source language into the surface structure of the target language, that is, the cultural connotation of the source language text is explained and illustrated by the vocabulary of the target language.

3. English Advertising Puns

Advertisement, a single word is worth a thousand pieces of gold. Therefore, advertising language should not only greatly reflect the characteristics of products, short and to the point and humorous, eye-catching, advertised. Puns are a common rhetorical device in English advertisements for its simplicity and meaningfulness. However, the translation of puns itself is a difficulty. Meanwhile, cultural differences and the profound cultural connotations add to the difficulty of translation. Therefore, the translator should not only fully consider the style of the original text and the contextual expression in different cultures, but also try to express the information of the original text completely and accurately. As the essence of language, puns possess profound cultural connotations, so translators should deal with cultural differences properly.

3.1 The Concept of Puns

The so-called pun, is a rhetorical device, which use phonetic or semantic conditions to express implicit meaning. Puns are humorous and brief, which can leave a profound impression on people, so that puns are favored by advertisers. As the essence of language, puns possess profound cultural connotations, so translators should deal with cultural differences properly.

3.1.1 Definition of Puns

A pun, according to The Oxford English Dictionary, is to use a word in such way as to suggest two or more meanings or different associations or to use two or more words of the same or nearly the same sound with different meanings, so as to produce a humorous effect. Webster’s Third New International Dictionary defines “pun” in this way, the humorous use of a word in such a way as to suggest different meanings or applications, or of words having the same or nearly the same sound but different meanings: a play on words. No matter how to define the word. The pun has two main characteristics, namely ambiguity and the double context.

The first feature of the pun is ambiguity. Ambiguity means that there are two or more possibilities in understanding and some words are easy to be misunderstood, but only one of the meanings is used in the current context. There is a piece of example: All is well that ends well. On the one hand, “end” is a verb, meaning “over”; on the other hand, “end” is a noun, meaning “cigarette”. This advertising makes clever use of semantic pun of the word “end”. According to the characteristics of pun, this advertisement not only points that this brand of cigarette is good but also is identical with a English idiom. The use of ambiguity achieves twice the result with half the effort.

Another feature of the pun is double context. Li Xinhua emphasizes that the existence of double context is an important condition for the establishment of pun, and there must be a medium of conversion between pun and double context, that is, pun itself. Double context means a pun has two meanings^[3](Yao Jun, 102). One is the literal meaning, the other is the intentional meaning. Usually, the literal meaning only tell the customers some basic information of the advertisement; the intentional context is the advertising context that expresses the deep meaning of the sentence and reflects the intention of the advertisement.

3.1.2 Advantages of Using Advertising Pun

As an effective linguistic means, puns are favored by advertisers on their own merits. More and more advertisers make various use of pun. Puns are humor, concise, and can convey culture and facilitate cross-cultural communication.

Firstly, puns are humors, it can attract the audience’s eyes and leave a deep impression on the readers. According to *CiHai*, the explanation of humor is as follows: through innuendo, allegory, pun and other figures of speech, exposing the errors and illogic of life with a well-meaning smile. In terms of its social function, puns can make people laugh and bring people fun. If the humor function of pun used in advertising field, it can also achieve great effect.

Secondly, puns are concise, which means the advertiser can save investment costs. When the advertiser invest an advertisement, they often charged by the time or the number count of the advertisement. If the advertisement is too long, the advertiser should pay more money. So here comes pun. Pun is concise and often can convey even more information. For example, "Make time for *Time*", an advertisement for famous American magazine *Time*. The first word "time" refers to "shijian", while the second "time" refers to *Time* magazine. The semantic pun "time" interpret the meaning of the advertisement.

The last but not the least, advertising pun can not only establish brand image and convey commodity information, but also carries the nation's politics, economy and culture. Among them, the most common is that advertising puns convey the nation's culture, including its customs, values, lifestyles and other aspects. On the one hand, pun is a symbol of values. In western culture, individualism is the primary value. The majority of Americans are edified by this family culture since birth. So, the "individuation" is prominent in the western culture. Some advertisers make advertisement with this characteristic, so that inspire the autonomous spirit of consumers.

3.1.3 Different Kinds of Advertising Pun

Homophonic pun often uses words with similar spelling, pronunciation. Advertisers likes use this kind of puns because it make the language implicit, humorous and vivid. It can also deepen the meaning and impress the audience. Advertisers are very pleased to use harmonic puns, because such puns have a funny, humorous, playful and comical language style that can enhance the persuasive and infectious power of advertisements, thus leaving a deep impression on consumers^[2](Lu Ying, 80).

