



A Study of the Trademark Translation Strategies in the Light of Skopos Theory

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ABSTRACT

International trade is increasing due to the rapid development of globalization. Many businesses target foreign markets, so trademark translation plays an important role in the promotion and sales of goods in those foreign markets. Skopos theory provides strong theoretical support for trademark translation. This paper examines the manifestation of the three principles of the Skopos theory in trademark translation and discusses the guiding role of the Skopos theory for trademark translation strategy from four aspects: literal translation, transliteration, transliteration and translation, and conversion. At the same time, it explores the practical significance of trademark translation and provides a reference for future trademark translation practice.

Keywords: Skopos theory; trademark translation; translation strategy

I. Introduction

1.1 Relevant background

As a mark of a product, a trademark provides product information to buyers. A good translation of a brand name can bring millions of dollars' difference in the product sales record (Bao Huinan 2001). Hence, a trademark has function and significance with its own features. Besides providing the basic product information it deserves, the trademark also contains a certain culture, and trademarks of import and export commodities are obvious examples. Because of the cultural difference between the two languages, the translator's understanding of the cultural background of the two countries directly affects the translation effect. At the same time, the translation of the trademark should also achieve the purpose of product promotion. Moreover, trademark translation should be the response of the consumer to the translation of the target language. Whether the trademark translation result carries out its purpose depends on whether the recipient of the trademark translation purchases the product advertised. According to Skopos theory, the purpose of trademark translation requires that the translation should achieve its intended function of the original text in the translation environment and culture.

1.2 Significance of the study

With the continuous development of world economic integration, the Chinese market has been occupied by a large number of foreign goods, and Chinese goods have continued to enter the international market to participate in the competition. In order to make a commodity win the favor of consumers in different regions in the international market competition, in addition to strictly guaranteeing its quality, its trademark also plays an important role in international trade. The quality of trademark translation is directly related to the influence of the commodity in the target consumer market. Good trademark translation can attract consumers and stimulate consumers' desire to purchase. The purpose of the trademark determines that the trademark translation must be guided by Skopos theory so that the target consumers can have the same reaction as the original consumers in the original market when seeing the goods in the destination market.

Skopos theory believes that the most important factor in the translation process is the purpose of the translation behavior. The original text is just providing information. Translators choose the information that they think is important or meaningful for the translation of the trademark. The first is whether the purpose of promoting the goods has been achieved. Therefore, the use of Skopos theory has a positive and important role in trademark translation.

1.3 Organization of the thesis

This paper consists of five parts. The first part introduces the trademark and trademark translation. The second part talks about some previous studies on trademark translation. The third part presents an introduction to Skopos theory and its relevance to trademark translation study. The fourth part discusses the application of Skopos theory to the trademark translation analysis and presents examples to elaborate on the application of strategies in trademark translation. At last, a conclusion of the whole thesis is presented.

II. Literature review

With the development of globalization and the policy of reform and opening-up of China, trademark translation has received more attention. Thus, the role of trademark translation has become more significant. Trademark translation has been already discussed by many scholars from different perspectives. At the same time, some scholars also put forward their own views.

The translation of domestic Chinese and English trademarks began to develop in the 1980s. A lot of scholars have devoted themselves to research in this area since then, and have discussed Chinese and English translations of trademarks from different perspectives such as cross-cultural and pragmatics perspectives. An article about the translation of trademark words was published by Xiong Wenhua. In the article “Translation of Chinese and English Nouns”, he summed up three common translation methods between Chinese and English nouns: transliteration, literal translation and transliteration and free translation, and transliteration mostly used in trademark translation (Xiong Wenhua 1979).

A study about external expressions and classifications of English trademark words was firstly conducted by Zhuang Hecheng. At the same time, he indicated that trademarks include descriptive trademarks and specialized trademarks, and different trademark features should be presented by following different translation methods. The former mostly use the free translation method, and the latter mostly uses transliteration or transliteration and free translation (Zhuang Hecheng 1988).

Trademark translation must not only follow the principles of translation but also take into account the inherent characteristics of the trademark itself (Gao Tingjian 1989). The translation of trademark translation has also developed rapidly because of the rapid development of domestic linguistics. Trademark translation research has been elevated to the theoretical level, that is, a simple translation method is not the only way. The research of English-Chinese trademark translation has applied kinds of system translation theories step by step. At the same time, as cross-cultural communication develops rapidly, many scholars have also taken into account additional factors, such as social differences, cultural differences and ethnic psychological differences. They put forward many techniques and methods on the basis of analyzing and discussing from different angles, such as Nida's Functional Equivalence principle. Xiao Hui presented that the trademark translation name must echo the target consumers' psychological identity, thus stimulating their desire to purchase. That is to say, the effect of trademark translation on the target language consumers should be the same as that of the original trademark (Xiao Hui 2000).

