

Translation of Cosmetics Trademarks from the Perspective of Translation Aesthetics

Shuai Wang

School of Translation Studies, Qufu Normal University, China

Abstract—This thesis presents the process of cosmetics trademarks translation from the perspective of artistic conception of translation aesthetics. The source name and target name of a cosmetics trademark are born in different cultural context. The two artistic conceptions created by the two names are connected by translation subjects' aesthetic experience and humane attainments based on the exchange of two languages. It studies successfully-translated cosmetics trademarks in Chinese market as examples to explain how artistic conceptions are created and connected.

Index Terms—trademark translation, cosmetics, artistic conception

Since the reform and opening up policy, more and more foreign brands have entered and been stationed in China. Simultaneously, many Chinese brands have been seeking the way to walk out. As a result, the quality of cosmetics trademarks translation plays an important role in the success of enterprise in the target market. The statistical data from China E-business Research Center shows China's cosmetics sales has broken through RMB 200 billion in 2012 and cosmetics expenditure has ranked second in the whole world only after US.¹ Cosmetics industry has been another high-growth market after real estate, communication, automobiles and tourism industry. Therefore, study on the cosmetics trademarks translation is of great significance to numerous foreign brands' marching in and Chinese brands' walking out.

I. LITERATURE REVIEW

Studies on trademarks and translations in west countries are confined to the business perspectives—marketing and brand management strategy, and cultural perspectives. What's more, studies mainly include trademarks of west countries. Since 1990s, trademarks in Asia market has drawn the attention of the academic world (Chan, 1990; McDonald and Roberts, 1990; Robinson, 1995; Johansson and Hirano, 1999; Blair, 2000) with the sharp rise of emerged markets. For example, Chan and Huang (1997; 1999; 2001) focused on the naming characteristics of Chinese trademarks and analyzed the law of naming for different trademarks from the perspective of linguistics. It is also pointed out that a successful trademark should be of positive connotation apart from pleasant-to-listen, readability and conciseness.

“Cosmetics trademarks translation” “cosmetics brands translation” and “cosmetics brandnames translation” being keyword respectively with no time span, the writer has searched on CNKI and found that the sum of articles is 63, including six dissertations for Master Degree after deleting uncorrelated articles. Among all the articles, eight of them are written from the perspective of aesthetics, taking up 12.7%. Studies on cosmetics trademarks translation from the perspective of aesthetics starts late but is on rise. Many scholars such as Xu Shanwen (2007), Yu Junying (2008), Zhang Jing (2009), Zhao Ping (2011) and Ge Shuyi (2012) have summarized translation methods of cosmetics trademarks from the perspective of aesthetics and emphasized the nonnegligible status of subjects (translators and readers) in aesthetics. Starting from the perspective of cultural aesthetics, Lin Hua put forward in 2008 that cosmetics trademarks translation should conform to the general acceptance and aesthetic standard of target readers and purchasing psychology and customs of consumers in the target language community, as well as product properties and function. Chen Min surveyed semantic loss in the process of cosmetics trademarks translation from the perspective of aesthetics and emphasized the beauty of Chinese characters in 2012. However, discussions on aesthetics in the above mentioned articles are all restricted to some aesthetic elements such as beauty in sound, word and rhyme. Ye Hui interpreted aesthetic principle to beauty of simplicity, of image, of artistic conception and of originality in 2010. He also pointed out that a successful translated cosmetics trademark should not only convey the connotation of the source trademark but also reach a realm of beauty by reinforcement and sublimation. However, he did not study further or deeper on beauty of artistic conception and on how to realize beauty of artistic conception in the process of translation.

Putting trademarks, aesthetics of translation and cosmetics in corresponding cultural context, this thesis discusses in-depth how to realize beauty of artistic conception in the translation process of cosmetics trademarks.

II. AESTHETICS IN COSMETICS TRADEMARKS TRANSLATION

¹ http://cz.ce.cn/xwzx/201305/21/t20130521_884767.shtml (accessed 28/5/2013).

