

The English - Chinese Translation of English Advertising Slogans Based on Ch'ien Chung-shu's Sublimation Theory

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Abstract: As economic globalization accelerates and China's "opening-up" policy deepens, imported commodities have gradually penetrated the Chinese market, resulting in the communicative role of translated slogans becoming more prominent. This article uses Ch'ien Chung-shu's sublimation theory to provide theoretical guidance for slogan translation and also proposes to analyse slogan translation by drawing on concepts of "rendering", "adapting" and "subliming". The first stresses fidelity; the second is a solution enacted in response to "flavor loss" in translation process and the last envisages the aesthetic surpassing of original texts.

1. Introduction

With the progress of economic globalization and the deepening of China's open-up policy, more foreign commodities entering the Chinese market, to the benefit and satisfaction of Chinese consumers attracted by novelty and high quality. This has in turn resulted in the communicative role of slogan translation becoming more apparent. In the contemporary environment, successful companies seek to improve product quality and establish a strict management system, but also seek to attract more customers by making their post-translation slogans more refreshing and more appealing; this in turn serves to reiterate and underline the importance of bilingual slogan translation. Ch'ien Chung-shu's "sublimation theory" first appeared in the book "Lin Shu's Translations", which implies three systematic steps: rendering, adapting, and subliming. Completing these three steps in order can make the slogans prominent and better play the role of guiding consumption, thus establishing a bridge of communication between consumers and merchants, and between different countries.

2. Ch'ien Chung-shu's Sublimation Theory

Wang Hongyin previously observed that, during the second half of the 20th century, the Chinese translation field was characterized by a renewed emphasis on literary translation and its theoretical exploration, along with a "tendency to explore translation theory from cultural sources" [1]. In operating within this context, Ch'ien Chung-shu put forward Sublimation Theory, which proved to be simple, straightforward and far-reaching in its impact [2].

2.1 Tracing the origin of Sublimation Theory

The terminology's source makes it clear that Ch'ien Chung-shu was influenced by China's local cultures. It has been speculated that this theory may have originated in two sources. The first is Jin Shengt'an's description of the highest realm of literary creation in his preface to the Chinese classic *Outlaws of the Marsh*. Here he observed: "In writing, you can't write something beyond what your inner mind can reach. Your writing can only reach sublimation when your mind becomes sublime" [3].

The second is the so-called "literary conception" of Chinese literature. This concept, which appeared in ancient Chinese literary theory, can be traced back to Zhuangzi, who sought to use the concept of blurring to describe things such as "the realm of honor and disgrace" and "the realm of right and wrong" in his book *Zhuangzi* [4]. This can be said to be a precondition for the creation of the sublimation theory. A further point of reference was provided by Liu Xie, who initially commented on the poems of others in *The Literary Mind and the Carving of Dragons -- Hidden Show*, which used the metaphor of "secular ideas in a magical realm", can also be regarded as an important influence on the emergence of this literary concept.

During the Tang Dynasty, it was also suggested that the concept of literary conception directly appeared in Wang Changling's *Poem Format and Style*. The poets Liu Yuxi and Si Kongtu, during the middle and later stages of the Dynasty, also both advocated the concept. As it spread across the East during the period of Western culture (which extended from the late Ming Dynasty to the beginning of the 20th century), Wang Guowei expanded the concept in *Human Words*, his work of literary criticism [5]. The concept's maturation was clearly attested to by the influence of modern science.

Literary translation lagged behind literature throughout Chinese literary history, and this helps to explain why it was only later that Ch'ien Chung-shu expounded the concept of sublimation theory in the Chinese translation field. His contribution is however clearly distinguished from Wang Guowei's theory on the literary conception of ancient poetry, which strongly relies on the logic of concept classification to form a unique system. In contrast, Ch'ien Chung-shu's monologue, entitled *Lin Shu's Translations*, quotes widely from various sources, with the consequence that his concept of sublimation theory obtains a clearer logic and systematicity [1]. Indeed, it is on the basis of his contribution that it is possible to systematically interpret the concept.

2.2 Interpretation of the content of "Literary Conception"

In *Lin Shu's Translations*, Ch'ien Chung-shu defined the highest standard of literary translation by noting that, subsequent to a work moving from one language to another, there should be no trace of awkward or strained translation that can be traced back to language differences. The unique character of the original language should also be fully preserved. For him, these are the key attributes associated with sublimation. This, however, differs from Jin Shengt'an's description, which holds that there is no "suitable" way of thinking or writing. Accordingly, the writer is free to write what he/she wishes; as a consequence, translation also appears as an act of "translating without translation"; meaning that work can be translated from one language to another without considering its original meaning. This, of course, appears to be contrary to the essence of translation, which is not just an act of conversion but is also concerned with the retention of original meaning.

