



On Translation of Coca-Cola’s Advertisements From the Perspective of the Manipulation Theory

ZHU Kangying^[a]; LI Changbao^[b],*

^[a] MTI student, School of Foreign Languages, Zhejiang University of Finance & Economics, Hangzhou, China.

^[b] Professor, School of Foreign Languages, Zhejiang University of Finance & Economics, Hangzhou, China.

* Corresponding author.

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Abstract

With the rapid development of economy, the advertising industry is springing up quickly. Coca Cola, one of the world’s largest coke producers, has a variety of advertising slogans, the Chinese translation of which are changing in accordance with many factors. This paper studies the Chinese translation of Coca Cola’s slogans from the perspective of the manipulation theory, consisting of a literature review, the theoretical basis, the current situation of Coca Cola’s advertising and the study of Chinese translation of Coca Cola’s slogans from the perspective of the manipulation theory. From this paper, translators should learn to focus on both internal factors like vocabulary and syntax and external factors like poetics, ideology and patronage’s requirements, so as to improve translation quality. It is hoped that this paper will guide translators to integrate the manipulation theory into their translation practice and understand the cultural differences between China and the USA.

Key words: Translation of Coca Cola’s advertisements; Manipulation theory; Ideology; Poetics; Patronage

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INTRODUCTION

Coca Cola, one of the world’s largest coke producers, enjoys great popularity in Chinese market. When it comes to the reason for its high status in Chinese market, the successful translation of slogans can’t fade into oblivion. It not only catches the eyes of Chinese consumers, but also helps to establish a good brand image and spread the corporate culture. This paper studies the translation of Coca Cola’s advertising slogans from the perspective of the manipulation theory, which is a first attempt to combine the research of the translation of commercial advertisement language with the manipulation theory. It expands the field of study on manipulation theories and provides theoretical guidance for future researches.

Although there are foreign studies either on the manipulation theory or on Coca Cola’s advertisements, no effort has been made to synthesize the two aspects into one. The early manipulation school was dominated by comparative literature studies (Li, 2017, p.22). In his paper *The Position of Translated Literature within The Literary Polysystem*, Itamar Even-Zohar proposed the concept of pluralism (1990, p.3), on the basis of which, scholars like Lefevere opened the door to the school of manipulation. The manipulation theory got its official acknowledgement in Hermans’s paper *The Manipulation of Translation* published in 1985. In this paper, the position of target language literature was highlighted, and the focus of translation studies was shifted from the original text to the target text (Li, 2017, p.22). Andre Lefevere, the most famous and most influential representative of the manipulation school argued that translation is affected by three main factors: ideology, patronage and poetics (Lefevere, 1990, p.8). Other scholars like Mary Snell-Hornby have recognized the dominant position of the manipulation theory in translation studies (Hermans, 2003, p.382). Since the founding of the Coca-Cola Company,

foreign scholars have studied its advertisements. For example, Zeynep MURAT ÇOLPA talked about its advertising strategy in 2017. However, these studies on Coca Cola's advertisements are still not abundant enough to present a comprehensive understanding of its deep meaning or to reveal how Coca Cola Company caters to the theme of times. Besides, few foreign studies have been found on the translation of Coca Cola's advertisements, which adds to the difficulty of the study on the application of the manipulation theory to the translation of Coca Cola's advertisements.

Domestic scholars attach great importance to the study of literature translation from the perspective of manipulation theory rather than to the theory itself. For instance, Gu Ying studied the translation of Chinese literary works based on the manipulation theory (2008, p.50). Lin Qinxiang researched the Chinese translation of Bible and analysed how society and ideology affected the translation (2015, p.34). Chinese scholars tend to study the manifestation and application of the manipulation theory on the basis of foreign scholars' findings, that's why the data on the pure study of the theory is hard to find. In terms of studies on Coca Cola's advertisements, there are some domestic papers either on the ads themselves or on their Chinese translation. Que Linjing introduced some wonderful Chinese translations of Coca Cola's advertisements (2019, p.193). Zeng Lidan's paper involved the comments on Chinese versions of Coca Cola's advertisements and how culture differences affect English-Chinese translation (2015, p.25). Compared to other kinds of texts, however, domestic studies on Coca Cola's advertisements are far from being rich. Similar to the situation of foreign study, nearly no attempt has been made to analyse the translation of advertisements or other commercial texts from the perspective of the manipulation theory in China. Also, the number of papers on Coca Cola's advertisement translation is relatively low.

