

# A Study on Advertisement Translation Based on the Theory of Eco-translatology

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**Abstract**—With the development of market economy and globalization, advertisement has become more and more important, and meanwhile, it is an indispensable part in people's daily life. Therefore, the translation of advertisement has attracted a lot of attention of domestic and foreign experts and scholars. A variety of research has been done on it. However, there still exist many problems in the advertisement translation. This paper tries to use the theory of eco-translatology proposed by Professor Hu Gengshen to study the translation of advertisement. Combined with actual cases analysis, the study is proceeded from several dimensions, such as language, culture, communication and so on. It is greatly hoped that this study can offer some help and reference for other translation activities.

**Index Term**—advertisement, translation, eco-translatology, adaptation and selection

## I. INTRODUCTION

With the reform and opening up and the economic development, China is playing a great role in the world. What's more, the world has been smaller and smaller with the trend of globalization. The trade communication between different countries has been more and more frequent in order to meet the need of ascending consuming desire. We can see advertisements in all aspects of our daily life, such as the TV shows and the billboard. Therefore, advertisement has been an indispensable element in this modern world. So the advertisement translation has been a great importance. In recent years, studies from different direction on the translation of advertisement are accelerating, such as the Scopus Theory, the Schema Theory, the Framework Theory and so on. But this paper tries to study from another direction which is still new in China, that is, eco-translatology. Eco-translatology attaches much importance to the leading role of translator and the principle of multi-dimensional transformation, namely the language dimension, the culture dimension, and the communication dimension and so on. All these elements compose a whole eco-environment. If the translator can play his leading role and do the right selection and adaptation in the whole eco-environment, then he can make a translation of high quality.

Eco translatology deals with the translation in terms of ecology, which develops from the theory proposed by Hu Gengshen in his book *An Approach to Translation as Adaption and Selection*. As far as the advertisement translation is concerned, there are a numbers of articles regarding languages features at the micro-level not at the macro-level. As a matter of fact, the person who makes the advertisement is the operator who manipulates the whole process and fulfills the function of the advertisement by ways of adaption and selection, considering all the factors related to the advertisement. Therefore, a translator is required and expected to reproduce the advertisement at the macro-level. The eco-translatology, based on the ecology, is accordingly applied as the guidance of translation activities. There are few theories covering the advertisement translation at the macro-level and instead a large number of papers studying the advertisement translation just cope with words, phrases and sentences and rhetorical devices at the micro-level.

The author has made a lot of effort to study the advertisement translation under the theory of eco-translatology, hoping that the study can help to find the beauty of advertisement translation in an all-round way and more specifically. In the meantime, the author also wishes that this paper will make its contribution if it can be regarded as a reference to the other people who also attempt to study the advertisement translation.

## II. LITERATURE REVIEW

At abroad, the studies on advertisement translation have experienced many changes from linguistic translation to the functionally and social-culturally-oriented translation theories since the late 1970s. The advertisement translation mainly goes through three stages. At the first stage, the advertisement translation was regarded as a syntactical and grammatical transformation focusing on translation equivalence. At the second stage, the text analysis and the equivalence between the source text and the target text were greatly studied. The third stage was marked by Mathieu Guidere's Study from 1995 and he emphasized effects on the target audience, stressing the function of the target text rather than the loyalty to the source text.

At home, the study on the advertisement translation has attracted scholars' attention in a lager scale. The person who first wrote paper about the advertisement translation is Zhou Jingwen, researching in the field of foreign trade many years. The paper *Translation of Export Advertisement* was published in *International Trade Journal* in 1984, which

mainly discussed his own experiences in the advertisement translation and put forward his ideas on the specific and practical translation in terms of translating long or repeated sentences or the sentence without subject (Zhou, 1984). Li Guoqing, in his paper *Achievement of Social Purpose and Choice of Translation Strategies—from the Perspective of Holliday's Functionalism to Study Strategies of Parody Advertisement and Sets of Advertisement Translation*, put forward his views on the advertisement translation from the perspective of functionalism. “the evaluation of translation should be placed in a cultural context. As long as the translation achieves equivalence in a culture and has the same effect in context, compared with the source language, it is a good translation; as for the translation strategy, the methodology should be flexible and as long as it can achieve purposes of advertisement, it works.” (Li, 2009, P.5). In recent years, eco-translation has been drawing more and more attention among scholars. For example, Paper *Public Signs Translation from the Perspective of Eco-translation ---Take Slogan Theme of Shanghai world Exposition as an Example*, published in *Shang Hai Journal of Translators*, was written by Su Huijun in 2010.

