

A Study of English Translation of Yili Products' Advertisements from the Perspective of Pragmatic Equivalence

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Abstract—With its long-term development, Yili Group has become one of the leading roles in the dairy industry of China. To expand its international brand influence, the translation of its advertisements is necessary for its promotion. Simultaneously, the application of language pragmatic equivalence and social pragmatic equivalence is of great guidance in the advertisement translation. This paper studies the English translations of Yili products from the perspective of these two principles, and thus positive and negative practices of translating advertisements have been selected to illustrate the application of these two principles. Based on the analysis, some references can be concluded to enlighten the translation of advertisements.

Index Terms—Yili products, advertisement translation, language pragmatic equivalence, social pragmatic equivalence

I. INTRODUCTION

“A pragmatic approach is required to the study of language in use and the analysis of discourse.” (Brown & Yule, 2000, p.27) Similarly, a pragmatic approach is necessarily to be considered in the course of translation, since translation itself is processed for the purpose of making sense and performing communicative functions as expected.

Dating back to 1938, an American philosopher Charles William Morris had his book *Foundations of Theory of Signs* published and in it pragmatics was first recorded as a branch of linguistic studies, focusing on the relationship between the use of language and the language users. With numerous scholars attempting to examine their linguistic principles and translators trying to have their practices backed up by theories, pragmatic approach and translation studies began to integrate with each other. In 2001, Leo Hickey proposed that pragmatics was helpful in achieving the “pragmatic equivalence” between the source text and the translated text. Starting from the 1980s, pragmatic approaches to translation studies also began to address the issues concerning equivalent translation in China.

Pragmatic equivalence in translation is measured by two aspects — language pragmatic equivalence and social pragmatic equivalence. To translate the source text into the target language centers on conveying the original message and intention, therefore that equivalence translators endeavor to achieve in their works rests on not only the semantic equivalence but also the pragmatic equivalence. The pragmatic linguistic equivalence, based on the understanding of the explicit and implicit meanings of the original message, emphasizes the reproduction of the closest equivalent statements in the target language to convey the original message, and does not stick to the linguistic format of the original work. The social pragmatic equivalence, focusing on the equivalence translation, serves the intercultural communication and cross-language communication. (Ye Miao, 2009, p.44) It demands translators understand the exact meanings of the source language and convert it into another language.

To accomplish the conversion, translators need to tackle smoothly the purpose, literary form of the source text as well as the words clearly defined and the meanings between the lines. “A language undergoes continuous change and development sometimes to its detriment, unfortunately.” (Samuelsson-Brown, 2006, p.29) When components of a language are to be translated into another, every possible factor should be given careful consideration to. This is particularly true when it comes to those products exported to the international market.

Yili Industrial Group Co. Ltd, located in Inner Mongolia Autonomous Region, is one of the largest dairy producers in China. Once serving the Olympic Games and the World Expo, Yili now ranks in the top 10 world's dairy companies. Its

great achievement in fame and sale is connected with the successful promotion of products to a large extent, which also rests on the translation of advertisement materials when its products are to be exported to foreign countries and welcomed to the tables. According to the information on its homepage, Yili's dairy products are classified into four branches—liquid milk, ice cream, milk powder and yoghurt. In addition, each of them covers more than ten kinds.

In this study, the appropriateness and accuracy of selected translations of those products will be analyzed and discussed first in terms of language pragmatic equivalence and secondly in terms of social pragmatic equivalence.

II. ANALYZING ADVERTISEMENT TRANSLATIONS OF YILI PRODUCTS FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF LANGUAGE PRAGMATIC EQUIVALENCE

“Since Leech classified general pragmatics into pragma-linguistics and socio-linguistics in *Principles of Pragmatics*, Professor He Ziran holds the opinion that the equivalent translation can also be divided into two parts as language pragmatic equivalence and socio-pragmatic equivalence.” (Wang Hongjun, 2014, p.123)

The language pragmatic equivalence is generally in line with the conception of dynamic equivalent translation raised by Nida. Language pragmatic equivalence refers that when doing translation activities, translators fully understand the implied meanings in certain context, and convert the original meanings in the source language into the target language. The expressed forms of translated texts in vocabulary, grammar, and semantics can be flexible, but translators should convert the original meanings of the source language to the target language on the basis of full comprehension of its superficial meanings and implied meanings, so as to achieve the equivalence.