This paper reveals the advertising strategy of Coca Cola via showing the connection between the advertisements itself and the theme of the times behind. It takes the Coca Cola's slogan translation as the starting point and examines how the three main factors of the manipulation theory -- ideology, patronage and poetics -- affect the Chinese translation of the slogan in three periods in history, which clearly shows economic, social, cultural and literary changes in China and America. It compares the similarities and differences between China and the United States in the development of patronage, ideology and mainstream poetics, which is helpful to understand the cultural differences between the two countries.

1. OVERVIEW OF THE MANIPULATION THEORY

Lefevere once said: "Translation is a rewriting of an original text. Rewriting is manipulation" (2003, p.21).

The manipulation theory put forward by Lefevere means that all translation contains some manipulation of the original text for a specific purpose and that translation is subject to ideology and literary ideas. Besides, translation is also related to power, thus serving as a tool for power's sake. Lefevere holds it tightly that translation cannot fully express the source text as it is always constrained by the three elements: ideology, poetics and patronage (1990, p.18).

1.1 Ideology

Ideology is the system reflecting the interests and requirements of a specific economy, class or social group, including people's views on politics, law, morality, philosophy, art, religion, etc. (Lefevere, 1990, p.23). As a kind of cross-language and cross-cultural communication, translation is inevitably influenced by ideology. Lefevere points out that ideology affects the translator's basic translating strategy and his or her processing of the original language and culture (1990, p.35). For instance, the translator will add or delete some words when doing translation to serve certain ideological purpose. A translated work is bound to be restricted by the social and ideological standards of the target language if it is to enter the target culture, otherwise it will be hardly accepted. For example, when reading Lin Shu's translation, we can obviously feel that it was manipulated by the Chinese social ideology and poetics at that time. The aim of translation, the methods people use to select the source text and the application of translation strategies can all reflect the manipulation of translation by ideology.

1.2 Poetics

Poetics is the study of poetry and its techniques, as well as the theory of literature and art (Lefevere, 1990:23). Poetics consists of two parts: one involves different literary skills, themes, typical characters and scenes and the other is on what role literature plays in the society. The formation of poetics takes place in a particular period when a certain literature style is preferred in practice. If we only attach importance to the meaning while but ignore the literary elements, the beauty of a work will disappear. According to the manipulation theory, poetics is closely related to the influence that a translated text may have on society. Lefevere puts forward that the translation methods adopted by translators are carried out and developed under the restriction of literary factors and that the study of poetics can be as shallow as a word, or as profound as the translation strategies (2003, p.57). Translation greatly influences the interpenetration of different literary systems because it plays a crucial part in deciding whether a foreign work could be successfully introduced into another literary system. Therefore, Lefevere believes that the rewriting done by translators is a kind of corollary since translators are definitely influenced and restricted by various social and cultural factors (2003, p.132).

The rewriting of poetics is consequently an indispensable part of the translators' work. In order to conform to the dominant literary form of the period and make the translated works accepted by as many readers as possible, translators will to some extent adjust the source text, including some masterworks. In the course of the development of translation theory, more and more attention has been paid to the indispensability of poetics or literature to translation.

1.3 Patronage

Lefevere regards different forms of translation as one of the social systems which has two manipulative elements. One is an internal element of the literary system composed of various professionals, including critics, teachers and translators; the other includes patrons who work outside the system and are often more interested in the ideology than the poetics of literature, including religious groups, classes, government departments, publishing houses, mass media or individuals. (Lefevere, 1992, p.17)

Among the three elements affecting translation, the power of the patron is deemed as the most vital factor in that it manipulates the whole process of translation. Instead of being an isolated activity, translation is closely linked to political, social and economic factors and in fact, the majority of translators do their job under the power of the social and political authority of their time. As a force that may contribute to the production and circulation of literary works or at the same time restrain or destroy the development of literary works (Chen, 2000, p.176), patrons can come into play through economic interests and social status. Generally speaking, patronage is of vital importance in the trend of translation activities, the development of translated literature and the social status of translators. For example, Yan Fu, full of his own thinking and totally clear about the purpose and strategies of his translation, still had to meet the demands of the emperor as an official of Qing government. Lin Yutang, another master translator, translated a series of works which were in accordance with the requirements and suggestions of his sponsor, Pearl S. Buck.

2. THE CURRENT SITUATION OF COCA COLA'S ADVERTISING IN CHINA

Coca Cola, often simplified as Coke, is an American carbonated soft drink produced by the Coca Cola Company. It has clinched a huge success, in many parts of the world, including the Chinese market, which is to a large degree owing to its artfully-conceived advertisements. In China, Coca Cola's advertising overwhelms other foreign companies in translation, innovation and cultural influence.

2.1 Translation

Coca Cola's Chinese slogans are successful thanks to its wording, sentence pattern and its power of making people empathize.