Subsequently, trademark translation research switched from a linguistic point of view to a cultural perspective. Peng Shiyu elaborated on the cultural attributes of trademark words and the essence of the internationalization of trademark words and advocated the preservation of national cultural characteristics (Peng Shiyu 2001). In 2004, there were many problems in the translation of

Chinese trademark words, such as the abuse of Chinese *pinyin* and the lack of cultural taboo consciousness, which caused duplicated names (An Yaping 2004).

The naming of trademarks has certain orientations, such as ethnic, cultural, psychological and aesthetic orientations, so trademark translation should also attach importance to the orientation of the original trademark naming, but translation can be adjusted on the basis of the specific circumstance (Li Junfang 2002).

Dai Rong is the first to promote the application of Skopos theory in trademark translation. He stated that Skopos theory contributed to the practice and development of trademark translation. Firstly, Skopos theory is not limited by traditional translation rules. In theory, The translator can translate trademarks flexibly. The second one is that Skopos theory breaks through the translation theory limited to the original text. The translation based on Skopos theory no longer only depends on the original text, and its effect can even be better than the effect of the original text (Dai Rong 2004).

An all-around research trend of trademark translation has emerged. Simultaneously, the research field is constantly precise, such as the perspective of Relevance Theory, cultural perspective, Functional Equivalence perspective, the perspective of Conformity Theory, cross-cultural communication perspective, etc.

After reviewing the previous study of trademark translation, the author finds that scholars have conducted in-depth research on trademark translation and have achieved certain research results. Although different translation strategies and theories have been accepted by some scholars, the further expansion of the study of trademark translation still has a large space. This paper will discuss translation strategies from the perspective of Skopos theory.

III. Theoretical framework

3.1 Introduction to Skopos theory

Skopos theory is a function-oriented translation theory proposed by Hans J. Vermeer of Germany in the 1970s, based on the research of Katharina Reiss, the founder of functional translation theory. In 1971, Reiss proposed that if the translation is equivalent to the original text in terms of content, form, and communicative function, it is the ideal translation. She refers to this kind of translation as “integral communicative performance” (Nord 2006). However, she found that it is occasionally hard to achieve idealized equivalence during later translation practice, even unsatisfactory. As a consequence, Reiss put forward that the functional characteristics of the translation should be prior to the principle of reciprocity. On this basis, Reiss’s student Vermeer further broke through the limitations of the theory of reciprocity and proposed the dominant theory of the functional school---Skopos theory. He believed that translation is based on a source text as a form of intentional and purposeful translational action (Nord 2006). According to Skopos theory, the purpose of the overall translational action is the prime principle to determine any translation process (Nord 2006).

Skopos theory determined the three rules that translation should follow: the Skopos rule, coherence rule and fidelity rule. The first principle of Skopos theory is based on the theory of human behavior. The purpose of the original text is the translation criterion. Based on the original text activity, the intercultural human communication also becomes an important factor within the scope of the translators’ consideration. Vermeer believes that the intended purpose of the translation determines the strategy of translation. When translating, multi-source information provided by the

original text should be attached more importance by the translator so that the translator can seize the main points to translate to meet the requirements of the client, and the translation should be combined with the purpose of the translation and the reader of the target language, which is “the end justifies the means” (Nord 2006). The coherence rule means that translation should make sense in the communicative situation and culture in which it is received so that the receiver can be able to understand the translation easily (Nord 2006). The Fidelity rule refers to the translation must be faithful to the original text, and be faithful to the target reader and the initiator of the translation to achieve a balance between the two. This kind of relationship is referred to as fidelity or intertextual coherence. In fact, this rule states that if the overriding principle of skopos and the rule of intratextual coherence have been satisfied, some relationship must be established between the two (Baker 2004). Both the translator’s interpretation of the source text and the translation skopos rule play decisive roles in the form (Nord 2006).

Later, in order to optimize Skopos theory, Nord adds the loyalty principle. “Loyalty refers to the interpersonal relationship between the translator, the source-text sender, the target-text addressees and the initiator” (Nord 2006).