The advertisement is a direct form of product's publicity. The function of advertisements requires they should not only have their unique features to attract consumers, but also should be clear and easy to be understood, so that they can be accepted by most of consumers. Since the modern society is filled with various advertisements, advertisements themselves must contain high attention value, in order that they can raise the public's attention.

Different from general translation, advertisement translation owns some unique characteristics. In order to realize the communicative function of advertisements, and meet with consumers' psychology in the target language, the translation of advertisements should accord with the principle of language pragmatic equivalence.

Combined with the language pragmatic principle and the function of advertisements, the following are the English translations of Yili products' advertisements as examples to analyze the application of linguistic-pragmatic equivalence in the translations of their advertisements. The study will be conducted from the differences of vocabulary, grammar, and semantics in the source language and the target language. In this way, the authors analyze whether the translations of the advertisements can achieve a good effect among English speaking consumers. Furthermore, some inspiration and suggestions for translating practices of advertisements will be raised.

1. From the Perspective of Vocabulary

In the view of vocabulary, words with similar meaning and structure may have different interpretive bias. (Yang Yujuan, 2002, p.49) In order to achieve the language pragmatic equivalence, translators should fully understand the original meanings of the source language and convert the original meanings to translated texts. There are some examples of the translations of Yili's advertisements that can illustrate this point of view vividly.

[1]Source text: 伊利谷粒多: 优质谷物浓浆中融入口感顺滑的牛奶, 搭配多种维生素, 全面营养开启一早好状态。

Translation: Yili Grain More: when condensed quality grain drink is mixed with smooth milk and various vitamins, we create Yili Grain more, providing all-round nutrients that help consumers start a day's work in a good shape. (<http://www.yili.com/product/2.html>)

The translation of the product fully considers the original meanings of the Chinese advertisement, and puts “多” into “more”. These two words are similar in meaning and function, and can achieve the pragmatic equivalence in general. However, the character “多” in Chinese is only a static adjective, and means “a number of”. The translation “more” is a comparative adjective with a dynamic meaning, which can make foreign consumers feel a condensed taste when drinking the milk.

There is a negative example in the translation as follows:

[2]Source text: 味可滋: 伊利味可滋甄选醇香好奶, 巧妙融合优质的进口食材, 独特的浓郁美味, 带来不尽的满足和享受。

Translation: Wei Ke Zi Milk Shake: the flavor can be nourishing selection - mellow good milk, clever fusion of high-quality imported food, unique flavor and delicious ... (<http://www.yili.com/product/6.html>)

The translation expresses the general meanings of the source text, except dealing with the translation of “好奶”. According to the context of the source text, the word “好奶” is supposed to mean milk with a high quality. However, it is translated into “good milk” by a word-for-word method, which will make foreign consumers feel confused about the definition of “good milk”. This translation only focuses on word-for-word translation, while neglecting different expressive ways in Chinese and English, and results in a pragmatic question. Considering the intention of the source text, the word “好奶” would be translated into “high-quality milk”, so that it can give foreign consumers a direct impression of its superior quality.

From the above examples, translators should have a clear idea that when translating advertisements, there is no need

for translators to be limited by literal meanings of words in the source text, but it is important for translators to express the pragmatic meanings of words. However, it is also important to avoid the word-for-word translation of the source language lest it cause foreign consumers' misunderstanding.

2. From the Perspective of Grammar

Generally speaking, English grammar and Chinese grammar are quite different. For instance, English is of great aggregation, while Chinese is a discrete type. That is to say the core of English sentence is a subject-predicate structure, and all other sentence constituents serve for it. Though Chinese and English types of sentences are various, complicated and flexible, the main structure of Chinese sentence is not so clear as one of English sentence. Besides, English is a hypotaxis language and Chinese is a parataxis language, which means that English sentence is more complete than Chinese one, and it usually expresses its meanings by its shape. On the contrary, Chinese language prefers invisible cohesion, and that is to say, it focuses more on the functional meanings of sentences. Therefore, when doing the translation of advertisements, translators should also pay attention to differences in the grammar of these two languages. Here are some positive examples of the translations of Yili's advertisements.