Using the polysemy of words in different contexts is a rhetorical "semantic pun". Semantic pun often use of the polysemy of words, use its metaphor meaning to express a kind of implicit, thought-provoking artistic conception so that enhance the effect of expression of advertising text.

In English, each portion of the sentence has a grammatical role and in different contexts could have different meanings. Grammatical pun refers to the use of grammatical methods to make a sentence possess two different meanings, such as subject-predicate structure, passive structure, and multiple grammatical meanings contained in phrases. This kind of pun is filled with literary interest, which attracts the audience's attention and push the customer to think, so that give the customer a deep and profound impression.

The idiom pun is a pun formed by modifying the code words, sayings and epigrams in English according to needs. Idioms pun embodies strong language artistry, and make use of people's existing language and cultural knowledge and familiarity with classic sentences to achieve the effect that people would be more familiar with the advertisement. Idiom Pun

3.2 Difficulties in Translating English Advertising Pun

A text which reflects many concepts and literary canons of a particular isolated culture often includes information which is extremely difficult to understand and to translate in a distinct language-culture. Nida clearly points out the difficulties of translation in different cultures. There are fifth main factors that influence translation.

The first factor is way of thinking. Western nations are used to use abstractness, which is an analytical way of thinking from one two many and like to use nouns, phrases and clauses while Chinese tend to use verbs and focus on the completeness of sentences with time-centered narration.

The second factor are manner and custom. History allusion is the inheritance of a national culture and an important characteristic that distinguishes a nation from other nations. For example, in China, people usually care about the birth of year. When Chinese meet each other, they usually ask "What is your birth of year." "Mine is the Rat." If one doesn't understand the historical and cultural background and try to interpret the meaning of the original text, he/she may misunderstand the answer as "I am a mouse" instead of "I am a rat."

The third factor is Literary quotation. Literary quotation is the deposition of history and culture during the development of a nation's history. It reflects the history and value of a nation vividly. If the translator is not familiar with literary illusion, it would be difficult to translation.

The fourth is religious tradition. Chinese mainly believe in Taoism and Buddhism while Western peoples believe in Christianity and hold that God created the world. In china, there are stories of "presenting Buddha with borrowed flowers" while there are also idioms in English like "God bless

you”.

The last but not least, different cultural backgrounds. Cultural features may also have different meanings. For example, the purchase of a large home may mean that the person has a large family, or wants to show off his wealth, or simply regards such a home as a sound investment. But most advertising focuses on prestige values, for example, “Express your success with a Mercedes” (Nida, 32).

4. Translation Strategies of English Advertising Puns

The most important thing about product introduction in advertisement is to convey information. Readers of the original text and readers of translated text should get exactly the same galaxy in the face of the same product introduction, which requires translators to grasp the essence of the product through the appearance of the product and ensure the accurate transmission of product image and information. Advertising language is a kind of concise, implicit, expressive and provocative language, while pun is the expression of double meaning, which has an insurmountable translatability barrier in language structure and expression.

According to Functional Equivalence Theory, translators should pay more attention to functional equivalence between two languages instead of the rigid correspondence of words. Advertising language is a kind of concise, implicit, expressive and provocative language, while puns are “double meanings expressed in one language form in a specific language environment”. These two factors increase the difficulty of translation. In addition to delivering the information of the original text completely and accurately, the key is to make the reader feel the same as the readers of the original text. So that customers can be attracted by advertising and stimulate their consumption desire so that achieve the purpose of commodity promotion. Due to the cultural differences between English and Chinese, in addition to pragmatic equivalence, English and Chinese advertising translation should also achieve social and cultural equivalence. Under the guidance of Functional Equivalence Theory, translators can adopt the following translation strategies.

4.1 Literal Translation

Literal translation preserves both content and structure of the original text. This translation method requires translators to clarify the Chinese translation fully and accurately without any distortion or arbitrary addition, while maintaining the original style. In translation, if the structure and expression form of the original text cannot be directly adopted, we must change the sentence structure and expression mode according to the expression form and characteristics to convey the connotation of the original text. In the history of modern Chinese translation, literal translation is the overriding criterion as both famous translators Fu Sinian and Zheng Zhenduo advocated literal translation.