3.2 Relevance to the study

Trademark translation is also a process of intercultural communication. Different cultural circumstances in which people live may lead to different ways of thinking, aesthetic temperament, interest, national psychology as well as the social value in trademark translation. Hence, translators should fully understand the cultural background and habits of target recipients, think about their differences with their native languages, pay attention to appropriate cultural transformation and consider the aesthetic culture during the process of trademark translation so that foreign cultural recipients can understand and accept translation easily (Chen Lian 2002). The Skopos rule in trademark translation is one of the manifestations.

According to Skopos theory, the result determines the process. Thus, it is proper to take Skopos theory to guide trademark translation. This paper attempts to study trademark translation strategies under the guidance of Skopos theory.

IV. Application of the Skopos theory to trademark translation analysis

The purpose of the business is to seek maximum benefits. Promoting the product is the prime function of the brand name. Successful trademark translation can facilitate merchants to get huge profits. Guided by this purpose, trademark translation is an interaction between the original text and the target text, but it is not necessary to copy the original text into the target language. Hence, Skopos theory of functional translation theory is a great option to guide the translation of trademark names. The first principle of Skopos theory is the skopos rule, which means that the translation results determine the translation method. Under the guidance of Skopos theory, the translator should give priority to the target audience, because the target audience provides direction for the purpose of the translation. The desire of the recipients provides a variety of possibilities for trademark translation because target audience has their own historical development knowledge, cultural background knowledge and expectation of the trademark translation. That trademark translation meeting the needs of the audience is a sensible behavior for merchants. The target consumer of the product is the key point. Whether the purpose of trademark translation can be achieved depends on whether it can be in line with the preferences of the target consumer.

Therefore, the method to be used depends on the achievement of the translation purpose of the trademark name, that is, whether it can cater to the consumer and whether the product can be sold. With this general principle, different translation methods can be used for different brand names.

4.1 Literal translation

The literal translation of trademark words refers to the equivalent words directly translated into the translated words according to the literal meaning of the original trademark words, such as “Blue Bird” (car) --- “蓝鸟”. Blue Bird reminds us of the Belgian writer Maurice Maeterlinck's drama. In the play, Blue Bird symbolizes “future happiness”. As a trademark of the car, Blue Bird means “the source of happiness”. Another example is the “Jaguar”(car) ---美洲豹. Jaguar is a British super-luxury sports car. Its design line is very smooth, and its ideas have unique cultural taste, so it can capture the hearts of countless fans. It was originally translated as “积架” in Hong Kong, but this name lacks imaginativeness. Nowadays, “积架” has gradually been replaced by the “美洲豹” as translated in the mainland. The “Jaguar”---美洲豹 is obviously a literal translation, but the name is vivid and the artistic conception is beautiful, in line with the jaguar's pursuit of lines, passion and speed from the inside out. The key to using the literal translation method is to faithfully convey the connotation information of the trademark itself and reflect the beautiful image of the commodity. Trademark designers like to use vivid images, profound meanings, and intentions embodying local cultural customs as the symbol of products. For example, “皇冠” (wedding photography) can be directly translated as “Crown”. In the culture of both the East and the West, the crown symbolizes honor and eternity, so it is very suitable for the theme of wedding dresses, and also can highlight the identity and status of the wearer. “自然美” (cosmetics) can also be translated as “Natural beauty”, which conveys to the Western audience that cosmetics can make users more and more beautiful. Such products will naturally be sought after by consumers. “好日子” is literally translated as “Good days”, and “自由鸟” is translated as “Free bird”, which are also successful cases. The former expressed the merchant's good wishes to the users, and the latter hinted that wearing the dress would make people feel relaxed and happy. Similar trademarks include “Camel” (tobacco) --- “骆驼”, “White Cat” (washing powder) --- “白猫” and “Microsoft” (PC) --- “微软”, etc.

When translating literally, it is necessary to take into account the differences between the meanings of English and Chinese, as well as the national culture and national psychology of the East and the West. If the intention contained in the trademark has the same or similar meaning in Chinese and Western cultures, then the literal translation should be considered a good strategy. At this time, the translated name can completely convey the original intention of the designer to the Western audience and achieve the equivalence in terms of information, aesthetic function, expression and vocative function, which is enough to be called a successful trademark translation.

4.2 Transliteration

When a trademark word does not have an equivalent word in the target language that can express the meaning of the original trademark, it can be translated by using the same or similar words that are read in the translated language and are easy to remember. If the translation is successful, not only can the original rhythm of the original trademark be preserved, but the translation can also be made exotic. Transliteration is the way that the trademark is translated according to the pronunciation of the source language to show features of the commodities so that it

can deepen consumers' impressions and memory (Shi Yujuan 2005).