Translation is, after all, never acknowledged as an original creation when it is conducted in one's own language. This is shown by the three systematic steps rendered in Ch'ien Chung-shu's description. First of all, translation appears as an act of "rendering a work from one language to another", in which the translated version preserves "the flavor of the original work". This establishes that there must be an original text, which then provides a basis for "conversion". The success of the translation is judged against the retention of the original content and this asserts "rendering" as the first important element of sublimation theory. Here Ch'ien Chung-shu reiterated that "you can't show any signs of awkward or strained translation because of the usage differences between the two languages".

Zhang Sijie, in quoting Ch'ien Chung-shu's *Translations of Lin Shu* provided further clarification by observing that "the study of a literary work often does not require—nor can one perform—a word-by-word understanding of the work" [6]. However, he noted that "translation is different. There is no one word in the original work that can slip the translator's mind without a thorough understanding" [7]. This aspiration was however complicated by Luo Xinzhang, who reminded us, "each language has its own unique usages or expressions, the two languages do not completely fit in terms of usages or expressions" [8]. This means that translation must often adjust to situations where "flavor" is "lost". This includes instances where the inability to make a 'fit' translation produces a reluctance to make any translation and also those occasions in which it is necessary to guess the meaning or arbitrarily translate an incomprehensible part.

Ch'ien Chung-shu, in reflecting on "flavor loss", also noted the "tolerance" with which Lin Shu was "treated" [9]. This establishes that Ch'ien Chung-shu viewed loss during the translation as being inevitable. He also hoped that the translator would have a strong sense of responsibility when faced with translation, and that he/she would never treat him/herself in the way that others treat Lin Shu.

With regard to serious translation, it is also necessary to consider if the reasonable "domestication" of the translation in the culture of the target language will increase the likelihood that it will be accepted by target language readers. This implicitly informs the translator that, in addition to "rendering" (the first step), it is also necessary to revise and correct the translation in accordance with certain requirements or considerations, with a view to minimizing "flavor loss". This is known as reconstructing and adapting in translation [10]. But this in turn raises the question of when it is acceptable to "adapt" with the intention of avoiding awkwardness or farfetchedness from being evidenced "in the translated version" -- once this requirement is met, further efforts must be made, up until the point where a state of sublimation is achieved.

In commenting on Lin Shu, Ch'ien Chung-shu observed that "the style used in Lin's translations is one that is more popular, more casual, and more flexible" [7], and noted that he would be more predisposed to read these translations than the ones provided by Haggard. In his view, Ch'ien Chung-shu attained a state in which he "uses his pen to make the world perfect". This use of "perfect" suggests that Shu's flexible translation surpasses the original in both language and style and is more "aesthetic" in its literary conception. This so-called "subliming" appears as the concrete embodiment of Ch'ien Chung-shu's aesthetic thought [9]. The interpretation of Ch'ien Chung-shu's sublimation theory reveals three core steps that are critical to translation: "rendering", "adapting" and then "subliming".

3. The Importance of Sublimation Theory in Slogan Translation

In broad terms, a slogan can be said to relate a promotional language that introduces various contents (of commodities, culture, entertainment and other services) to the public through various media and posters. In a narrower framing, a slogan appears as a means through which a company obtains enhanced publicity (through media promotion and other means) with the intention of making itself more profitable [11]. Most slogans consist of between 6-12 words and a good slogan must be concise, uniquely worded, and easy to understand and addressed to a prominent theme. Peter Newmark's Text Typology Theory observes that slogans possess informational and call-to-action texts, and thereby reiterates that they should provide information and calling on consumers to take action [12]. If the information function is to be realized, then it is necessary to faithfully convey the meaning of the content in the original slogan, and to thereby ensure that its subtleties are not increased or decreased. This requirement is, it should be noted, actually consistent with the "rendering" requirement of sublimation theory. However, cultural differences between the two languages along with slogans directed to action mean that some expressions have to be modified because they do not exist in the target language. In this instance, it is not necessary to stick with the original expression, and it would instead be preferable to take full advantage of the target language. It would then be best to revise or start "adapting" "translated" slogans in accordance with the advertising language: this will ensure that slogans conform to the reading habits of target language readers and will

help to produce advertising slogans with greatest consumer appeal. In order to better realize “all-to-actions”, it will also be essential to persuade consumers to purchase products – this will help to beautify and upgrade the slogan and, in the words of Zhu Yuanyuan, “make the target reader feel the effect of approaching the original text as much as possible” [13]. The translated slogan will become “subliming” to the extent where readers are as fascinated by it as by the original slogan in the original language.

4. Applications of Slogan Translation Under the Requirements of Sublimation Theory

It has already been noted that the three core contents of Sublimation Theory are, in successive order, rendering, adapting and sublimizing. Advertising slogans help some Chinese-translated advertisements meet the theoretical requirements, and thereby enable them to become classical versions of widely spoken and popular translated slogans.