Although there are lots of studies on the advertisement translation, most of them only focus on language and rhetorical features. One of the reasons is that there are few macro-level translation theories which can guide the advertisement translation. Eco-translatology which is proposed by Hu Gengshen can fill the gap. It is from a higher and more macro point of view to analyze the translation process and it regards ecology theory as a basic principle in translation. “As primary and integrated knowledge, ecology is of inclusive significance in that it can provide some practical perspective for research. Eco-oriented thinking is a kind of synthesis-oriented understanding.” (Hu, 2009, P.2)

### III. ON ECO-TRANSLATOLOGY

Eco-translatology is a specific course which study translation from an ecological point of view. This definition is based on the theory of translation as adaptation and selection, which comes from the book *Theory of Translation as Adaptation and Selection* written by Professor Hu Gengshen, who is an authority in the field of eco-translatology. The book tells that the theory of translation as adaptation and selection originally comes from Darwin. It maintains that translation is just a procedure of adaptation and selection under the guidance of the translator who is treated as the core in the whole translation procedure, and one also should have the ability to translate the original version to a new one. In other words, the theory of translation as adaptation and selection define translation as a kind of selective activity during the process which the translator tries to adapt to the eco-environment. Eco-environment involves the original text, language, and the world the words have reflected, like a whole party in which the language, the communication, the culture, the society, as well as the writer and reader combine and interact with each other. All these elements in the eco-environment have a decisive influence on the translation. Professor Hu thought that translation actually is an alternative process between the translator's adaptation and selection in the whole eco-environment of translation. He gave priority to the measure of three-dimensional transformation. Therefore, such theory has also been called multi-dimensional selective adaptation and adaptive selection. A good test is the one which has a successful transformation on all these dimensions, and the one which has a good reader feedback.

Conclusions about Eco-translatology as Follow:

Translation process	An alternative process between the selection and adaptation of the translator.
Principle of translation	Multi-dimensional selective adaptation and adaptive selection.
Way of translation	Three-dimensional transformation—language, culture and communication
Criteria of appreciation	The degree of multi-dimensional transformation, the reader feedback and the quality of translator.

As a result, eco-translatology has broken many kinds of limitation in the study of translation, and put translation into a more spacious space.

The following are several important concepts related to eco-translatology. (1) “eco-environment of translation refers to the whole situation and condition presented by the source text, the source language and the target language, including the corresponding part of language, communication, culture and society as well as the author, the reader and the sponsor.” (Hu, 2006, P.3) (2) Principles of translation—selective adaption and adaptive selection from multi-dimensions. In other words, “the principle of eo-translatology maintains multi-dimensions of adaption and adaptive selection, indicating that a translator bears this principle in mind to adapt and select correspondingly with a focus on all kinds of elements and factors involved in the translation process.” (Hu, 2006, P.3) (3) Methods of translation---switch of three dimensions among three factors: language, communication and culture. Put it in another way, “the method of eco-translatology, guided by the macro-principle of multiple dimensions of adaption and adaptive selection, regards translation as a conversion and transformation of the language, culture and communication.” (Hu, 2006, P.3) (4) Standards of translation review—“in order to have a perfect translated text, a translator should integrate his or her adaption and selection at the highest level. This is the translation standard put forward in eco-translatology” (Hu, 2006, P.4).

To make a successful study of the advertisement translation under the theory of eco-translatology, we should know the characteristic and function of the advertisement translation. It's crucial to this study.

### IV. CHARACTERISTICS AND FUNCTIONS OF ADVERTISEMENT AND ITS TRANSLATION

The superficial meaning of advertisement is making the products be well-known. The famous American Marketing Association defined advertisements as an impersonal communication of information usually paid for and persuasive in nature about products, services or ideas by identified sponsors through the various media. Generally speaking, advertisements can be divided into two types: public relation ads and commercial ads. However, all kinds of advertisement have the same characteristics and functions.