For example, "Tide"---汰渍 in the pronunciation is very close to the original sound, but also gives the impression of being real and clean. In "Benz" (car) ---奔驰, the Chinese translation follows the original trademark homonym, and it successfully shows the special information of the car that is powerful, fast and sporty. The English translation of the Chinese clothing brand "雅戈尔" is "Younger". This transliteration is a pun, and the clothes worn by customers will make them look young. The advantage of transliteration is to preserve the authenticity of the brand name and to show the origin and quality of the product. For example, Italy and France are famous for their fashion. France's Chanel is famous for its perfumes and fashions. The Chinese translation of Chanel---"香奈儿" gives consumers a scented and high-end atmosphere. The famous American sporting goods, Nike, uses the name of the goddess of victory in Greek mythology. When this brand is translated into Chinese, it is based on the pronunciation of Nike, which is good in quality and durability and represents tough sportsmanship. As a result, it attracted a lot of Chinese consumers to buy. The famous French wine Hennessy is translated as "轩尼诗" in Chinese. The words that are completely irrelevant in the Chinese context appear in the public as a brand name, which not only gives people an exotic sense but also has invisibly added a noble and cultural atmosphere. Other examples are "Peak"---匹克; "Casio"---卡西欧; "Colgate"---高露洁 and so on.

In addition, the double-voiced words are pronounced easily. In order to improve the recognition of trademarks, many companies take advantage of this trademark naming method. Although their trademark names may lack profound meaning, they can leave a deep memory and a good impression on consumers. To give the target language consumers the same feeling, the transliteration method always is used, because this method can preserve the effect of the double sound in the target language when translating the name of a double-tone brand. For example, the down jacket named "鸭鸭" is translated into "Duck". Although it retains the original intention and can be related to the product, "duck" has a stupid and clumsy meaning in English culture, so it is obviously not desirable. If the brand name is translated to "YaYa", although there is no real meaning, it is more lovely. Similarly, the children's clothing brand "娃哈哈" is directly transliterated as "Wahaha", which is full of childlike and happy associations. It does not have to be translated as "Chuckling kids", which is both tedious and mediocre.

The transliteration method makes the translation name and the original name unified in pronunciation. It also can retain the beauty of the tonality of the original trademark, so trademarks read catchy. It actually realizes the equivalence between the aesthetic function and the vocative function. Therefore, it is widely used in trademark translation. However, its shortcomings are also obvious. Transliterated trademarks often lack the cultural heritage and cultural flavor that the trademark is endowed with.

4.3 Transliteration and free translation

The combination of sound and meaning demonstrates that the translated name is similar in pronunciation to the original name, and is related in semantics. Taking the pronunciation and the meaning of the source language into account at the same time, the combination of transliteration and free translation also reflects the quality of products (Zhang Hekai and Wang Yunqiao 1997). To retain the style of the original trademark and the target language, the translation may be different from the original brand name. However, the translation method that achieves the purpose of conveying the meaning of the trademark is more easily accepted by consumers, and the effect is

more far-reaching. Therefore, it is a great method to combine language translation with cultural translation.

For example, the sports brand Reebok was translated into “Leibao” at the beginning in China, which has nothing to do with the characteristics of its sports brand. In fact, Reebok is a South African kudu which runs fast. Obviously, the meaning of the original trademark name is not reflected in this translated name. When the translated name was changed to “Reebok”, the characteristics of the pronunciation were preserved, and the sporty characteristics of the footsteps were smooth and aptly translated. As a consequence, the market performance completely obtained tremendous success. “黛丝” (shampoo) is translated as “Daisy”, which means “first-rate character or beautiful girl”. It is naturally reminiscent of the beautiful image of the girl who uses this shampoo brand. “乐凯” (film) is translated as “Lucky”, which is also a wonderful translation model. First of all, the pronunciation of the original name is very close to the original name. Secondly, “乐凯” can be understood as “happy and triumphant” in Chinese, and lucky means having good luck. Both translations have the same effect. Famous home appliance brand Hisense Electric has an imposing English translation of “Hisense”, which makes it stand out in the international market. Because “Hisense” sounds the same as high sense, consumers will believe that this appliance will bring people a high-end experience. The translation of the drink “Robust” is catchy and powerful. “Robust” means “strong and powerful”, which implies that the drink will make people strong and energetic, whereas “乐百氏” has no practical significance. Obviously, the translated name is more successful than the real name in both the temperament and the meaning.

