Analysis of Translation Strategies of Advertisement under the Reception Theory

Ru Wang
School of Shanghai Maritime University, Shanghai, China

Abstract
In the context of the globalization, all kinds of goods are frequently imported and exported, while advertisement, as an important tool of product marketing, which has increasing tendency towards being translingual. Advertisement translation is more of something that can not be avoided. Advertisement has its own characteristics. Different from other textual translation, advertisement translation lays more emphasis on its readers and encourages its readers to become consumers. Therefore, translators should adopt various strategies to translate the texts. This thesis, under the perspective of reception theory, will analyze the translation strategies through collecting some excellent advertisement translation cases. Here, three conclusions would be drawn through analysis. The translation should first conform to the characteristics of language of advertisement; Then, advertisement translation should take readers in priority to achieve its commercial values; The aesthetic needs and expectation should be satisfied. In the last part of the thesis, under the guidance of the reception theory, there are four translation strategies adopted in advertisement translation, which can offer references for the future advertisement translation. The writer discusses the limitations and gives suggestions for further study.

Keywords
Advertisement translation; The Reception Theory; Translation strategies.

1. Introduction
With the deepening of globalization, multinational enterprises can be seen everywhere, and the relationship between China and the world is getting increasingly close. The imports and exports trade in a convenient and fast way, when international trade is in full swing. In order to quickly integrate the products into the domestic market and attract consumers, advertisement is the most effective way both for producers consumers to show and promote products and to understand even accept, respectively. Therefore, much progress has been made in advertisement which has become an indispensable part of modern society. This new commercial activity creates the need to translate the English advertisement into Chinese. There is the demand for advertisement translation.

On the one hand, in order to study the advertisement translation in the reader’s perspective, reception theory, known as reception aesthetics both a literary theory and a aesthetic theory, is chosen to guide the study. The success of products to an extent depends on whether the advertisement suits the taste of the common people. Without the aesthetic reception of the advertisement’s receivers, the advertisement would have no realistic significance. Under the guidance of the Reception Theory, advertisement translation should take priority over the responses of the receivers. On the other hand, analysis on the strategies of the advertisement translation, mainly literal translation, free translation, parody and addition, can offer reference for the further translation of advertisement.
This thesis is designed to explore how can the Reception Theory be applied to the advertisement translation. There are six sections in this paper. 

Part 1 gives a brief introduction on the purpose and the structure of the thesis. 

Part 2 reviews the related research on advertisement translation in the west and China. 

Part 3 presents an introduction to advertisement. 

Part 4 serves the theoretical framework of the whole thesis, in which the author introduces the origin and development of the Reception Theory. 

Part 5 attempts to conduct a deep analysis on the cases under the guidance of the Reception Theory. 

Part 6 the main conclusion to be drawn from this study is that the practice of advertisement translation can be effectively guided by the Reception Theory, thus realizing the purpose of advertisement.

2. Review of Literature

2.1. Advertisement Translation Studies in the West

Concerning the translation of advertisement, researches in the west started very early, so the theories are relatively mature and standard. It was in 1972 that Advertisement translation was firstly advanced in Hurbin’s article “Peut-on traduire la langue de la pulice” (Can One Translate the Language of Advertising). Hurbin demonstrated the importance to investigate advertisement translation and he put forward the idea of helping advertisement translation by creating the glossaries according to specific product classification. 

In 1995, Candace Seguinot(1994) published the article “Translation and Advertising: Going Global in Cultural Functions of Translation”. Seguinot points out the culture is a significant role in advertisement translation in the globalized market.

2.2. Advertisement Translation Studies in China

In 1995, Ding Shude(1995) wrote an article to discuss the advertisement translation from English to Chinese. Ding Shude addresses that English advertisement is always simple and colloquial but the Chinese advertisement always uses modifier to highlight the characters of the products. In Chinese advertisement, the use of four- character phrases is widely seen. 

In 2002, Cao Shunfa(2002) states in his article The Translation of Advertisement that advertisement translation requires translators to use the least words to express most meanings. Thus advertisement translation should be concise and meaningful to make make the meaning understood by readers. 

There are many recent and updated studies in this field. In 2010, Li Kexing discusses in his article Advertisement Translation: A Theoretical and Practical Approach two principles of translation: Skopos principle and rewriting principle. The most valuable contribution of the book is that it constructs a theoretical model of advertisement translation, which helps the translator choose the right translating principles and strategies.

