

Strategies for Translating Household Appliance Instructions from Chinese to English*

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Abstract—The translation of household appliance instructions is a new field where there are not enough research and study. At the same time, even much shortage lies in this field which is waiting to deal with. To solve these problems, this paper will discuss and study the translation strategies on household appliance instructions from Chinese into English with considering the choice and usage of words, sentences and language habits according to the translation theories and principles.

Index Terms—household appliance, instructions, translation strategies

I. INTRODUCTION

Since China has joined WTO, more and more household appliances which are made and produced in China are sold toward many countries all over the world. English instructions of household appliances are the most popular and general way for people to know the household appliances. And many customers make a choice of what they want to buy through English instructions. Thus the quality of translation about the instructions of household appliances from Chinese to English has a great influence on the sales volume of household appliances. And it also has connection with the company which has produced this household appliance.

The topic that is “translation about the instructions of household appliances” was found in the journal named Shanghai Journal of Translation for Science for the first time. And the first paper named “The special difficulty in translation from Chinese to English—talk about the choice of noun vocabulary in translation of instructions” was published in that journal. According to the statistics of China National Knowledge Infrastructure, in China, there are only three papers which are about the translation of instructions being published from 1993 to 2001. However, from 2002 to 2011, numbers of the papers about this research have grown rapidly. In summary, the numbers of this kind papers are fifty seven. Among these papers, six of them were published in Chinese Translators Journal, Chinese Science & Technology Translators Journal and Shanghai Translation Society for Science and Technology and so on.

Among the fifty seven papers, thirty seven of these papers have connection to the kinds of instruction. According to the result of statistics, these papers have nine classifications. And the largest classification is the translation of medicine instruction. The second one is the translation of cosmetic instruction. What's more, the third one is the translation of industry instrument and equipment instruction. It is shown in the table below.

TABLE ONE:
THE CLASSIFICATION OF INSTRUCTION TRANSLATION

Classification	times	percent
The translation of medicine instruction	14	37.8
The translation of cosmetic instruction	11	29.7
The translation of industry instrument and equipment instruction	4	10.8
The translation of car usage instruction	3	8.1
The translation of food instruction	1	2.7
The translation of household appliances instruction	1	2.7
The translation of electromechanical instruction	1	2.7
The translation of patent	1	2.7
In total	37	100

According to statistics results, there are twelve theories in the fifty seven papers. By the way, maybe one paper can have more than one kind of theory. At the same time, the results have shown that the first one is The Functional Teleology And the second one is Text Type Theory created by Peter Newmark. The third one is Functional Equivalence Theory put forward by the famous American translation theorist Eugene. Nida in 1969. The detail data are shown in the table two below.

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TABLE TWO:
THE THEORY THAT THE TRANSLATION DEPENDS ON

The theories	times	percent
The Functional Teleology	19	55.9
Text Type Theory	5	14.7
Functional Equivalence Theory	2	5.9
Domestication theory	1	2.9
Adaptation Theory	1	2.9
Contextual Theory	1	2.9
Theory of Grammatical Metaphor	1	2.9
The Social Semiotic Translation Theory	1	2.9
Register Theory	1	2.9
Manifest theory	1	2.9
Schema Theory	1	2.9

With the development of the study in translation, researchers have realized the characteristic and principle of translation on instruction in a macroscopic view and abstract way. That is to say, they develop the specific translation strategies to the theoretical translation strategies progressively. Since 2007, more and more papers use The Functional Teleology and combine with Text Type Theory to produce a new theory (Wei Wei et al. 2013). And the theory which can be used is becoming diversification because the achievement of translation is introduced from other countries.

Instructions have a wide variety and forms, while the main variety is as follows: manual type instructions, label type instructions and the instructions printed on the packaging. According to their usage, they can be divided into electric appliances, food, pharmaceutical, manual mechanical equipment specifications, cosmetics and books instructions.

Generally speaking, instructions have two kinds of purpose. On the one hand, it plays a role of introducing the constituent, function, characteristic and the way of usage of the product to customers. On the other hand, it has the function of advertisement which is to attract the customers to buy this product (Shi, 2014. p. 16).