#### A. *Functions and Characteristics of Advertisement*

Advertisement is prevailing nowadays; we can see or hear all kinds of ads everywhere, from the wall outside the road to the main media such as TV or radio. In business, the importance of advertising has been paid more and more concern than before, and whether an advertisement is attractive or not would determine how many products have been sold. Recent study indicates that customers' desires to buy things are greatly affected by advertisement. The more advertisements there are about the product, the more impressive the product is, and the more likely they will buy it. In view of these facts, businessmen are increasing the investment in advertising in order to grasp the public's attention and impress them.

A survey of advertisement abroad indicates that the following three advertisements are always accepted as the most acceptable and effective advertisement in western countries (1) An advertisement which often introduces the function of products and proves its quality by experiments. (2) An advertisement which can often grab consumers' attention and move the audience. (3) An advertisement which make full use of the lovely animals and kids.

To sum up, advertisement has the function of spreading information, persuading consumers, stimulating consumption and show the image of the company. The functions of advertisement require advertisement should have following characteristics.

Good advertisement is right to the point, brief and unforgettable. It is based on the so called principle of "KISS", which means to keep it simple and short. During the process of translation, these characteristics should be remained.

#### B. *Translation of Advertisement*

Firstly, the translation of advertisement should be simple and easy for consumers to bear it in mind.

For example: "要想皮肤好, 早晚用大宝" (An advertisement about the product of facial cream)

The translation is "Applying 'Dabao' MORNING and NIGHT makes your skin soft and bright. —Dabao—you will prefer, sooner or later. The translation is consisted of simple sentences which is easy to understand. The word "soft" and "bright" are also rhymed, which make the sentence beautiful and fluent.

Secondly, try to make the words in the translation colloquial, but keeping the original meaning unchanged.

For example: "城乡路万千, 路路有航天" (it is an advertisement of car named Hang Tian)

It is translated into: "East, west, Hangtian is best." It meets the foreign culture perfectly. Using the word "east" and "west" to illustrate hundreds of roads in the country display another picture of country filled of roads. The two words are also more oral.

Lastly, try to make the translation short.

For example: "要买房, 到建行(建设银行)" (An advertisement of bank)

The translation is: "Wanna a house of your own? Buy one with our loan." It is a sentence of rhetorical question, which is not only short, but also more persuasive.

Therefore, the quality of advertisement translation is highly required. However, the current situation of advertisement translation is not so good. There are still many problems existing. When making and translating advertisement, the writer or translator is required to master both the laws and regulations of import and export, but also consumer's lifestyle and experience, culture background and other knowledge.

### V. AN ANALYSIS OF CURRENT SITUATION OF ADVERTISEMENT TRANSLATION

As whether advertisement is well translated is related to many parts of people's life, we pursue the maximum effect of the advertisement translation. So it is greatly meaningful to discuss the current situation of the advertisement translation. There exist problems in advertisement translation in terms of language expressions and culture, which is regarded as a key point in our discussion.

#### A. *Analysis in Terms of Language*

The translation of advertisement is based on its original version, but it has never been a simple job of word to word translation. The translator should first have a deep comprehension of the original text, a right analysis of the property of the product, and a sound grasp of the objective market, before making an optimal translation.

Problems in terms of language often lie in three main parts: words usage, grammar and pragmatics.

The abuse of words is very common to see in the translation of advertisement. It is all because of the bad quality of the translator, their weak groundwork in translation and careless collation. For example, Chinese people like to use "cheap" to describe the low price of the products, While, in foreign country, the word "cheap" often refers to the products of bad quality. The word "cheap" has already been replaced by the word "economic".

The problem in grammar lies in the sentence structure of the advertisement. The two sentence structures in Chinese and English are totally different. Therefore, when doing a translation, the sentence structure should have a relevant change. However, such transformation will easily cause grammar errors and make the translation stiff. There is an advertisement saying: the products features high speed, high performance, and high efficiency, underscoring the usefulness in actual manufacturing scenes. The advertisement is a simple sentence, but the translation should transfer into coordinated compound sentence to meet Chinese habit. So the translation has such characteristics like high speed, high performance, and high efficiency.

