The Advertisement Translation Based on the Prototype Theory

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Based on the Prototype Theory, the prototypical feature of advertisement is found to be the combination of three language functions: the informative function, the expressive function, and the vocative function. The advertisement translation means the adjustment of the informative function and the expressive function according to the differences between languages or cultures in order to maximize the vocative function. The faithful translation is the closest to the prototype of the source text but not necessarily the best translation.

Keywords: the Prototype Theory, advertisement, the informative function, the expressive function, the vocative function

Introduction

The advertisement not only conveys the value of goods and services, but also serves the function of stimulating consumer purchasing desire; therefore, it is often rhetorical and highly creative. The advertisement translation requires translators to strive for both information equivalence and functional equivalence in the text, but due to language and cultural differences, the two are often incompatible. How to maintain a balance between informational transfer and functional transfer in translation is an important issue in the advertisement translation.

Category is the fundamental concept of cognitive linguistics. Human cognition of the external world cannot be separated from category division. By categories, the complexity of the external world cognition can be reduced. The result of categorization is concepts and meanings. Wang Yin believed (2009) that "category division, in essence, is a process of concept formation. Each concept has a corresponding category" (范畴划分，就其本质而言，就是一个概念形成的过程。每个概念都有一个对应的范畴) (p. 89). According to the stylistic characteristics, Liu Miqing (2012) divided texts into six categories: journalistic texts, argumentation, official documents, description and narration, technical texts, and applied texts. Among them, the advertisement belongs to the family of applied texts. The classification of categories helps to clarify concepts and grasp the fundamental characteristics of the subject. In addition, the philosophical foundation of cognitive linguistics is the philosophy of embodiment, which believes that concepts do not directly mirror the objective essence of the subject in the human consciousness, and "acknowledges that understanding concepts should include subjective factors of the cognitive subject" (承认对概念的理解应包含认知主体的主观因素) (Wang, 2009, p. 89). In other words, category is the classification of the external world based on the interaction between both subjective and objective factors, and it is, in general, a subjective summary of the external world. In this way, categories (or concepts) are flexible, and different cognitive subjects may have both commonalities and individualities in their cognition of

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the same category (or concept), which reflect the creativity and imagination of cognitive subjects. From the perspective of cognitive categories, the advertisement translation can ensure that the translator does not deviate from the paradigm of the advertisement when practicing translation, while also allowing the translator to engage in a game between the source culture and the target culture, fully unleashing his or her creativity.

The Prototypical Characteristics of the Advertisement

Over 2,000 years ago, dating back to the age of Aristotle, the classical category theory was deemed unchallengeable, which regards categories as a collection of elements with common characteristics, believing that features are binary and the boundaries of categories are clear. Namely, a certain element is either a member of a category or not. In the 1970s, Eleanor Rosch and her colleagues abandoned this objectivist view and posed a challenge to the classical category theory, establishing the Prototype Theory (or the Theory of Prototypes).

The theory is proposed based on Wittgenstein's theory of Family Resemblance. He compares a category to a family, believing that family members have similarities in appearance but are very different from each other. Rosch and Mervis defined Family Resemblance as: "… a set of items of the form AB, BC, CD, DE. That is, each item has at least one, and probably several, elements in common with one or more other items, but no, or few, elements are common to all items" (Wang, 2009, p. 102). The prototypical category is one composed of members with family resemblances. From this definition, it can be seen that firstly, the boundaries between category members are not black or white, but are of fuzziness and that secondly, the more familial characteristics a member possesses, the more they can become a typical representative of the family. The member with the most familial characteristics can be considered a prototype. There are two different interpretations regarding the concept of "prototype": "One refers to a typical representative; the other refers to an abstract scheme representation or a set of attributes" (一是指具体的典型代表；二是指抽象的图示表征，或属性集合) (Wang, 2009, p. 113).

We believe that the prototypical features of the advertisement conform to the second interpretation. Regardless of the culture, the role of advertising is to convey information about goods or services and gain consumer recognition, and there is no advertising that deviates from this particular characteristic. Wang Shuhuai and Wang Qun (2006, p. 13), based on Newmark's theory of textual function, namely, the informative function, the expressive function, and the vocative function, pointed out that "in the advertisement, the former two functions are surface functional forms, while the latter is a much deeper one, which is the result of the joint implementation of the informative function and the expressive function" (在广告语篇中，信息功能和情感功能是表层的功能形态，而意动功能则是深层的功能形态，它是信息功能和情感功能联合实现的结果). This argument can be regarded as the prototype feature of the advertisement. The informative function is the function of transmitting information about goods or services. There are three types of expressive functions: "(1) pride and confidence; (2) friendliness and hospitality; (3) warmth and romance" (①自豪、自信；②友好、殷勤；③温馨、浪漫) (S. H. Wang & Q. Wang, 2006, p. 15), which are achieved through vocabulary, sentence structure, intertextuality, and textual perspective changes. The combination of the informative function and the expressive function in an appropriate way produces the vocative function, which is to win the trust of consumers and arouse their desire to consume. The advertisement translation aims to coordinate the informative function and the expressive function as much as possible in the process of translation under the premise of differences in languages and cultural backgrounds, and maximize the realization of the vocative function.