4.1 “Rendering” is the best if possible

In referring to the basis on which translation predecessors can be creatively inherited, Ch’ien Chung-shu observed:

“When faithfulness in translation is mentioned, expressiveness and elegance should never be ignored. Expressiveness helps realize faithfulness, and elegance is more than word decoration. Translation should render the exact meaning and style of the original language possible, and [this] is called faithfulness...There are cases of expressiveness without faithfulness while there also exist cases of faithfulness without expressiveness.” [7]

From the era of Yan Fu and Lin Shu onwards, translators with strong literary knowledge and extraordinary creativity were widely dispersed. Those who were able to write or were confident enough to write preferred to express themselves via translation. They conducted additions or deletions at will when translating the original work, an innovation quite clearly at odds with established translation practice. Nieh Youjun reiterated this point in an article, when he noted that ‘faithful’ entailed both the retention of the original ‘meaning’ and the alignment of the translation style with the original text [14]. It is upon this basis that Ch’ien Chung-shu reiterated the need for the translator to be faithful to the original text. English to Chinese translators, in similarly invoking this imperative, present widely quoted Chinese translations in the following forms:

Example 1: 味道好极了 (Maxwell Coffee)

Example 2: 感受新世界 (Samsung Electronics)

In the original English versions, these two examples are respectively “The Taste is Great” and “Feel the New Space”. The original structure and language of these slogans are relatively simple and concise, and no creative rewriting is required. Instead, the translator simply needs to directly translate them into English. This undertaking is made easier by the fact that the Chinese version “味道好极了” and “感受新世界” adopt the same sentence structure as in their original languages, specifically “noun + be verb + adjective + (adverb modifiers)” and “verb + noun phrase”. In this type of Chinese slogan translation, the content and form of the original text are retained, and the charm of the original slogan is clearly conveyed to target language consumers.

4.2 “Rendering” leads to “adapting” if flavor loses

A further example is also instructive:

Example 3: 智慧演绎, 无处不在 (Motorola Inc.)

In the original English, this slogan is: “Intelligence everywhere” (Motorola Inc.). If the English slogan is translated directly, then the Chinese slogan should be “智慧到处都是”. It will be noted that the

translated version is faithful, as the meanings of “intelligence” and “everywhere” are not missing from the translation. However, the translated slogan does not conform with Chinese idiomatic expressions, as the Chinese language tends to be a four-character idiom with a neat expression. In instances where translation results in awkwardness, a certain degree of rewriting or adaptation is required.

The original slogan of Example Three only consists of two words, specifically a noun and a modifying adverb. English-speaking consumers will grasp this slogan without difficulty, as the word “intelligence” has a double meaning and is therefore understood to denote both wisdom and IQ. This slogan establishes that company machines can be ‘smart’ at any time during their use and also presents the company’s wisdom and its ability to extract this resource and then embody it within its products. The former refers to the product itself, while the latter highlights an attribute possessed by the company. In Chinese, however, “智慧” and “智能” appear as two separate words. The translator must therefore consider how these two meanings can be separately expressed while ensuring the four-character correspondence and the neatness of form that characterizes the Chinese language. Once these different considerations are taken into account, the end product of the Chinese translated version is two four-character phrases, which are as follows: “智慧演绎, 无处不在”. The Chinese version of the slogan is not limited to the question of how “wisdom” and “intelligence” can be retained in the original text in the same short sentence; rather, it is instead to analyze its connotation – that is, how the “intelligence” of the original product, which is derived from the company’s ‘wisdom’ is actually embodied within, and deduced from, the product. The translated slogan therefore absorbs “智慧” and “智慧演绎” into a four-character phrase, thereby achieving the effect of double meaning and ensuring acceptance by Chinese consumers. The translated version of this slogan retains the slogan’s intrinsic meaning and faithfully conveys the original meaning, thereby instituting its status as one of the most popular slogans in China.

A further example is equally instructive:

Example 4: 不同凡“想” (Apple Company)

The Apple Company’s original slogan is “Think Different”. It clearly relates to both Apple products and the product philosophy that underpins them. This makes it clear that the translated slogan must not only be rendered but should also be creatively adapted. The translation therefore embeds the original “think (想)” into the idiom of “不同凡响” in Chinese. This does not only convey the meaning of the slogan but is also familiar to the consumers of the translated language, and this causes them to stop and stare at the products.