The pragmatic errors often refer to those improper or inefficient expressions in translation which will lead to the failure of understanding. The exact meaning of the original language often becomes fuzzy when it is translated.

Here is an example of Chinese advertisement: “开放型大学让你展翅飞翔”(He Jianju, 2010). If it is translated into “Open universities let you spread your wings and fly.”, few foreigners can understand it. Because there is no such phrase of “开放型大学” in foreign culture. The phrase actually means open study. Therefore, the sentence should be translated into “You can spread your wings with open study”.

### B. Analysis in Terms of Culture

Advertising translation is a kind of cross-culture and cross-language activity. The advertisement will be read by two kinds of different people who are in two different cultures, different locations and different eras. The culture, the thoughts and aesthetic idea of a country have been rooted in its language.

Translators should know much about the taboos in the targeting market, particularly in language. For example, goats in china are propitious animals, while in England, goats refer to lascivious man. Tortoise in china is used in abuse. While in Japan, tortoise is a very lucky word. The flower of crane and chrysanthemum are also typical examples that have two contrary meanings in different countries. Therefore, translators should take much care about such words and avoid them if it is possible.

Religion is a very important part in culture which has a very big influence on people's aesthetics and value perspective. In other words, different religion has different behavior habit and consumption mode. Translator must study the differences among religions so as to adapt to the differences and make a relevant change. Only in this way, the translation of the advertisement can be accepted by the consumers in different religion.

To adapt to the foreign cultural background and custom, translators sometimes must change the length or delete some senseless content a bit under the allowance of the advertiser. There is one example in Chinese as follow:

“某公司自1981 年成立以来,在改革开放,加快企业转换机制方针指引下,以强烈的竞争意识,勇于开拓,积极进取,出口额逐年上升与世界80 多个国家和地区的120 多家厂商建立了良好的业务关系。”

Translation: “ABC Corporation has built up excellent business relations with more than 120 companies and manufacturers in over 80 countries and regions since it was founded in 1981. We make progress actively with a strong sense of competition. Our exports have been increasing year after year”.

Obviously, some content has been deleted in the translation. However, such deletion doesn't affect the customers' thought about the products, and also make the translation more concise and efficient.

## VI. ENLIGHTENMENTS FOR ADVERTISEMENT TRANSLATION

It is not easy to make a good conversion in translation while keeping the original meaning unchanged. To make a good translation, one should make conversion in all-dimensions, such as language, culture, communication and aesthetics. And then make the best adaptation and selection. Such translation will win the attention of the audience. Eco-translatology offers a chance to make up the defects on language, culture and other aspects in advertisement translation. This will be discussed in detail in the following parts.

### A. Language Dimension

Under the whole eco-environment, translator should think more about whether the language in the translation is adaptively selected when facing different languages. Many mistakes happen in the translation because translators think too little about the language or expressions they choose.

To make a good translation, translator is better to avoid the using of ambiguous words, and use some soft words, paralleled sentences, or some homophonic words.

Here is one example:

“Give a Timex to all, and to all a good time” The translation is “人带天美手表, 准时乐道”(Jia Liping, Li Xiaoxia, 2010)

This is an advertisement of watch. The original text made a pun on the phrase “good time”. It means the exact time, and also means “to have a good time”. While “表” and “道” in Chinese are homophonic from which we can see conversion in terms of language dimension. What's more, the sentence is fluent to read. Seen from the communication dimension, the translator has grasped consumers' purposes of purchasing, and put emphasis on the function of the watch. It is regarded a perfect translation.

### B. Culture Dimension

The translators should not neglect the cultural dimension. They should pay attention to the differences between two different cultures.