[1] Source text: 冰工厂：伊利冰工厂，产品中加入新鲜果肉、果汁，不仅带来冰爽的口感，更添一份活力体验。

Translation: Yili Ice Factory, with fresh fruit pulp and juice, brings you both an ice-cold taste and a vigorous experience. (<http://www.yili.com/product/8.html>)

As we can see, the source text is composed with several short sentences in parallel structure, which is a main feature of Chinese language. There is no conjunction between neighboring sentences. The English translation is not limited by its original grammatical structure, and the translator deals with it into a subjective-predicate structure. In this way, the translation looks more logical and the sentence structure is clearer.

[2] Source text: 伊利红枣酸奶：伊利红枣风味酸乳，枣汁含量≥5%，枣汁与酸奶相结合，健康又美味。

Translation: Red Date Flavored Yoghurt: Healthy and yummy, Yili red date flavored yoghurt mixes dates juice and yoghurt, with about 5% or more dates juice content. (<http://www.yili.com/product/24.html>)

From this example, we can see that the Chinese version is also composed with several parallel sentences, and the meanings of each short sentence are coordinate. It first introduces its raw material, then its taste and quality. Yet, the English translation first puts the accompanying adverbial at the beginning to stress its flavor and taste, then illustrates its raw material. In this way, it makes the sentence structure clear. In addition, considering the function of advertisements, the translation stresses its function and flavor at the beginning in order that it can better attract consumers. The translation reorganizes its structure regardless of the original structure in the source text, and makes the sentence structure more logical.

3. From the Perspective of Semantics

Since there are differences in cultural backgrounds, social traditions and language habits in context, translators should also pay attention to the differences of semantic meanings in two cultures and try to express the original intention of the source text. As for the words with similar literal and cultural meanings, they can be directly translated, or they should be expressed according to the target language context. Here is an example that can illustrate this point of view.

[1] Source text: 意品：意品冰淇淋，融合优质配料及先进工艺的优雅作品，每一个细节都倾注所能，不断为你带来醉人口感，只为你慢享悠扬人生。

Translation: Yipin Ice Cream is a piece of refined artwork combining quality ingredients and advanced processing technique. We dedicate great efforts to each detail, so that its charming taste prolongs your melodious life. (<http://www.yili.com/product/10.html>)

Analyzing this translation carefully, we can see that there is a word “醉人” in the Chinese version. The word in Chinese generally has two meanings: one is that something contains alcohol making people feel drunk. The other meaning is a use of metaphor; it means that the taste or feeling of something makes people addicted to it. Having read the original advertisement, we know that the intentional meaning of the advertisement should be the second one. The advertisement expresses that the taste of the ice cream can get consumers fall in love with it, but does not mean that this product contains alcohol. The translator deals with it into “charming”, which has a similar meaning with the implication of the Chinese word. This shows that the translator fully understands the meanings in two different cultures, and achieves the language pragmatic equivalence.

In short, from the above examples, we can learn that the language pragmatic equivalence is of great importance in translating advertisements. Only by fully understanding this principle and putting it into practice can translations well express the original intentions of advertisements, so that they can achieve good effects among foreign consumers.

III. ANALYZING ADVERTISEMENT TRANSLATIONS OF YILI PRODUCTS FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF SOCIAL PRAGMATIC EQUIVALENCE

Social pragmatic equivalence, along with language pragmatic equivalence composes pragmatic equivalence. “In 1951, the pragmatic equivalence was first proposed by Roman Jakobson, a Western translation theorist, in his linguistic monograph *On Linguistic Aspects of Translation*. Roman believed that language was asymmetric, so the core essence of

pragmatics was to achieve the same expressive effect of different languages through various translation methods". (Wang Yingying, Liu Caili & Zhang Jianfang 2014, p.51) That is to say, there exist equivalences between languages. Language is a carrier of culture, and different languages reflect different cultures. Social pragmatic equivalence is beyond cultural barriers to reach cultural communication within the scope of receivers' language. In other words, forms, patterns and styles can be neglected if necessary, in order to achieve the same social effect since every language has its own way to rephrase the same situation.