The word aesthetic is derived from the Greek αἰσθητικός (aisthetikos, meaning “esthetic, sensitive, sentient”), which in turn was derived from αἰσθάνομαι (aisthanomai, meaning “I perceive, feel, sense”). The term “aesthetics” was appropriated and coined with new meaning in the German form Ästhetik(modern spelling *Ästhetik*) by Alexander Baumgarten in 1734. It is also derived from the French word “esthétique”, both German and French words come from the Greek aisthetikos “sensitive, perceptive”. Aesthetics is a branch of philosophy dealing with the nature of art, beauty, and taste, with the creation and appreciation of beauty. It is more scientifically defined as the study of sensory or sensori-emotional values, sometimes called judgments of sentiment and taste. More broadly, scholars in the field define aesthetics as “critical reflection on art, culture and nature.” More specific aesthetic theory, often with practical implications, relating to a particular branch of the arts is divided into areas of aesthetics such as art theory, literary theory, film theory and music theory. Confucius emphasized the role of the arts and humanities (especially music and poetry) in broadening human nature and aiding li (etiquette, the rites) in bringing us back to what is essential about humanity. As well as being applied to art, aesthetics can also be applied to cultural objects such as crucifix or tools. Aesthetic coupling between art-objects and medical topics was made by speakers working for the US Information Agency. This coupling was made to reinforce the learning paradigm when English-language speakers used translators to address audiences in their own country. These audiences were generally not fluent in the English language.²

According to its origination, Aesthetics includes two aspects: subject and object. For the objects, aesthetics are showed or expressed by their images or appearances or sounds. For subjects, aesthetics comes from psychological reflection on objects, which is called “aesthetic feeling”. Aesthetic feeling is a kind of direct or indirect physical pleasure induced by beauty in nature, only which is elevated into a cultural, reasonable and mental level to fill human’s physical experience with cultural and mental beauty, can people walk towards a harmonious and beautiful world thanks to the pursuit to beauty.

Trademark, aesthetics of translation and cosmetics are all products of social development to a certain historical period. Trademark can be dated back to the title of an ancient Greek writer’s work. In China, image-text trademarks have appeared in North Song Dynasty time. Trademark has become a part of product and tends to be common in the modern market economy, which is not only a mark to distinguish products, but also a tool to compete in the market economy. According to Chan and Huang (1999, 2001), trademarks must bear three elements: language elements, market elements and legal elements. When name a product, first of all, the name must avoid “taboo” in the target context. It should be pleasure to hear, and have a good connotation. Second, The name should be marketable, which means it is suitable for the product, its positioning, its promotion and advertising. Last but not least, when the name is given, it must be applied to the Trademark Office of The State Administration For Industry & Commerce of the People’s Republic of China³ before it is commercially used. On the basis of “avoiding to be the same with other brandnames” and “avoiding taboos”, it could be registered officially, and then it can be called a trademark. As a result, a successful translated trademark must bear the three elements as well. When can be used legally, it can not only produce a beautiful connection in the mind of consumers but also reach the effect of brand recognition.

Commonly provided with pleasing aroma, cosmetics can help people make clean and tidy appearance, benefiting both physical and psychological health. Aesthetics of translation can bring beauty and pleasure to people as well. Consequently, translated cosmetics trademarks become the indispensable subject to bear and deliver this kind of aesthetic feeling. The highest state of aesthetics of translation is to reach the beauty of artistic conception, which is a kind of endogenous aesthetic feeling produced by aesthetic subjects when looking at the aesthetic objects. Aesthetic subjects can feel themselves in a beautiful artistic conception by a kind of connection based on experience or memory. Translation aesthetics aims to help people enjoy the artistic beauty by language transformation (Mao, 2005). Its objects of study are aesthetic objects (source texts and target texts), aesthetic subjects (translators and readers), aesthetic activity, aesthetic judgment, aesthetic appreciation, aesthetical standard and the creative aesthetic representation in the translation process.

III. BEAUTY OF ARTISTIC CONCEPTION IN COSMETICS TRADEMARKS TRANSLATION

The word of “artistic conception” is derived from China’s ancient poetry, which could also be called “realm” or “ambit”. Chinese theory of art has begun to explore “realm” from Tang Dynasty. Wang Changling mentioned in his *Poetic Styles* that a poem has three conceptions—object-conception, feeling-conception and artistic-conception (Liu and Zhang, 2011). Thus it can be seen that artistic conception is based on “thing” and “feeling”. Artistic conception in ancient poetry means a kind of artistic state formed by combining poet’s feelings with the described life picture. *Jen-Chien TZ’u-hua* by Wang Guowei pointed out “It is much more to the point to speak of ching-chieh than of vital force and substance (ch’i-chih) or spirit and tone (shen-yun). To have ching-chieh is basic while the others are secondary. If a poem has ching-chieh the other elements will follow along.” The creation of artistic conception is the trademark for a poet so that the priority to deliver artistic conceptions of literary works is to express the “emotions” or “feelings” of the author or characters (Sun, 2000). Famous poet Bai Juyi wrote in his *Letter Written to Yuan Jiu* that what can touch one’s heart most should be emotions. As a result, artistic conception is the product of interactions

² <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Aesthetics> (accessed 20/5/2013).