Example 1

Trust us. Over 5000 ears of experience.(An advertisement for hearing-aid)

In this advertisement, the sound of the word “ears” is similar with the word “years”, so when the customer hearing this advertisement, they may have two different interpretations, they are “Trust us. Over 5000 ears of experience” and “Trust us, Over 5000 years of experience”. There is nothing difficult to understand, so we adopt literal translation. Literal translation requires translators to preserve both content and form of the original text.

So in the process of translation, the homophonic word ears-years should be translated literally. On the one hand, “ear” refers to a hearing organ of human body. 5000 ears points that this brand of hearing-aid have been experienced and examined by many customer.; On the other hand, “year” is a unit of time, 5000 years hints that this hearing-aid has a long history. The use of the homophonic ears-years fully attracts customer’s eyes, enhances the impression of customers on the product, and also enhances the publicity of the product.

Example 2

More sun and air for your son and heir.(An advertisement for a bathing beach)

In this advertisement, there are two groups of homophonic pun, air-heir and sun-son. If the customers only hear this advertisement instead of seeing the text, they may feel confused, because these two groups of homophonic puns sound very familiar. The use of the homophonic pun greatly

attracts customer's eyes, at the same time, it push customers to explore what this advertisement truly wants to express.

Although it can be consuming at first. But after repeating this advertisement again and again and understanding these two words, the customers will find this advertisement makes sense. As for translating this advertisement, we adopt literal translation because this advertisement is easy to understand and its form is easy to obey. According to the requirements of literal translation, we only need to translate directly without changing the content and structure of the original. So this advertisement can be interpreted this way, our bright sunlight and fresh air is prepared for your offspring.

4.2 Free Translation

Free translation, is a translation method that keeps the content of the original text without keeping the form and structure of the original text. Mr.Zhao Jingshen once said that “ a smooth version is better than one that only focuses on being faithful to the original”. Mr. Yan Fu also prefers free translation. In the free translation, the content faithful to the original text should be given priority, and the fluency and popularity of the translated language take the second place, but free translation is not limited to the form of the original text.

Example 3

Spoil yourself and not your figure.(An advertisement for a diet ice cream)

In this advertisement, the word “spoil” is a semantic pun. On the one hand, “ spoil yourself” means “enjoy yourself”, on the other hand, “spoil your figure” means “ break and ruin your figure “ (Let one's body type develop at will, that is, gain weight). The foreign customers may be confused about the word “spoil”, because people without enough cultural knowledge can't understand the meaning of these two phrases.

In order to express these two different meanings clearly, corresponding translation is the best method. Through the use of corresponding translation, the translator can make up necessary knowledge to help the audience have a better understanding. The translator can add the meaning of these two phrase. After analyzing this advertisement, customers will clearly know the advantages of this ice cream. This advertisement makes customers think of “ enjoy without regret”. As thus, the customers will dispel the concern of gaining weight and accept this advertisement in a relaxing and humorous atmosphere, so that produce consumption desire.

Example 4

Every child should have an Apple after school.(An advertisement for Apple)

In our general perception, “apple” refers to a kind of fruit which is beneficial for physical health. If we take “apple” of this advertisement as a fruit, this advertisement can make sense. However, if we notice that this is an advertisement for Apple enterprise. We will know that the word “apple” refers to the product of Apple enterprise.

After having a better understanding of this advertisement, translation will be relatively easy. In the process of interpreting this translation, we adopt literal translation, because this advertisement is understandable. The homophonic words “apple” can be translated directly into a Chinese pun, and we can use a double quotes on the word “apple”, so that the customer can understand the meaning of the word “apple” themselves.

4.3 Loan Translation

Loan translation means that in the translation of foreign words, neither transliteration nor free translation is adopted, but a compromise method, which uses the existing vocabulary in the native language for translation. Some advertising puns possess a certain historical and cultural background and corresponding translation is suitable is suitable for this kind of advertising pun translation. The advantage of loan translation is that it can convey the cultural connotation of the original text, and at the same time, it can basically guarantee the concise and condensed language characteristics of the original advertisement. However, the connotation of puns not fully displayed, so that loses the humor and wit of the original text.

Example 5

Which larger can claim to be truly German? This can!(An advertisement for Larger)

This is an advertisement for Larger Beer, the advertiser makes clever use of the part of the speech of the word “can”, at the same time, “larger” refers to different things.