The studies on advertisement translation have been mainly divided in three parts. First, choose a theory or perspective to be the theoretical framework, then to have an in-depth analysis on the translation strategies or methods of advertisement; Second, to discuss the advertisement translation in the specific fields, such as sports, commercial activities, etc. Third, to study the use of rhetoric of the advertisement translation.
3. Advertisement

3.1. The Definition of Advertisement

According to the meaning in Cambridge Dictionary, advertisement refers to a picture, short film, song, etc. that tries to persuade people to buy a product or service, or a piece of text that tells people about a job, etc. advertisements are messages paid for by those who send them and are intended to inform or influence people who receive them, as defined by the Advertising Association of the UK. Advertising is a form of marketing communication used to promote or sell something, usually a business's product or service. In Latin, advertere means “to turn toward”. The purpose of advertising may also be to reassure employees or shareholders that a company is viable or successful. From the purpose of advertising, it is the information audience received matters most.

From above definitions, advertisements are commercial activities through attracting people's attention and encouraging them to be potential customers or buy the products or services.

3.2. The Characteristics of English Advertisement

Advertisement, on the basis of its native features, adopts many advantages from other countries and gradually forms its own style. There are three aspects as followed.

3.2.1. Authenticity

Advertisement must be authentic and reliable to win the customers' trust. The authenticity is not only a requirement for the advertisement creators but also responsible for the customers (Wang, 2019). Therefore, to ensure the authenticity of advertisement lays the solid foundation of the value created by the advertisement.

3.2.2. Abbreviation and Creative Spelling

In order to shorten the message, memorize easily and reduce the costs, advertisements usually use common and brief words and abbreviation. As the linguist, Leech said, the frequently used words in the advertisement are new, fine, free, big, fresh, real, full, easy, etc. What's more, advertisements can impress the customers with using false words or disordered collocation on purpose to present the original and unique features of products.

3.2.3. Simple Sentence and Fixed Tense

In the light of the sentence, it is always an imperative sentence, which has the effect of persuasion and encouragement. In addition, the simple sentences are commonly used while the compound and complex sentences are avoided. The language used is common words, which can make advertisements readable and impressive. From the perspective of tense, present tense is always applied into the advertisement, which can give customers a kind of feeling, no limits in time and space, implying the lasting of the service or products.

4. Advertisement Translation under the Reception Theory

4.1. The Reception Theory

4.1.1. Origin of the Reception Theory

Reception theory, also known as Reception Aesthetics, first appeared around 1960s. Scholars such as Hans Robert Jauss and Wolfgang Iser in Germany put forward the idea of reception theory. They established the “reader-centered” and “text-centered” reception aesthetics, which shifted the direction of literature studies from “author-centered” and “text-centered”.

In reception theory, text would result in different meanings from different readers. H.R. Jauss mainly studies the impact of the readers’ reception on the meaning of the text and the insight to the methodology of literature history. W. Iser mainly focuses on the reception of
readers from the angle of phenomenology. The theory emphasizes on the interaction between the text and the readers.

4.1.2. Development of the Reception Theory

In the early stage of translation study, the author and the text have been the center of the translation theory and activity. The role of readers has been changed from a passive form into an active form since the coming of reception theory.

In the development of Reception Theory, the cultural theorist Stuart Hall is one of the main proponents. Stuart Hall has developed it for media and communication studies from the literary and history. Stuart Hall’s (1993) “Encoding-Decoding” model of communication essentially states that meaning is encoded by the sender and decoded by the receiver and that these encoded meaning may be decoded to mean something else. That is to mean, the senders encode meaning in their messages according to their ideas and views and the messages are decoded by the receivers according to their own ideas and views.

4.2. Advertisement Translation under the Reception Theory

4.2.1. Literal Translation

Literal translation, direct translation, or word-for-word translation is the rendering of text from one language to another one word at a time with or without conveying the sense of the original whole. Much attention has been paid to the faithfulness and equivalence in literal translation. The literal translation is often used in advertisement when the meaning of the target advertisement is fully expressed and can be accepted by the reader. In addition, the source advertisement should be just expressive words without any cultural background.

Example 1:
ST: It tastes great! (Nescafe)
TT: 味道好极了!
This advertisement translation is very classical due to its simple expression. According to the English text, the Chinese translation has been following the pattern. The literal translation suits the language pattern of Chinese readers, which is extremely easy for the Chinese readers to remember the advertisement.

Example 2:
ST: I’m loving it. (McDonald’s)
TT: 我就喜欢。
McDonald, as a fast food chain store, is very popular among the young people. The advertisement “I’m loving it” describes the unique behaviors and attitudes of the young, and the translation “我就喜欢”, especially “就” in Chinese shows a feeling of obstinacy, presenting an image of the distinct personality of the young people. The meaning of the target advertisement is fully expressed and can be accepted by the reader.

4.2.2. Free Translation

Free translation, or liberal translation is generally used to convey the meaning and spirit of the original faithfully without coping its sentence patterns or figures of speech.

In advertisement, free translation should express the content of source text faithfully, but the target advertisement can not be limited to the pattern. The differences between cultures, from the perspective of readers, should be taken in consideration to make readers understand and accept.