³ <http://www.ctmo.gov.cn/sbsq/> (accessed 20/5/2013).

between translation subjects and objects and of harmony and unity between subjectivity and objectivity. It always appears in the manner of fusion of feelings with the nature setting, which is the so called “The (poetic) state is not limited to scenery and objects alone. Pleasure and anger, sorrow and joy are also a sort of ching-chieh in men’s hearts. Therefore those poems which can describe true scenery and objects, true emotions and feelings, can be said to possess ching-chieh. Otherwise they may be said to lack ching-chieh.” (Wang, 1998, p.2)

A translator’s highest level in translation is his interpretation to the source trademark and creation of artistic conception. Many successful translated Chinese trademarks are derived from China’s ancient poetry. For example, Revlon, its translated brandname is Lu Hua Nong in Chinese which comes from Li Bai’s “Her robe is a cloud, her face a flower. Her balcony, glimmering with the bright spring dew.” The former sentence describes Lady Yang⁴’s appearance as a flower and the latter one represents the beauty of a flower with dewdrops on it by Revlon’s Chinese pronunciation—Lu Hua Nong. The beautiful peony becomes more gorgeous by the moistening of glittering dew, which means taken care by Emperor Xuanzong, Lady Yang becomes so in fine fettle that she looks like a Heaven fairy descending to the world. This kind of artistic conception comes from China’s cultural context so that Lu Hua Nong is highly attractive to customers who are familiar with Lady Yang. On the other hand, for those who are not grown up in China’s cultural context, Lu Hua Nong is only three simple Chinese characters with no relation. Therefore, in the opinion of the writer, attention should be given to translation process, translation subjects, objects and the existing context from a macro level to create the beauty of artistic conception of cosmetics trademarks. The whole translation process includes the following five steps:

a. Translated trademarks (source names) are born from original trademarks (target names), while existing in different cultural contexts. Reproduction or creation of artistic conceptions is based on cultural context which is the source of experience and memory. It conforms to the first characteristic of artistic conception —— situationalized image in art (Liu and Zhang, 2011). Placed in the designated scene, atmosphere and environment built by the artist, readers will feel staying in a critical state between real and illusion without pictures and languages.

b. A successful trademark can bring beauty of artistic conception to readers in its original context. This kind of beauty comes from people’s experience or memory in the context. Similarly, a successful translated trademark can also bring beauty of artistic conception to readers in its target cultural context. This kind of beauty comes from people’s experience or memory in the target cultural context. It conforms to the second characteristic of artistic conception —— individualized experience in art. That means “Realm is the same while the hearts to feel it could be different”. Artistic conception possesses unique aesthetic characteristics and aesthetic experience (Liu and Zhang, 2011).

c. Trademark translation is a process of understanding and expression. Translation skills can realize the transformation of designative meaning from the semiotic level, which could be called language transformation. Yang Chengshu (2008) put forward the conception of words and expressions relating to cultural context and the technique of correspondence on the basis of corresponding relationships between two languages. According to the closeness degree to source language, it could be ranked in the following order:

i. Replacement

Replacement means to replace the vocabulary conception in the source language with that in the target language. For example, “Maybelline” should be pronounced to “Mei Bai Ao Lan” in Chinese. However, it is translated to “Mei Bao Lian”⁵ in Chinese so as to make it fit people’s acceptance habit to cosmetics trademarks in the Chinese context much better.

ii. Duplication

Duplication means to move all or part of the lexical morphology in the source language to target language. For example, “Head & Shoulders” was translated into “Hai Xian Du Fei Si” when it first landed on China, which was hard to be memorized due to length and pronunciation. What’s worse, it had nothing to do with the beauty of artistic conception, which worsened the situation of being popular among Chinese consumers in a relatively long period. It was translated into “Hai Fei Si”⁶ afterwards, which is both concise and readable. Besides, the refreshing and graceful artistic conception built by “Hai Fei Si” conforms to the product positioning of shampoo in an extreme way.

iii. Supplement

Supplement means to add contents or mend morph above the meaning of source language. For example, “Impress” was translated into “Yin Xiang” directly at first, which provided a low product identification and no artistic conception. Afterwards, it was translated into “Yin Xiang Zhi Mei” which means “The beauty of impression” in Chinese, indicating its position of cosmetic. “Zhi Mei” comes up to the psychology of woman to leave a nice impression to others, building a beautiful artistic conception.

iv. Paraphrase

Paraphrase means to reorganize morph or word order according to grammar of target language or pragmatic principles. For example, “ORCHIDEE IMPERIALE” from France is translated into “Yu Ting Lan Hua”, which adopts

⁴ Lady Yang, an ancient beauty and imperial concubine of Emperor Xuanzong

⁵ “Mei” means beautiful, “Bao” means rarity, “Lian” is the name of Lotus flower in Chinese. “Mei Bao Lian” means as beautiful as a lotus flower and as rare as treasure.