The reason for discussing social pragmatic equivalence is to explore effective methods to overcome cultural barriers, and render the source language into the target language which is expected to give the same reading experience to target text readers as that of source text readers. Therefore, social pragmatic equivalence translation needs to be discussed. Social pragmatic equivalence translation refers to equivalence translation which serves the communication across languages and cultures. That is to say, the translator should take the understanding of the source text as a foundation, and take the context and cultural habits into consideration, and make the target text appropriate for the culture of receivers' country to achieve translation equivalence.

Social equivalence translation can be obtained through various methods which largely depend on the purpose of translation. After a browse of Chinese and English advertisements of Yili products, it can be found that in some advertisement translations translators has considered social pragmatic equivalence, while in the others, some improvements should be made. In the following part, social pragmatic equivalence translation will be discussed, combined with Chinese and English advertisements of Yili products. Social equivalence translation is sorted into two kinds: one is to replay cultural information which is unique in the source language; the other is to transfer cultural items into those of the target language or just discard its formats and take its connotative meanings.

1. Achieving social pragmatic equivalence with maintaining cultural items.

English and Chinese are two very different languages and they mirror different cultures. Every culture has its own unique cultural items and phenomena. As a carrier of culture, language demonstrates differences by diverse words, and thus English and Chinese languages have their unique methods and words to exhibit the same situations. For those items that have no responding matches in the target language, it is better to reserve the original expression or adopt the method of transliteration. As for Yili advertisement translations, here come two examples.

[1]Source text: 意品: 意品冰淇淋, 融合优质配料及先进工艺的优雅作品, 每一个细节都倾注所能, 不断为你带来醉人口感, 只为你慢享悠扬人生。

Translation: Yipin Ice Cream is a piece of refined artwork combining quality ingredients and advanced processing technique. We dedicate great efforts to each detail, so that its charming taste prolongs your melodious life. (<http://www.yili.com/product/10.html>)

[2]Source text: 伊利每益添: 活性乳酸菌+膳食纤维, 独一无二的双重助消化组合, 在体内形成更高速的“快消化”动力! 畅饮每益添, 就像给肠道按下快进键, 即刻拥有快人一步的“快消化”活力!

Translation: Yili Mei Yi Tian: The combination of active lactobacillus and dietary fiber is Mei Yi Tian's unique benefits in digestion, which accelerate the efficiency of digestion. Drinking Mei Yi Tian, it's all like pressing the fast-forward button of people's digestion system which fills you up with energetic power. (<http://www.yili.com/product/23.html>)

In the above advertisement, “意品” and “每益添” in Chinese have profound meanings in themselves. “意品” means to taste every bite of the ice cream wholeheartedly, however, there are no matches in English to transmit this meaning. Therefore, using pinyin in the translations may be a better choice. As for the advertisement for “每益添”, the product's name is the homophony of “每一天”, which means “every day” in English. It's hard to find English words to display the implied meaning. Here Yili company employs the safest translation - pinyin, but it is advisable to address the connotative meaning in the advertisement. Only in that way can English native readers have the same reading experience as Chinese consumers.

2. Discarding forms and creating translated texts that appeal target consumers.

In English, people use “as strong as a horse” to describe a person who is strong in strength, while in Chinese “力大如牛” is adopted to express the same meaning. In Chinese, people say “孔夫子搬家 —— 尽是书(输)” to make sense that a person always faces failure in life. This allegorical saying employs the event of ancient sage Confucius' (he is a learned person with many books) move and homophony (in Chinese, “书” and “输” have the same pronunciation “shu”) to describe “failure” vividly. However, in English, people have no idea about Confucius, and they do not think books have any relationship with failure. In view of advertisement translations, this principle is also of big use. Here are some examples of Yili advertisement translations to show the principle.