Strategies for Translating the Advertisement

The vocative function dominates the advertisement, followed by the informative function. The role of the expressive function is to serve as background, as Newmark (2001) said:

> Few texts are purely expressive, informative or vocative: most include all three functions, with an emphasis on one of the three. However, strictly, the expressive function has no place in a vocative or informative text—it is there only unconsciously, as "under life". (p. 42)

As a background function, the expressive function is not unimportant, but rather it is an important link between communication the informative function and the vocative function.

If the translation of an advertisement can highlight its vocative function and balance its informative function, the translation is closest to the prototype of the advertisement category; on the contrary, if the translation highlights the informative function, weakens the vocative function, or adds, deletes, or adapts the source language information due to cultural conflicts and other factors, then the translation is a marginal member of the advertisement category. Based on the above principles, we can categorize the advertisement translation strategies into the following three categories.

Literal Translation

Literal translation aims to achieve the maximum consistency between the target text and the source text in terms of the informative function, the expressive function and the vocative function, provided that there are no language differences or cultural conflicts between the source language and target language as much as possible.

Example 1:

Source text:

观景台

263米高的观光廊是上球体的主要观光楼层。向下俯瞰时，游客可以看到代表旧上海历史的外滩，陆家嘴金融区和见证新上海诞生奇迹的美丽黄浦江。高259米的高空透明观景台是世界上独一无二的360度透明观光走廊。来这里走走吧，象踩着繁华的陆家嘴，体验在漫步云端的感觉。

Target text:

Observation Deck

The 263 meter-high Sightseeing Gallery is the main sightseeing level in the Upper Sphere. When overlooking downward, the visitors can see the Bund which represents part of the old Shanghai history, Lujiazui Financial Zone and the beautiful Huangpu River which witness the miracles of the New Shanghai. The 259 meter-high Transparent Observatory in the Upper Sphere is the world's unique 360-degree transparent sightseeing corridor. Here, visitors are encouraged to walk around to experience the feeling of strolling over clouds. You can image stepping on prosperous Lujiazui.

This is the advertisement of the observation deck of the Oriental Pearl TV Tower in Shanghai. Its informative function is mainly to introduce the location and height of the observation deck as well as the function of the transparent sightseeing corridor. Although advertisements of this type are only objective statements with plain language, the information, such as a 259-meter observation deck and a 360-degree transparent sightseeing corridor, is enough to arouse the interest of domestic and foreign tourists. Namely, the information function also serves as a vocative function; thus the literal translation is used.

Adjusting the Expressive Function

When the source text and the target text cannot be aesthetically in consistency with each other, efforts should be made to preserve the information of the source text, and the expressive function should be adjusted through intertextuality or changes in rhetorical devices and text structure in order to maximize the vocative function in the target text.

Example 2:

Source text: My Goodness! My Guinnes!

Target text: 此酒只应天上有。   (Chinese advertisement for the Guinnes Wine)

This translation is typical of intertextuality. "Intertextuality, also known as 'cross-textuality', is used to illustrate that the production and understanding of a text depends on the participants' understanding of other texts" (互文性亦称之"跨篇章性",用以说明对文本的生成和理解取决于参与者对其他文本的理解) (Ding & Ai, 2009, p. 132). The source text clearly imitates the English colloquial phrase "My God! My Jesus!" If translated literally as "上帝啊!我的Guinnes葡萄酒", it deviates from Chinese culture and the beauty of rhetorical imitation is completely lost. The translator cleverly uses Chinese parody rhetoric to imitate Li Bai's poetic line "此曲只应天上有", which fits the aesthetic taste of Chinese readers and preserves the expressive function of the source text, thus achieving the vocative function.

Example 3:

Source text:

A vacation to Egypt sphinx for itself. A trip to Hawaii is filled with leizy days. An African vacation is exciting safaris I'm told. A trip to Switzerland' Alps to relax you. A vacation in France is a Seine decision.

Target text:

去埃及度假吧,瞻仰一番狮身人面像的风采,包您不虚此行。走一趟夏威夷,看一看美丽的花环,定会让您悠悠然流连忘返。信不信?非洲假日的丛林之旅会给您有惊无险的美妙体验。如果您要放松一下,就到瑞士去吧,风光旖旎的阿尔卑斯山会让您心旷神怡的。想去法国游历吗?漫步塞纳河畔,是您最明智的决定。 (Xiao, 2021, p. 41)

This advertisement introduces five world-famous tourist destinations, and in terms of the expressive function, it highlights a warm and romantic language style through homophones. Among them, sphinx is a homophonic word for "speaks"; leizy (Hawaiian wreath for welcoming guests) for "lazy"; safaris for "so far as"; Alps for "helps"; and Seine for "sane". It is difficult to reproduce these homophones in Chinese translations, so the translator successfully changes the warm and romantic language style to a friendly and hospitable language style by using phrases, such as "包您不虚此行", "让您悠悠然流连忘返", "让您心旷神怡", and "是您明智的决定", and rhetorical questions, such as "信不信?" and "想去法国游历吗?", thus realizing the vocative function.