II. THE CHARACTERISTICS OF PRODUCT INSTRUCTIONS IN ENGLISH

Generally speaking, there are instructions of machinery, electronics, food, medicine and daily necessities. Generally, there are four parts in an instruction:

- a. The characteristic, function and component of product
- b. Methods of install, use, take, drinking and eating
- c. Matters need to be paid attention
- d. The main performance, parameters and specifications

Thus translators should care about the characteristic of product instructions in English when they translate the instructions of household appliances. For example, there is an English instruction below

Product name: Hair Dryer	
Product model: EH-NA10	
Power source: 220V~50Hz	
Power consumption: 1200W	
Dimensions: 187(W)x77(D)x224(H)mm	
Accessory: Quick-dry nozzle	
Place of origin: China	
Date of production: See engraving on the commodity.	
Execution Standard	Chinese GB4706.1 GB4706.15 Standard: GB4343.1 GB17625.1 Company standard: Q/SXWBMJ7

The instructions of household appliances have the function and purpose to tell the costumers about the product and how to use them. And let them know the danger if they use the household appliances in a wrong way. At the same time, it is the strategies for sellers to persuade and guide the costumers to buy their product. So, it has great influence on the sales volume and profit.

III. THE PRINCIPLES OF TRANSLATION IN PRODUCT INSTRUCTIONS

A. The Principle of Faithfulness

According to the famous translator named Yan Fu, he put out that translation should be faithfulness, expressiveness and elegance (Pan, 2003). Thus translators should make the translation be faithful when they translate the instructions of household appliances. For example, one kind of Panasonic hair drier has written that “this appliance is not intended for use by persons (including children) with reduced physical, sensory or mental capabilities, or lack of experience and knowledge, unless they have been given supervision or instruction concerning use of the appliance by a person responsible for their safety” (Panasonic operating instructions. Nose& Facial Hair Trimmer <http://www.docin.com/p-455115440.html>). When we compare English instruction with Chinese instructions of this hair drier, we can find that the translation is faithful to the original Chinese instruction.

The translation of instructions of household appliances should be faithful. At the same time, translators should pay attention to the logical order of the instruction, especially in the part of how to use the household appliances. If translators do not follow the logical order, some terrible accidents may happen, which is dangerous and does harm to customers health and safety. For example, the Philips hair drier has shown the logical orders as follows,

Operating Steps	
Step one	Put the plug in the wall socket.
Step two	1) Set the airflow slide switch to “the desired setting to switch on the appliance. 2) Set the slide switch to setting II for ultra-quick drying. 3) Set the slide switch to setting I for drying short hair or styling your hair (http://www.go-gddq.com/down/2011-04/11042814557935.pdf).” HP8203/HP8202 only: “The ion indicator light goes on to indicate that the ion function has been activated. The ion function provides additional shine and reduces frizz and static electricity(http://www.docin.com/p-373383503.html).”
Step three	1) Set the temperature slide switch to the Quick Dry, Thermoprotect or Cool Care setting. 2) The Quick Dry setting 6 dries shower-wet hair very quickly and safely. 3) We advise you to use the Quick Dry setting only briefly to avoid dehydrating your hair(ibid.). 4) The Thermoprotect setting 5 quickly and gently dries the hair at a constant, caring temperature. 5) The Cool shot setting 4 dries your hair with care and helps to seal in shine(ibid.).
Step four	1) “Dry your hair by making brushing movements with the hairdryer at a small distance from your hair(ibid.).” 2) “Tip: When you have finished drying, press the cool shot button and direct the cool airflow at your hair. This fixes your style and adds shine(ibid.).”
Step five	Set the airflow slide switch to O to switch off the appliance after use.

B. The Principle of Conversion between Two Cultures

The main differences of culture between China and foreign countries are local culture difference, social customs and habits difference and religious faith (Xu, 2012. p. 22). These differences have different effects on Chinese to English translation in different degrees. And these differences maybe lead to misunderstanding of the instructions and have influence on the quality of instructions translation (Shao, 2013.p.20). Thus these differences also have effects on the translation of instructions of household appliances. For example, both the Chinese “Long” and dragon are meanings a kind of animal. However, they have different meaning when they are in different culture. In China, dragon has sacred, noble and auspicious meaning. While in foreign countries, dragon is a kind of animal with the symbol of evil (Newmark, 2002. p. 23). And some colors also have different connotation between two countries. In China, red is usually connected with success, good luck and celebration. However, red often means dangerous things in English. Some numbers also have different connotation between two different cultures. Number six is an example which can be put out. Six is a good number with the meaning of smoothness and good luck. But in English, six is regarded as negative connotation. According to the Bible, number “six” at times represents imperfection, because God spent seven days in creation, so seven takes the connotation of completeness. Besides, six is related with the wild beast.