[1]Source text: 冰淇淋口感细腻、柔滑、清凉, 伴随着巧克力的甜蜜、水果的清新和牛奶的浓醇, 是解渴祛暑、尽享休闲的美味选择。

Translation: Ice cream is known for its tender, soft, smooth, and refreshing taste added with a variety of flavors, which bring a cool and refreshing moment in the hot summer. (<http://www.yili.com/product/1y/2.html>)

[2]Source text: 帕瑞缇: 能带给消费者放松愉悦的心情, 满足对欧式精致生活憧憬的高端休闲乳制品。

Translation: Pureday yogurt is a kind of high-end leisure dairy product which can bring consumers a relaxed and pleasant mood to meet the longing for the delicate European life style. (<http://www.yili.com/product/22.html>)

In the above examples, the English advertisement for ice cream is somehow different from the Chinese version. The Chinese version uses “巧克力的甜蜜、水果的清新和牛奶的浓醇” which composes catchy phrases to describe various flavors of ice creams. However, in English, the translator employs “with a variety of flavors” to maintain the character of briefness in advertisement instead of word-for-word translation. In the advertisement for Pureday, the translator is not limited by the Chinese version. Instead, the translator translates the advertisement into one that suits the English consumers’ mentality. In the Chinese version, Pureday can provide consumers with a relaxed and pleasant mood, as well as meet the longing for the delicate European life style. In comparison, the English version refers the relaxed and pleasant mood as the premise of meeting the longing for European life style.

Though social pragmatic equivalence translation is discussed, in fact, considerations should be taken into two aspects. Here comes an example to illustrate this.

Source text: 伊利优酸乳: 香浓爽滑的牛奶 邂逅真实营养的青苹果汁 那一刻的酸甜美味 飞扬青春心情给你加倍快乐 全新升级酸甜好口味 快乐更加倍

Translation: Yili Yogurt: When fragrant and smooth milk meets pure and nutritious green apple juice, the intertwined taste of sweetness and sourness invokes teenage-like vigor and happiness. A new upgrade of Yili Yousuanru with the wonderful mixture of sour and sweet flavors multiplies the joy. (<http://www.yili.com/product/23.html>)

In the example, the translator reserves rhetorical features, but the translator does not translate “那一刻的酸甜美味 飞扬青春心情给你加倍快乐” literally; otherwise, English native speakers will not understand the relationship of taste, youth and happiness. Through logical thinking, the translator renders it into “the intertwined taste of sweetness and sourness invokes teenage-like vigor and happiness”, namely, it is the sweet and sour taste that brings people vigor and happiness. However, it is not suitable for the product’s name “优酸乳” being translated into Yili Yogurt. According to *Oxford Advanced Learner’s English-Chinese Dictionary*, yoghurt means a thick white liquid food, made by adding bacteria to milk, served cold and often flavored with fruit. (Lu Gusun, 2009, p.2341) Yousuanru is not yoghurt, but a kind of milk drink with multiple flavors, and milk makes up a very small portion of the drink.

IV. CONCLUSION

Unlike translating works in other fields, advertisements and advertisement translations aim to have a positively direct effect on consumers as soon as possible and to bring economic returns to the largest extent. Bearing so great and important an expectation, every detailed translation processed in the context of intercultural communication should be given full considerations. To achieve an expected social effect, translations are needed to be worked out on the basis of pragmatic equivalence - social pragmatic equivalence and language pragmatic equivalence.

In this paper, a discussion has been made on the English translations of Yili products’ advertisements from the perspective of social pragmatic equivalence and language pragmatic equivalence. In spite of lacking accuracy in some products’ translations, the translations of Yili advertisements have succeeded generally in conveying the original intention of the source text and achieving a positive effect among the target readers – English speaking consumers as expected.

Considering studies of comparisons between the English version and Chinese version of Yili products’ advertisements, there are two things worth mentioning on the basis of language pragmatic equivalence and social pragmatic equivalence concerning the translation of advertisements of a company’s products. Firstly, better to discard a word-for-word translation and the forms of words in the source text should not be taken as a decisive factor since not all words and phrases have an identical meaning beyond cultures. Secondly, better to find an expression of pragmatic equivalence in the target language to cross cultural barriers, and various translation resources could be adopted in searching for authentic expressions that suit target consumers’ reading habits best.

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