Another example provides further insight:

Example 5: 旅馆虽小, 一应俱全 (Slogan for a hotel)

The original English text of this slogan is “What it’s like to be small but good”. If the translated slogan does not consider the characteristics of the advertising language or the expression of the translated language, then a completely faithful translation would read as: “小却好的感觉是什么”. But this raises the question of what it actually means to be small but good. The end consequence is that target language consumers cannot understand the real meaning that the slogan sought to convey and may even make a false guess. One translator sought to modify it into “麻雀虽小, 五脏俱全”, which is a common (Chinese language) proverb. While “adapting” appears to have been realized in this translation, the problem of “flavor loss” has not been resolved and the reader is therefore still confused. They will ask what the slogan is advertising and will seek to clarify what the word “sparrow” refers to.

It is therefore essential to grasp that the purpose of translating slogans is to generate customer understanding and interest, in advance of the ultimate purchase of items in question. In this instance, the slogan is addressed to a hotel, and seeks to convey the impression that “although the hotel is small, the supply of equipment and services will be no less”. This slogan can therefore be translated as: 旅馆虽小, 一应俱全. In “adapting”, it is therefore necessary to consider the slogan’s purpose, consumer psychology

and the question of if the translation meets the target language's idiomatic expressions, in addition to a number of other questions. If rewriting is completed after these questions are answered, then no signs of awkwardness will be shown in the translated version of the original text, and Ch'ien Chung-shu's maximum requirement for "adapting" in translation will be met.

4.3 Seeking "subliming" after "adapting"

Ch'ien Chung-shu therefore dealt with the problem of rendering and adapting and alluded to the understanding that the "flavor loss" was inevitable in translation. He then praised the ability to "realize sublimation by making complementary changes in translation", which entailed the ability to make translation sound and look smooth and natural. In his view, this is particularly crucial in translation because it offers the only way through which the ultimate goal of subliming can be achieved. In this instance, we have fully surpassed understanding the original text and making various revisions.

Example 6: 天长地久 (Swatch watch)

"Swatch" is a Swiss watchmaker that was founded in 1983. The original slogan is "time is what you made of it". The sentence structure is simple and can be directly translated as: "时间就是你所创造的". "You" refers to the watch, while "time" indicates the role of the time-telling time watch. This initial translation resembles the language and structure of the original text and can therefore be easily understood by consumers. But if there is no picture around the slogan to show that it is a watch, then the potential buyer is likely to be confused because he/she will misunderstand when hearing "themselves". This version of the slogan may also be regarded as insufficiently "aesthetic" for the reason that it simply introduces the product information but does not leave space for consumers to imagine its 'beauty'. In order to meet Ch'ien Chung-shu's aesthetic requirements to as great an extent as possible, the translated slogan should, to the greatest possible extent, reflect both the time-telling role and aesthetic aspirations of the watch. It is upon this basis that "天长地久" becomes the final translated version of the slogan. In addition, domestic consumers in China are very familiar with the idiom "天长地久", and therefore mention it in relation to time. This idiom also, it should be noted, relates a double meaning by invoking the Swatch Company's long history.

Another example provides additional insight:

大刺激, 小花费 (Slogan for a taxi company)

The original slogan, "big thrills, small bills", was originally translated as "莫大的刺激, 微小的花费", meaning that both the rendering of the original form and content, and adaptation (subsequent to the consideration of various factors) were retained. However, at the auditory level, it appears that aesthetic requirements are not met. If this had been the case, then the advertisement pronunciation would be strong, rhythmical, filled with music and would induce a sense of aesthetic enjoyment. Advertising English frequently uses various means of speech expression, including syllables related to sound intensity, pauses and rhymes consistent with sound. It also deploys rhetorical devices closely related to speech, such as onomatopoeia and homophonic sound with the intention of obtaining an aesthetic effect. The translation of English slogans should therefore focus on the phonological beauty of the original text to as great an extent as possible. Care should also be taken to use the characteristics of Chinese double vowels and compound vowels, in addition to Chinese characteristics of syllable lengths, with the intention of ensuring that translated slogans read smoothly and also meet aesthetic requirements. In the preceding example, the original text and the final translated version both read to the rhyme, ensuring that the latter is as aesthetic, catchy and popular as the former.

5. Conclusion

As advertising occupies an increasingly prominent role in international trade, high-quality translated

slogans can establish an important communication bridge between consumers and commodities. The study of the translation of slogans could, in this context, prove to be of great significance to the promotion of business activities. This paper takes Ch'ien Chung-shu's sublimation theory as its point of theoretical departure. It then refers to specific examples with the intention of exploring slogan translations and proposes that the first step of slogan translation is concerned with rendering the original text; the second and third steps, meanwhile, are respectively concerned with adapting and subliming. In proceeding through each of these steps, this paper has sought to demonstrate that Ch'ien Chung-shu's sublimation theory can make slogan translation simple and concise, neat in wording, and memorable: in each of these respects, it suggests, it can be directed to the purpose of attracting consumers.

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