⁶ “Hai” means sea, “Fei” means fly, “Si” is used to describe hair in ancient China. “Hai Fei Si” brings Chinese people a scene that a young lady is standing facing to the sea with her long and beautiful hair blown and caressed by the sea wind.

word inversion, conforming to Chinese's reading habit. What's more, the use of "Yu" and "Ting"⁷ brings noble flavor to readers. From its translated trademark to its spokeswomen who are mainly female CEO or female artist, it is easy to find its high-end brand position of dignity, elegance and power. As a result, it achieves the support of various consumers of high-level, high-grade and high-consumption, which fits for its slogan — Orchidee Imperiale, Great Party Together. It accords with women's psychology of being ambitious of success and brings strong sense of beauty by building an artistic conception of standing out and accomplishing both success and fame.

v. Modulation

Modulation means to change opinion, perspective and insights. For example, "Clinique" is translated into "Qian Bi"⁸ in Chinese, which gives up transliteration and literal translation but displays cosmetics' function of making people's appearance beautiful and clean. It constructs the wonderful artistic conception of a beautiful lady with fine, smooth and shiny skin.

d. In trademarks translation, connection between artistic conception of the original culture and target culture depends more on the mutual communication and transplantation between two kinds of culture so that readers in two different contexts could feel similar beauty of artistic conception. Therefore, it is suggested to comprehend the social history and cultural background of the source language and various elements of the target language such as national culture, codes of language, aesthetic taste, consumer psychology and value orientation in a macroscopic view. Cultural context was put forward for the first time by Malinowski, a British anthropologist, which means the socio-cultural background, mode of thinking, values, emotions and social mentality where language is used. As environment of the whole language system, cultural context plays a decisive role in the whole language system. Labov, an American sociologist once said that language should be studied in its social environment. Language is a part of culture and also the reflection of culture. Language cannot exist without culture which is the soil where language live and develop. Consequently, languages rooted in different cultures carry with the brand of their culture inevitably. In the process of translation, translators should take into consideration not only beauty in sound and vocabulary but also beauty of meaning in the context of target language, which is the foundation of building an artistic conception. For example, the Chinese meaning of "Dove" is "pigeon", a kind of birds. However, "pigeon" is hard to be accepted as the name of bath products such as toilet soap for consumers in the Chinese context. "Duo Fen"⁹, the translated trademark emphasizes the lasting of fragrance which makes it possible to smell it earlier than seeing it. A refreshing artistic conception arises spontaneously.

e. In fact, it is an aesthetic process from language transformation to connection between different artistic conceptions. By his own judgment and experience, translator realized aesthetic reproduction and sublimation of trademarks in a creative way so as to make artistic conception be applicable to both trademarks and translated trademarks born in two different cultural contexts, reaching the effects of advertising products and stimulating buying inclination. It conforms to the third characteristic of artistic conception — synthetic presentation of artistic effect. Artistic conception is not a kind of art with single-level, single-dimension and single-element. On the contrary, it is a synthetic presentation of artistic effect (Liu and Zhang, 2011).

IV. CONCLUSION

"Literal translation", "faithfulness", "similarity in spirit" and "perfection/sublimation" are all important constituent parts of China's traditional translation theories. Combining various images together, artistic conception aims to imply other than explain or reproduce, which is an important components of translation value (Zhou, 2010). Starting from the perspective of artistic conception of translation aesthetics, this thesis presents the process of cosmetics trademarks translation in a much broader way. A successful translation depends more on the connection between two different cultural contexts than the beauty of pronunciation, vocabulary and rhyme. And translator is the messenger to connect two kinds of cultural contexts. In the process of trademarks translation, translator should also analyze the thought, art and culture of the source text apart from language and reconstruct the artistic conception of the source text in the target language context based on analysis and aesthetic experience. The construction of artistic conception relies on the live-action in the cultural context while the sublimation of artistic conception proposes much higher requirements to translation subjects. In especial, translator should possess high aesthetic appreciation and perfect themselves in humanity knowledge. When translating foreign trademarks, mastering and utilizing skillfully Chinese traditional culture will yield twice the result with half the effort.

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⁷ "Yu" means imperial, "ting" is usually used to describe "palace" in Chinese.

⁸ "Qian" means pretty and beautiful, "Bi" means jade in Chinese.

⁹ "Duo" means many, "Fen" means fragrance in Chinese.

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Shuai Wang was born in Jinan, China in 1981. She received her Master Degree from Shandong University.

She is currently a lecturer in the School of Translation Studies, Qufu Normal Univeristy, Rizhao, China. Her research interests include translation studies and English for specific purposes.