

Research on Chinese-English Translation of Enterprise Publicity Materials from the Perspective of Adaptation Theory

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Abstract: As the process of economic globalization continues to advance, China has undergone earth-shaking changes. High-quality products and promotional materials are crucial for Chinese companies to go global and build their brands. The English translation of external promotional materials is crucial. However, some companies do not pay enough attention to their publicity, resulting in a low international status. This paper analyzes the Chinese-English translation of enterprise external publicity materials from the perspective of adaptation theory, thereby exploring the translation strategies adopted under the guidance of adaptation theory, hoping to provide some references for related translation practices in the future.

Keywords: Adaptation theory; Enterprise publicity materials; Translation strategy

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1. Introduction

With the development of economic globalization, the competition among countries is increasingly fierce. It is universally acknowledged that the company publicity materials are of significance to the company's international profile. The feasibility of the business and the position of the company depends on the quality of translation. There is a lot of research on enterprise publicity materials. However, there are still a lot of problems caused by mistranslation, over-translation, and redundant translation. In response to solving these problems, a theory provides the key—the adaptation theory. This paper discusses the adaptation theory, a guiding principle, for the analysis of promotional materials translation.

2. An analysis of Verschueren's adaptation theory

The linguistic adaptation theory was first proposed by Verschueren in his book *Pragmatics as a Theory of Linguistic Pragmatics*. Then he systematically enriched and explained it in *Understanding Pragmatics* in 2000. Verschueren assumed that language has four important concepts that are a continuous choice-making process, adaptability, negotiability, and variability^[1]. Adaptability, negotiability, and variability explain why human

beings can make choices in the process of language use ^[2].

2.1. Choice-making for language use

Verschueren argued the usage of language is a process of continuous choice-making. It is made for language-internal or language-external reasons ^[1]. It can be made consciously or unconsciously. These choices appear at any level of linguistic form, such as, phonetic, morphological, lexical, syntactic, semantic, and textual. The choice-making for language use has some characteristics. Firstly, choices may exist at any level of language structure. Secondly, the users choose not only the structure of language but also communicative skills. Thirdly, the salience can be distinguished from the speakers. The communicative context factors influence the language choices made by language users ^[3].

2.2. Three key notions

As far as Verschueren was concerned, “making choices” includes at least three hierarchically related key notions including variability, negotiability, and adaptability. Verschueren insisted that the three basic notions of language are adopted by people dynamically ^[1]. Variability, negotiability, and adaptability constitute the whole of the study of adaptation theory, but they are at different levels ^[4].

The variability of language means that language has a range of possibilities for choice ^[5]. It aims to achieve the communicative purpose. Negotiability means that the speakers choose the appropriate word. The speaker ultimately selects suitable expressions in the range of abundant language. Verschueren described adaptability as the language property. It can approach satisfaction for communicative needs. It is considered that context and structure are the locus or ‘place’ where the dynamic processes of adaptation take place with different degrees (or statuses) of salience ^[6]. Adaptation theory can be regarded as a theory for fully interpreting the phenomena in language use from cognitive, social, and cultural perspectives ^[7].

3. An analysis of publicity materials

Since the 21st century, with the implementation of China’s reform and opening-up policy, Chinese companies suddenly emerged. Chinese companies claim that it is time to enhance the ability to communicate and disseminate. The organizational reality of international companies is being produced through the communicative process in which multiple languages interact ^[8]. International publicity is a translational activity. It plays quite an important role in the transaction.

3.1. Definition and features of enterprise publicity materials

Publicity materials are the medium by which information can be conveyed quickly and clearly ^[9]. The company profile translation belongs to the category of pragmatic translation. It transmits information about this company or products in different ways. It provides a basic and objective introduction to enterprises for the public: brand name, corporate background, products, location, services, and so on. Meanwhile, corporate advertisement is part of the company profile. It emphasizes promoting its products and services to attract customers.

3.2. Functions of enterprise publicity materials

The enterprise profile, an indispensable part of the promotional materials, displays the strength and credibility of the company ^[10]. The aim is to set a good corporate image and to promote its products and services. Then it can improve the competitiveness of the company in the global trades. Accordingly, corporate publicity materials have informative and vocative functions. Informative function means the enterprise publicity materials must

carry lots of information. The prerequisite of high-quality corporate promotional materials is basic information such as the trademark, prosperity, location, and phone number. Beyond that, a corporate profile plays a vocative role. The ultimate purpose of a company profile is to provide basic information for the customers.

4. Translation strategies of enterprise publicity materials based on the adaptation theory

In light of the adaptation theory, we know that enterprise promotional materials translation is a purposeful process of continuous choice-making. The translators always make their own choices in this course. It aims to adapt the internal and external language functions. The thinking habits of the translated audience are the most important and difficult thing for translators to pay attention to in the translation process^[11]. Under the guidance of Verschueren's adaptation theory, this paper analyzes strategies from four aspects: transliteration, omission, addition, and reconstruction.