For example, the advertisement: "To me, the past black and white, but the future is always color." The Chinese translation is "对我而言, 过去平淡无奇, 而未来却是绚烂缤纷。" The translator didn't translate the color directly, because it doesn't meet the language and culture in China. In China, the color white and black can not be equal to monotony. It can not refer to colorful as well. Only by skillful conversion, can the translation be of great vitality. Some skin care products claim that they have the function of whitening. It contradicts to the international aesthetic perspective. Because in western country, rosy black is a symbol of health and wealth, while white color refers to poverty and disease. Therefore, a good translator should know the culture background of the relative country.

### C. Communication Dimension

The superficial purpose of advertisement is making the target products known by the public. But in fact, how consumers think decide whether the information can be well expressed. Therefore, the translation of advertisement should think more about the target consumers, or who the investors are making service for. So, translators should care more about the intercourse when doing the translation of advertisement, so that the translation can achieve the same effect as the original text.

In the actual advertising translation, we can see good translations use many soft words. For example, "prohibit" is rarely seen in advertisements, because it often leaves consumers an impression of aggression. So we often use "no" to replace it. A more soft and easy-going word will get a perfect result.

Here is an example:

"where there is a way, there is a TOYOTA" The translation is "车到山前必有路, 有路必有丰田车"

This is an advertisement of the car—TOYOTA. The advertisement is obviously a piece of proverb. While the Chinese translation is skillfully combined with a piece of Chinese old saying—车到山前必有路, 船到桥头自然直。In 1980s, the biggest car importer in China is Japan, while TOYOTA is the biggest car company in Japan. The translation not only meets the actual situation of TOYOTA, but also reflects the confidence of that car company. Seen from the eco-translatology point of view, the translation met the eco-environment that the original text described. The translation also made a very good conversion in terms of communication.

Of course, good translation of advertisement often takes all of the three elements into consideration, that is, culture, language, and communication.

Advertisement translation which has many characteristics in common with advertisement creation is influenced by many ecological environment factors such as cultural difference, language habits, beliefs, market rules. Therefore, a translator is supposed to have the above knowledge in the process of translation so as to achieve the purpose of advertising. The most important issue the translator should take into consideration is whether the translated advertisement is legal or not in target countries. In other words, a translator needs to know the bilingual culture, advertisement law, as well as the target language. For example, in Britain, the place of products is prohibited to appear in the advertisement according to its brand law. However, there is no such prohibition in Chinese advertisement law. Instead, Chinese people tend to demonstrate the place of products when advertising. For example, you may see advertisement like *SiChuan PaoCai*(四川泡菜), *BeiJing KaoYa*(北京烤鸭). Meanwhile, a translator is expected to meet all the elements involved in the process of translation. Taking proper and flexible strategies to adapt and select. For example, pansy(紫罗兰) represents "elegance" in Chinese, while it means feminine men in English, which is a insulting term. If the brand name of men's clothing, "紫罗兰男装" in China has been literally translated into *Pansy men's clothing*, no men should show any interest in such product in Britain. In translation practice, a translator always meet the challenge from ecological environment. To meet the desire and taste of target readers, the translator should make proper adaption and selection. With the above analysis, it is apparent that the translation process is centered by the translators' activities including taking the translation as a source text reader or a receiver who keeps the translation task in mind. Furthermore, a translator should have bilingual competence covering advertisement, culture, language and advertisement law.

## VII. CONCLUSION

It has been more and more common to see advertisements in our daily life. Advertisements become popular in every social class by all kinds of media. With the development of economic globalization, the spreading of advertisements has been beyond of language and national boundaries. In order to publicize the function and service of the products, as well as its corporate culture, the quality of the advertisement translation plays a critical role in the exploiting of the new markets. How to achieve translation of high quality has caused heated discussion in translation research field.

So far, translators have studied translation from many points of view, while studying advertisement translation under the theory of eco-translatology is still new in China. Eco-translatology is based on the theory of translation as adaptation and selection, which asks translator to play his leading role in doing a series of selective activities during the process of adapting to the eco-environment. The translator should stick to the principle of conversion in aspects of multi-dimensions, and make a good conversion in terms of language, culture, and communication and so on.

Eco-translatology puts translation into a more spacious space. It will make up all the defects existing in advertisement translation in many aspects, such as language, culture, communication, esthetics and so on. Therefore, to study advertisement translation in the view of eco-translatology will receive an unexpected good effect.

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