Example 4:

Source text:

山海关啤酒厂坐落在风景优美的避暑胜地、历史名城——山海关。素有"龙头"之称的万里长城的东部起端,由此伸向大海。该厂始建于1982年,后经二次扩建和技术改造,如今已形成了具有年产8万吨啤酒和9千吨麦芽的生产能力,是我国啤酒行业的重点骨干企业之一。

Target text:

Shanhaiguan Brewery is a key enterprise brewing beer in China. It is located in Shanhaiguan, a picturesque summer resort and historical town, where the East End of the Great Wall extends to the sea. Since its founding

in 1982, Shanhaiguan Brewery has been technically transformed twice and expanded to the present scale with an annual capacity of 80,000 tons of beer and 9,000 tons of malt (Dong, 2009, p. 351).

In terms of the informative function, the translation does not make any changes to the source text. The only problem is that the style of the source text does not conform to the westerners' thinking patterns. The theme of this text is that Shanhaiguan Brewery is one of the key backbone enterprises in China's beer industry. The Chinese way of thinking is to focus on details first and then on the main idea; westerners are exactly the opposite. So, according to the western tradition, the translator changes the last sentence of the source text into the first sentence as the topic sentence of the entire text, successfully adjusting the expressive function by changing the text layout.

Adding, Deleting, or Adapting the Information in the Source Text

This strategy is mainly driven by two reasons. Firstly, cultural conflicts result in the translator's having to add, delete, or adapt the information in the source text. Secondly, the addition, deletion, or adaption does not affect the value of the goods or services, but can instead be more in line with the consumers' aesthetic orientation, thereby enhancing the vocative function.

Example 5:

Source text: Lovable. Drawable. Magical.

Target text: 可圈可点可画心。 (iPad advertisement from Apple's official website)

The source text uses three relatively rhyming adjectives, which provide both subjective evaluations (lovable, magical) and objective descriptions (drawable) of the iPad's functions. Those who have used the iPad know that the iPad comes with a powerful Apple Pencil, and the writing is very smooth, almost comparable to using a pen to draw on paper. However, if the text is literally translated as "可爱，可作画，神奇", the beauty of the text disappears, and the expressive function of the text no longer exists although the objective information that the iPad can write and paint is barely retained. Therefore, the translator removes all evaluative information from the source text, retaining and highlighting only functional information, cleverly translating it as "可圈可点可画心". According to the information provided by Apple's official website, the new iPad adopts a full screen design, equipped with a 10.9-inch retina display screen, with four bright colors to choose from, and various essential accessories including Apple Pencil, allowing users to use the iPad to write, draw, take notes, and send messages, making everything easy and smooth. This is the main feature of the new iPad and also the idea that the translator wants to convey to consumers in the advertisement. Moreover, the expression "可圈可点" not only highlights the powerful function of Apple Pencil but also serves as a harmonious Chinese four-character idiom, making the advertisement easy to read and in line with the Chinese aesthetic standard. In this way, although the translation sacrifices some information of the source text to a certain extent, it does not harm the elegance, but further strengthens the expressive function of the translation, enhancing the vocative function simultaneously.

Conclusion

From the perspective of the Prototype Theory, the prototypical effect of the advertisement is an organic combination of three language functions: the informative function, the expressive function, and the vocative function. Among them, the informative function and the expressive function are surface functions, while the vocative function is a much deeper one. How well the vocative function is realized depends upon the joint implementation of the informative function and the expressive function. Besides, the informative function is relatively more important than the expressive function. The advertisement translation has two distinctive

characteristics. First, the faithful translation is the translation closest to the prototype. In other words, the translation should present all the information (the informative function) of the source text as much as possible, while pursuing the expressive effect (the expressive function) that is as consistent as possible with the source text. Under these two premises, the vocative function is maximized. Compared to the informative function, the expressive function is the background and can be adjusted according to the language differences, with the aim of providing the target readers with a similar aesthetic experience like that of the readers in the source language context. Secondly, the faithful translation may not necessarily be the best translation. If, due to cultural differences or for some other reasons, the information in the source text is added, deleted, or adapted without affecting the value of goods or services, the expressive function of the advertisement can be retained or enhanced and finally, the vocative function can be strengthened accordingly. This kind of translation, although not faithful, can still be considered an excellent translation.

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