4.1. Transliteration

A good name is half the battle, as we always believe it. It can catch the customers' eyes. Brand names could be translated into Chinese pinyin. It surely preserves its Chinese pronunciation of the brand name, making it sound original. According to the adaptation theory, it achieves the communicative purpose.

Haier is a successful example. It is transliterated from “海尔” (*haier*) that is famous overseas. It sounds like the English greeting “hi.” It demonstrates the kindness of the manufacturers. In adaptation theory, it conforms to producers' and consumers' expectations. The brand name of Haier greatly shortens the distance between customers and producers. However, some brand names exert a negative influence on companies. For example, a Chinese company translates “白象牌” (*baixiangpai*) into “white elephant.” The survey found that the sales were low. “White elephant” had unpleasant associations in the Western world. Under the guidance of Verschueren's adaptation theory, we should make the right choice to translate the brand name. The translators should consider consumers' backgrounds, cultures, and religions.

4.2. Omission

Omission means that translators should cut out some irrelevant and redundant information. It is a widely adopted strategy in the Chinese-English translation of publicity materials. In terms of the adaptation theory, the translator must consider consumers. Omission is a reader-oriented translation method^[12].

Source Text (ST): “上上电缆”先后被评为“中国机械工业企业核心竞争力100强企业”、“中国企业信息化500强企业”、“全国守合同重信用企业”、“全国质量管理先进企业”。

Translation Text (TT): “Shangshang Cable Group Co., Ltd.” has received dozens of honorary and professional titles conferred by relevant national authorities.

These descriptions belong to vocative information. It makes customers believe that this company is reliable. In Verschueren's adaptation theory, we should choose the suitable language according to the background of customers. Due to the different thinking patterns and cultures, the target text should not be redundant. They are luxury words and unnecessary awards. We all know that foreigners like simple things and do not like florid words. The translators must meet the habits of the target readers. Thus translators are supposed to cut out the redundancy.

4.3. Addition

It is conscious or unconscious for language-internal or language-external reasons. The source texts contain

many Chinese classic poems and culture-loaded words. There is much information in several words and sometimes Westerners cannot understand their meaning. So there is no doubt that they should be further explained according to Verschueren's adaptation theory; thus, addition is a suitable way to solve this problem.

ST: 伊利奉行“入才为本”战略，将之列为企业发展的第一战略。他们造就废除了“三铁”。伊利开始公开招聘人才，实行全员合同制。

TT: Yili pursues a merit policy. And it gives top priority to human resource development. It has long abolished the “three irons” (no dismissal, no demotion, and the fixed-wage system). Instead, it employs staff on a contractual basis through open competition.

From the above translation, it is clear that the translator puts it into English as “three irons,” perplexing the customers. In the source text, it means the Yili abolished the no dismissal, no demotion, and the fixed-wage system. Thus the translation should add the meaning of three irons and meet the habits of Westerners. In adaptation theory, the translator should choose the right language to allow consumers to understand. By explaining appropriately, the English version is more natural and understandable.

4.4. Reconstruction

Reconstruction work needs translators to make the version more attractive to potential customers. That is to say, the translators must describe the whole picture to customers. As discussed in the former part, the syntactic structure of Chinese and English is quite different. Generally, English texts often adopt the deductive method with head focus. Chinese texts choose the inductive method with end focus.

ST: 本公司是我国机车车辆行业出口基地，是国内最大的内燃机车检修基地。同时也是国内最大的内燃机车研发、制造基地之一。产品遍及全国并远销欧美及东南亚等地区，在国内外享有盛誉。

TT: We enjoy a reputation at home and abroad. We sell our high-quality products throughout China and export to European, American, and Southeastern Asian countries. Our company holds these honors as follows.

- (1) the locomotive industry exportation base in China.
- (2) the largest diesel locomotive maintenance base in China.
- (3) one of the largest diesel locomotives researching, developing, and manufacturing bases in China.

In terms of Verschueren's adaptation theory, Westerners have the habit of using the conclusion as the beginning. The translator chooses a deductive method. The conclusive and important information may be at the beginning, that is head focus. Then the translator respectively elaborates on the company's honors. The company's honors are consumers' first sight of the promotional translation. The major information has been highlighted in the translated version.

5. Conclusion

With China's further integration into the global economy in the 21st century, Chinese corporations are expanding their business worldwide. The Chinese-English translation of enterprise publicity materials plays an increasingly important role in the transactions, opening the international markets. The ultimate purpose of enterprise profiles is to persuade customers to purchase the products. It is a pity that companies in China fail to attach adequate importance to the course of translation. This paper first provided a brief introduction to Verschueren's adaptation theory. Next, it made a short overview of enterprise publicity materials. A detailed introduction is made from the definition and functions. At last, the paper suggested suitable strategies under the guidance of Verschueren's adaptation theory. Although this paper attempts to make a thorough analysis, it still does not cover all aspects. Therefore, some problems need to be studied in the future.

Disclosure statement

The author declares no conflict of interest.

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