This advertising pun is easy to understand and translate, it is suitable to adopt free translation method. According to the principle, we only need to convey the meaning of the original text clearly. As we all know, can has two parts of the speech, one is a modal verb, meaning “is able to”; the other is a noun, meaning “pot, tin”. If we take “can” as a modal verb, this ad means Larger Beer is able to be truly German; if we take “can” as a noun, “this can” means a tin of Larger Beer. At the same time, the word “larger” is a homophonic pun, it not only stand for the beer but also is a implicit of the brand Larger.

Example 6

Coke refreshes you like no other can.(An advertisement for coke-cola)

There is nothing difficult to understand in this advertisement. So it is better to choose free translation method. According to the principle of this method, the translator only need to convey the meaning of the original text clearly. In the process of translation, it is necessary to deal with the different parts of the speech of the word “can”, which is vital to understand this advertisement.

In this advertisement, the pun is still the word “can”. When the customers consider the word “can” as a noun, the interpretation of this advertisement is like this: Coke refreshes you like no other can of drinks. When the customers take the word “can” as a modal word, the interpretation of this advertisement could be: Coke refreshes you like no other can refreshes you.

4.4 Annotation

Due to the great differences between Chinese and English languages and cultures and the differences in the sounds and glyph of the two languages. Many English words don't have the Chinese counterparts. In addition to the three methods mentioned above, annotations can also be adopted in translation. The content of annotations can be supplementary background materials, introduction of local customs, cultural knowledge and other explanations that the translator thinks should be added.

Example 7

You will go nuts for the nuts you get in Nux.(An advertisement for Nux nuts)

At first glance, the customers may feel puzzled, because they may take the words “go nuts” to mean this “go, nuts!”. But in our perception, nuts are not creatures which can move freely. If the customer take it that way, this advertisement seems can not make sense. But if you have a knowledge of the foreign culture, you will know that “go nuts” means “to become angry and act or yell in a crazy way.” As for this advertisement, it's better to adopt annotation. The translator should add the meaning of the phrase “go nuts” to help customers have a better understanding.

After understanding the true meaning of the slang “go nuts”, we can interpret the advertisement this way “you can not get enough for Nux nuts.” In this way, customers can better understand the meaning of the advertisement. In the process of understanding the advertisement, the customer also deepens the impression of the product. As thus, the customers will be attracted by the advertisement, so that arouse consumption desire.

Example 8

Where there is a way, there is a Toyota.(An advertisement for Toyota)

The advertisement imitates the well-known English proverb “Where there is a way, there is a will”. The advertiser cleverly use the model of pearls of wisdom, which can easily attract customer's eyes because customers are familiar with the famous words. This advertisement can also remind customer of a Chinese idioms when the word “way” is interpreted as “road”, that is “when we reach the mountain, there will be a way.”

This advertisement has deep cultural background. It is appropriate to adopt corresponding translation. In the process of translation, the translator should coordinate both English culture and Chinese culture, so that all customers can have a full understanding of the advertisement. Combining both Chinese culture and English culture, this advertisement can be interpreted this way, where there is a mountain, there is a way a Toyota. The translator must grasp the vivid characteristics of different

kinds of advertisement pun and thus the meaning of advertisement could be conveyed fully.

5. Conclusion

This paper points out that puns are brief, humorous and puns are favored by advertisers. Puns come in all shapes because of the preference of the advertisers, and this paper mainly introduces four kinds of puns, they are homophonic pun, semantic pun, grammatical pun and idiom pun. Different puns have different characteristics, so the author states that the translators should adopt appropriate translation strategies according to the advertisement and different puns.

This paper use Functional Equivalence Theory to discuss the application of pun in English advertisement as well as the translation strategies of English advertising pun. According to Functional Equivalence Theory, it should achieve equivalence between two languages instead of requiring rigid correspondence on the surface of words in translation. And according to Functional Equivalence Theory, it requires that the target readers should receive the same information as the original readers.

The author points out that in the process of translation, the translator should take full consideration of the differences between languages and cultures, because cultural differences would increase difficulties of the translation and affect the accuracy of the translation. In short, the differences in language and culture make the translation of advertising puns extremely challenging. The success of advertising translation is one of the key factors to guarantee the quality of advertising translation.

The study may encourage translators apply appropriate translation method when translating different kinds of English advertising pun, so that the connotation and artistry and inspires the translator to pay attention to the differences between languages and cultures.

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