Thus when translators translate the instruction, they should consider the difference between two different culture and make their translation have the equal and same meaning.

C. The Principle of Clearly and Smooth Translation

Pay attention to express clearly and make the instructions unobstructed, which is very important to customers, because it can let the customers understand how to use a product easily.

For example,

“Wahaha, a children’s nourishing liquid is co-developed by Hangzhou Wahaha Nutritious Food Product Factory and the Dept. of Medical Nutrition of Zhejiang Medical University. The liquid contains rich amino acids, vitamins and particularly supplies children with Ca and trace elements such as Fe and Zn essential to healthy growth. It occupies the leading position in the development of nourishing products and has passed the nation-level evaluation of newly-developed products

(http://wenku.baidu.com/link?url=D7esKGVYdsIa-SIZL3bALa_Vz9DsEwW6ln4NNwMa06sjiNbRBS2KQOtdcFIctbtvVS8-vYg3Re573ro7iG-aJqGgZHwyrM2vs9C0LKOuG7).”

Ingredients: honey, hawthorn, jujube, lyceum, Chinese lotus seed, barley.

Nutrients: per 100ml: protein over 1.5%, Ca 250-300 mg, Fe 12.5-20 mg, Zn 12.5-20 mg.

“Contents: 10 ampules per case, 10 ml per ample, total 100 ml.

Storage: To be kept in a cool place. Quality guarantee for one year and storage period one and a half year (ibid.).”

“Dosage: 1-2 ampules a day in the morning and evening. Sanction No.: Zhejiang Food Hygiene Permit (89)0004-35 Standard Code: Q/WJB 0201-89(ibid.).”

“Manufactured by: Hangzhou Wahaha Nutritious Food Product Factory.

Supervised by: Dept. of Medical Nutrition of Zhejiang Medical University (ibid.).”

We can learn from the instruction above that translators can use a list or a table to make the instructions clearly and smooth enough. And customers can also understand the instructions easier if the instructions are in this form.

D. *The Principle of Objective*

Your objective opinion can let customers trust you. In some way, it proofs that the quality of the product is reliable. Don't change the meaning of the instructions, which is the basic rules to translate instructions. If translators change the meaning, the customers may understand the meaning in a wrong way, which probably causes an accident suddenly. It is dangerous to everyone near the product.

E. *The Principle of Introducing the Reputation of Product*

Talking reputation about the product does good for the product. Normally, translators can use sentences as follows,

- 1) The product enjoys a good reputation/ high prestige at home and abroad.
- 2) The product has won high praises from the users.
- 3) The product has been well received by customers and sells well in Southeast Asia.

4) The product "has gained an excellent reputation in many countries and regions by virtue of its reliability, cost-effectiveness and a wealth of features (http://wenku.baidu.com/link?url=2IvCi3I1pgX8ZHGrXWNNuSWmpdSkaXrIafBbat1jTy5LrmOd72JF1HLebJbDDHQO4T19aSpNmWx3z00-Ga3YoAS3vyQc_7HxbDt0cvv5QS)."

IV. THE STRATEGIES ON THE TRANSLATION OF INSTRUCTIONS OF HOUSEHOLD APPLIANCES

A. *Borrow Words from Other Languages*

When translators want to translate the instructions of product, they should know how to borrow words from other languages. Four ways of borrowing are loanwords, loan blend, loanshift and loan translation.

1. Loanwords

"The borrowing of loanwords is a process in which both form and meaning are borrowed with only a slight change, in some cases, to the phonological system of the new language that they enter (Hu, 2011, p.69)."

2. Loan blend

Loan blending is a process in which part of the form is native and the rest has been borrowed, but the meaning is fully borrowed.