Transliteration or free translation may sacrifice some of the merits of the original trademark name. For example, transliteration may abandon the superiority of the original trademark name, and the free translation may not pay more attention to the aesthetics of the sound. Translators often use a combination of sound and meaning so that the best translation effects can be produced. Using this approach, the translator always chooses a word with product characteristics and positive meaning as transliteration. The trademark translation using this method usually consists of two parts, one part of which resembles the original name, and the other part is ideographic. This method of translation preserves the meaning of the pronunciation of the original brand name as much as possible, and the target audience is easy to accept the translation. It may have differences between the original trademark name and the translation of the brand name. However, it achieves the purpose of transmitting the meaning of the trademark in light of the style of the original trademark and the target language.

4.4 Conversion

When the method of literal translation, transliteration or transliteration and free translation can not achieve good results, conversion can be used to discard the meaning and pronunciation of the original trademark in order to find another way to redesign a product that is favored by Western audiences. As we all know, the “联想” computer was once translated as “Legend” and later changed to “Lenovo”. The trademark was not directly translated as “Association”, nor transliterated as “Lian Xiang”, but “Lenovo” has established a strong brand image in foreign markets, so the translation of the trademark is undoubtedly successful. Another example is about pure water trademark. Zheng Guanghe’s English trademark for pure water is “AQUARIUS”, which means Aquarius in the 12 constellations. Although the translated name is different from the original trademark in terms of pronunciation and meaning, its meaning is “the water in the bottle” which has a high degree of fit

with the product of this company so “AQUARIUS” is completely a good English trademark. The men’s clothing brand “劲霸” is translated into “K-boxing”. The Chinese trademark name gives people a feeling of masculinity. Transliteration can not achieve this effect, and the translation of the trademark such as “robust” or “power” is too ordinary. “K-boxing” will undoubtedly give people a sense of fierceness in the mind, and it is a better choice to match the meaning of the original brand name. The translation method requires that translators be familiar with Chinese and Western cultures, in particular, the aesthetic tendency, customs and cognitive styles of the English language and English audiences. In addition, translators need to be proficient in marketing. For this reason, conversion is not as widely used in practice as other translation methods. With the continuous improvement of the level and quality of the people, the conversion will become a major trend in trademark translation.

In many cases, the translation process is a process of creation. Due to distinctions between language and culture, a lot of concepts of two different languages are different. The original trademark names have various features that have been accepted by consumers in the original market. It is the key step to knowing how to retain the characteristics of the original trademarks in the target language market and produce the same effect. If literal translation, transliteration or transliteration and free translation can’t achieve good results, translators may wish to abandon the sound and meaning of the original trademark and translate the original trademark name into a translated name according to its characteristics and effects. As a process of interpretation and rewriting, trademark translation is different from the meaning and spirit of literary translation. Thus it is often added or deleted to the original trademark name to meet actual needs.

To sum up, trademark translation is not simply to convert a language into another language literally. Instead, it is a process of re-creating trademark words based on the understanding of the performance, characteristics and functions of the goods under the guidance of Skopos theory, so that the trademark translation can achieve the purpose of promoting goods to the greatest extent.

V. Conclusion

5.1 Summary of the study

As a symbol of goods, the trademark intuitively reflects the attributes of the product and allows consumers to have a good or bad impression of the product at first time. Sometimes it can also directly affect the consumer's perception of the quality and influence of the product so as to promote or reduce consumers’ willingness to buy. Trademarks are also the core embodiment of corporate image, and their strengths and weaknesses are related to the sales of products and even the competitiveness of enterprises in the market. Today, trade between China and foreign countries will expand even further. The English translation of trademarks is particularly important, and it is an important part of products entering the international market. A large number of facts have proven that trademark translation of products directly affects their popularity in foreign consumption and sales in the international market.

From the perspective of Skopos theory, translation does not have to be specific to the original. If the intended purpose of the translation and the special function of the text are neglected during the translation process, the original text will not be translated into another language successfully, and it is likely that the original effect will not be achieved. In short, Skopos theory breaks the equivalent view of translation, emphasizes the role of the translator and text function in translation and raises the intended purpose of translation to a higher level. The inclusion of

cross-cultural communication in the field provides a new perspective for trademark translation and has a positive guiding significance for trademark translation practice. In order to reproduce the effect of the original trademark in the translation, the author believes that trademark translation should be guided by Skopos theory, and adopts a translation strategy and method oriented to the target language and culture.

5.2 Suggestions for further research

The application of the Skopos theory to trademark translation analysis is discussed in this thesis. However, more studies can be directed by other translation theories, such as functional equivalence, communicative translation and semantic translation, because trademark translation is still a complex area. Moreover, trademark translation can be improved by much more translation strategies.

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