Example 3:
ST: You Can’t Stop Us. (Nike)
TT: 哪儿挡得了我们。
The advertisement from Nike is a very simple negative sentence. However, the Chinese version is affirmative sentence which is totally different from the English version in the pattern but still conveys the meaning of the original text. In the advertisement, the colloquial language applied can impress the common people and attract them. Besides, the advertisement translation is full of positive energy and strong power for the people, giving people a feeling of being invincible.

Example 4:
ST: Stay strong together to fight with the invisible enemy. (Nike)
TT: 看不清的强敌, 更能让我们看清一起强大的意义。

The advertisement from Nike is an imperative sentence, which has the functions of suggestion, requirement, etc. If literal translation is applied, it will be “一起强大，对抗强敌”, less better than the literal translation in this sentence. Because in the target context, using a comma to divide the whole sentence, with “更” in Chinese showing the progressive meaning will better convey the meanings of the English advertisement. Here, it serves as an encouragement for those who fear to face the difficulties and hardships at present or in the future.

4.2.3. Parody Translation

Parody is a kind of figure of speech that creates a new form of language temporarily according to the existing form of language expression. Parody is usually applied in words or phrases, which can also be extended to sentences, paragraph, chapters even styles. Parody translation is very commonly used in advertisement.

Example 5:
ST: Where there is a way, there is a Toyota. (Toyota)
TT: 车到山前必有路, 有路必有丰田车。

According to the source text, this is advertisement translation of Toyota from Japanese to English. Those who are familiar with English idioms can understand that this sentence is adopted from Where there is a way, there is a way. When this advertisement was translated from English to Chinese, it would be “车到山前必有路，有路必有丰田车”. This advertisement is created according to the existing language expression of China, which impresses Chinese customers a lot. Under the guidance of the Reception Theory, the “reader-centered” and “text-centered” reception aesthetics, the cultural background was involved in and readers are also taken into consideration. All that will have positive effects and can achieve the commercial aims of the advertisement.

Example 6:
ST: There are some things money can’t buy, for everything else, there's MasterCard. (MasterCard)
TT: 万事皆可达, 唯有情无价。

From the perspective of the translation, “万事皆可达，唯有情无价” is created from the traditional idiom of China “万般皆下品，唯有读书高”, which emphasizes the importance of the “情” and “读书”. This parody translation will not only impress the customers, but also realize the significance of “情”. What’s more, MasterCard, as a payment platform, stresses that there are something that money cannot buy, which focuses on bringing the great experience to customers and spending quality time with families. This advertisement is of great value not for the company, but for the whole society.

4.2.4. Addition

Addition is a translation method, which means supplying necessary words in translation, making the version grammatically correct, semantically clear, rhetorically sound, logically acceptable and culturally appropriate.
In advertisement translation, addition includes two aspects; one is to extent or expand the key words in meaning, and the other is to add four-character phrases with Chinese characteristics, forming the style of antithesis or rhyme.

Example 7:
ST: Elegance is an attitude. (Longines)
TT: 优雅态度，真我个性。

The advertisement translation on the Chinese website is “优雅态度，真我个性”, which is quite different from the original sentence. If the advertisement is translated literally word by word to Chinese, the advertisement in Chinese should be “优雅是一种态度”. With regard to the product, watch, it can highlight people’s disposition. That translation still can make sense, but it does not have the same functions as “优雅态度，真我个性”, which demonstrates the meaning of both “优雅” and “个性” of people. What’s more, four-character phrases used in the translation can also show the advertisement’s beauty of the sound and patterns to the readers.

Example 8:
ST: Look at the sunrise again; Get close to each other. (HUAWEI P40)
TT: 再望日出，相近咫尺。

The advertisement from HUAWEI P40 is to discuss its performance of photography. People can use the phone to take excellent photos of sunrise by some simple settings even if it is distant from us. The Chinese version of the advertisement “再望日出，相近咫尺” has been added with information that is not included in the English text. “Get close to each other” refers to “相近”, but “咫尺”, very close or very near, something is just in front of us, as a traditional Chinese expression is added in the translation. For readers, the translation is poetic and attractive.

5. Conclusion

With the development of all fields in the whole society, advertisement is playing an increasingly role. As a commercial language, advertisement has its own features. Thus the translation from English to Chinese should comply with the features of advertisement. Under he guidance of the reception theory, the readers’ needs and expectations should be satisfied when advertisement is translated.

This thesis has its own limitations, too. Due to the the limit and fast change of the advertisement, not all types of advertisements are selected in this thesis. In addition, some of the cases selected in this thesis have already been outdated because of the changing market, although they are very classical.

For further research, the study of advertisement may be classified into specific sections according to different products. Also, the new cases need to be selected and analyzed in the further study.

References