3. Loanshift.

"Loanshift is a process in which the meaning is borrowed, but the form is native. Bridge is an English word, but when it refers to a type of card game, the meaning was borrowed from the Italian ponte. The English word artificial satellite is also a case of loanshift from the Russian sputnik (Hu, 2011, p.69-70)."

4. Loan translation.

"This is a special type of borrowing, in which each morpheme or word is translated in the equivalent morpheme or word in another language. (Hu,2011, p.70)."

B. *Often Use the Simple and Short Words*

The function and purpose of instructions of household appliances is to let customers learn how to use the household appliance as soon as possible. Thus, translators should let the instructions as easy as possible when they translate the instructions of household appliances (Chen, 2014.p.21). If they want to achieve the result, they should use the words that are often used in our daily life, the easy understanding words and short words. These words can let customers want to read the instruction. These words can also let customers remember the product and easy to learn how to use it. All of these can let customers understand the instructions correctly in case something bad happens. At the same time, these words can save the space of instructions.

For example, translators can use the word "use" instead of "utilize", use the word "stop" instead of "discontinue" and use the word "get" instead of "acquire". If translators use these words, almost everyone can understand what the instruction means, which is better for customers. And it can reduce the accidents happening. For example, there are three sentences as follows: "1)Do not use this appliance near water. 2)Do not use this appliance near bathtubs, showers, basins or other vessels containing water (http://wenku.baidu.com/link?url=45YbC5PYi9wTeGq8XxRpYGNEJrnSHTXWPT2v587ixhLiqyVTBdguDibg69hCGzsAHTtagCTdbKTvYB5_w1FtmRcNavRxFGLxi5mxRKTak).") 3)This machine is equipped with a gear transmission mechanism, and its multi-dies are arranged in line. You can see the sentences, they are easier to understand when people read the short and simple sentence and words. These words "do", "use", "water" are all the ones that are short, easy and often used in our daily life. If translators change some of the sentences into "Customers should not make the usage of this appliance near water as well as not make the usage of this appliance near bathtubs, showers, basins or other vessels which contain water", we can compare this sentences with "1)Do not use this appliance near water. 2)Do not use this appliance near bathtubs, showers, basins or other vessels containing water(*ibid.*)". It is easy to find out that the later two sentences are easier to understand. What's more, the word "do" is better than the word "should" when translators translate the instruction. Because "do" is more suitable, easy and short when it is used in instruction.

C. *Often Use the Abbreviations Which Only Have One Meaning*

We can see abbreviations both in our daily life and in the international society. Of course, when translators use

abbreviations in the translation of instructions of household appliances, it can also achieve an efficient result. Many abbreviations can make it is easy for customers to remember the name of the product. And at the same time, it can save the space of the instructions. Such as DV(Digital Video), PC(Personal Computer), CD(Compact Disk), DVD(compact disc-digital video), OD(Optical Driver), HD(Hard Disk), LCD(Liquid Crystal Display) and so on. There are many of these abbreviations which can express what instructions want to introduce and can let customers understand the instructions too, so it is good enough to use abbreviations.

However, translators and researchers should pay attention to some special abbreviations which have two or even more meanings. These abbreviations can not be used in the translation of instructions of household appliances because they have two or more meanings. These abbreviations may let customers misunderstand the instructions. For example, ABC can stand for the American Broadcasting Company, Agricultural Bank of China, a kind of children shoes and the control system of the car. If translators use ABC as an abbreviation in instruction of a household appliance, customers maybe misunderstand what the instruction wants to express, even do not know what the instruction wants to explain.

Moreover, it is important that some abbreviations which are not often used by people should not used in the translation of instructions of household appliances. For example, 1). CC means Carbon copy 2). FYI means for your reference 3). ASAP means as soon as possible. Most people may not know the meaning of these abbreviations. If translators use these words in the translation of instructions of household appliances, customers may not get the correct meaning. In addition, some abbreviations can be used just in some special occasion. And some of the abbreviations have different meanings when they are used in different places or occasions. So, these words can not be used in the translation of instructions of household appliances.

For example, specification

LeLing Golden Silk Small Dates is produced in the biggest area of three big production areas. It is famous in the world for its small body, small pit, thin skin, rich of pulp, good quality and rich of nutrition. It contains Pectin Vitamin, Protein, Fat and rich of Fe, Calcium, Phosphorus and Vitamin AP etc. nutritious materials. It is high-grade tonic of a long history and well known both in China and abroad.

D. Use Elliptical Sentence

Elliptical sentence can save the space of product instruction and make the instruction briefly. For example, be careful when you are washing, which is better than the sentence you should be careful when you are washing your clothes. However, when translators use elliptical sentences, they can not cut off the important and necessary part. If they let the sentences miss these parts, the sentences may have different meaning or can not be understood by customers.

For example, in the sentence “This hairdryer offers you a variety of heat and speed settings for optimal styling freedom, giving your hair the lustre, body and richness you love”, the part “settings for optimal styling freedom” can not be cut off. In the sentence “Check if the voltage indicated on the appliance corresponds to the local mains voltage before you connect the appliance (http://wenku.baidu.com/link?url=ULr-pgqIPr2ToeotJ9htkgh4hBZKLT_QXXb_rUvAL_JZxUpZUucXMkMKbH14V3QXf3D8LTWXH2FqoBI7ejsRPZWLIIpSeU2o1hqdY68xv2G)”, the part “before you connect the appliance” can not be left out. And in the sentence “Do not use this appliance near bathtubs, showers, basins or other vessels containing water”, the part “or other vessels containing water” can not be left out. If translators let the sentence lack the part of “or other vessels containing water”, customers may use this appliance near other vessels which are containing water, and they may be in danger.

E. Use Imperative Sentence

In oral English, imperative sentence lets people feel impolite in our daily life. However, when you use it in instruction, people will believe your product in some degree.

For example, keep it clean all the time; Keep this User Manual for future reference; “Do not attempt to open the device other than as instructed in this guide. Do not drop, knock, or shake the device. Rough handling can break internal circuit boards and fine mechanics. Do not use harsh chemicals, cleaning solvents, or strong detergents to clean the device. Do not paint the device. Paint can clog the moving parts and prevent proper operation. Use a soft, clean, dry cloth to clean any lenses (such as cam-era, proximity sensor, and light sensor lenses). Use only the supplied or an approved replacement antenna. Unauthorized antennas, modifications, or attachments could damage the device and may violate regulations governing radio devices. Use chargers indoors

(http://wenku.baidu.com/link?url=D7esKGvYdsla-SIZL3bALa_Vz9DsEwW6ln4NNwMa06sjiNbRBs2KQOtdcFIctbtvVS8-vYg3Re573ro7iG-aJqGgZHwyrM2vs9COLKOUg7”).

We can see many imperative sentences which are used in the product instruction. And they make the instructions seem simple for everyone to use.

F. Use the Sentence Structure “BE+Adjective/Prepositional Phrase”

This structure makes the meaning of the instruction easier to understand. And it lets the sentence structure more simple. For example, be careful in raining days. This sentence seems very easy for almost everyone who can read English words to get its meaning. In some degree, it is convenient to emphasize the parts which should be paid more attention to.

For example,

1. Poly Clean is specially formulated to clean all dirt and stain from glass, windows and other hard surfaces quickly and easily.
2. This machine is equipped with a gear transmission mechanism, and its multi-dies are arranged in line.
3. The Type CYJ15-18-18 oil pumping machine is of simple and compact construction.
4. It is effective in reducing neurological pain and spasm caused by lack of calcium.
5. Due to its unique formulation, Etha moisturizing lotion is suitable for the skin of children and adults.

These sentences are short and clear enough. They can introduce the function of the household appliances and at the same time, they can save the space of the instruction on paper.

V. CONCLUSION

After a close study of the examples of instructions of household appliances translation, we concluded that the principles of translation in product instruction should be put in an important place. And the translation of instructions of household appliances plays a very important role in the sale of household appliances. It affects the understanding of customers and the sales volume. When we are translating the Chinese product instructions into English, we need to consider the choice of words, phrase and sentences. We can use simple, short and abbreviation words to let the instruction of household appliances become easy for customers to understand. At the same time, translators can use simple, elliptical, imperative and other sentences to translate the instruction of household appliances.

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