"Have a Coke and a Smile", Coca Cola's slogan in 1979, was translated as "一杯可乐, 一个微笑", which used a balanced sentence composed of two parallel noun phrases. It's no doubt more acceptable to Chinese people, reflecting the characteristics of traditional Chinese sentence patterns. "真味道, 真品位, 可口可乐", the Chinese translation of Coca Cola's slogan in 1957 "The Sign of Good Taste", reveals two different meanings of the word "taste", including both the flavor of coke and the pursuit of those who choose to drink Coca Cola, which fully conveys the literal and connotative meaning of the English slogan.

In recent years, Coca Cola's slogans focus more on triggering consumers' feelings. For example, "Coca Cola". Enjoy" and "The Coke Side of Life" are intended to inspire and delight consumers by guiding people to pursue the bright side of life. The principle is so strictly followed in the translation of Coca Cola's slogans that "要爽由自己" and "生活中的可乐一面" are the Chinese equivalents of the above two ads. This shows the emphasis of translation should be shifted from the form of language expression to readers' reflection on translations.

2.2 Innovation

Coca Cola is not only deft at creating attractive slogans, but also good at applying innovation in different kinds of vending machines.

In order to celebrate International Friendship Day, Coca Cola once installed a 12-foot-tall vending machine which could only be reached with a boost from one's buddy, and consumers who completed the task would get two Cokes instead of one. Another type of vending machine of this company could dispense a Coke only when given a hug.

All these innovative strategies function as a perfect tool to sell the products and promote the brand as well.

2.3 Cultural Influence

Before promoting its brand in China, the Coca Cola Company has made full preparation. It investigated the special preferences of Chinese consumers and studied the cultural background in China.

In its famous video advertisement in 1997, the red small windmills inserted in Coca Cola's bottles in the snowfield gave the Chinese audiences a feeling of peace and warmth, which was in line with Chinese culture and value. The commercial named "dragon and lion dance article" made in 2000 was highly praised by Chinese consumers, for dragon is the traditional mascot in China with dragon and lion dance being a crucial traditional activity to celebrate Chinese festival.

Coca Cola is committed to China's culture and values in a gesture to find Chinese people's real appetite and touch them through emotion, which is one of the most significant approaches to success.

3. ANALYSIS OF THE CHINESE TRANSLATION OF COCA COLA'S SLOGANS FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF THE MANIPULATION THEORY

As discussed in Chapter 2, Coca Cola's success is partially attributed to its adequate Chinese translation of its slogans. This part proceeds to explore this problem on the basis of demonstrating how the Chinese translations of Coca Cola's advertisements are manipulated by the three factors of the manipulation theory in three different periods of time. During the first period, namely, from the end of the 19th century to the beginning of the 20th century, the Coca Cola Company was newly found and had little popularity in China's Qing Dynasty. The second period witnessed how the two World Wars wreaked havoc on Chinese people and society, thus triggering people's yearning for the peaceful life. After World War II, in the third period, Chinese people attached more importance to the development of the society and pursued common prosperity.

3.1 Ideology and Chinese Translation of Coca Cola's Slogans

3.1.1 The Late 19th Century to the Early 20th Century

In this period, Coca Cola was developing as an emerging industry with its advertisements focusing on the quality of its product itself. Since Coca Cola was a newly found company at that time and hadn't stamped into China's market, the amount of people drinking coke in China was relatively small. Hence, the translations of Coca Cola's advertisements are mainly literal ones, not catering to the requirement of ideology.

For instance, the first slogan of Coca Cola "Drink Coca Cola", appearing in 1886 when the company was initially found, was just literally translated as "请喝可口可乐". And its commercial in 1904 -- "Delicious and Refreshing" was put into Chinese as "美味畅爽" word for word.

It can be concluded that during this period, translators wouldn't bother to weigh and consider from the perspective of ideology and the translation of Coca Cola's advertisements almost had nothing to do with the ideology for it hadn't won popularity among the Chinese people.

3.1.2 The Early 20th Century to the Mid-20th Century

This period was witness to the outbreak of World War I and World War II, when Coca Cola as a brand was gaining popularity in China and later gradually became a famous foreign beverage there. Since the war had wreaked great havoc on Chinese people, their longing for better (peaceful and wealthy) life could be found in the Chinese translation of Coca Cola's advertisements.

For example, when translated into Chinese, "The Only Thing Like Coca Cola is Coca Cola Itself", Coca Cola's slogan in 1942, became "只有可口可乐, 才是可

口可乐——永远只买最好的". Adding the latter half of the sentence makes people focus on the pursuit of good things, thus indirectly reflecting people's thirst for a better life.

In this period, imperialism was being fostered gradually in America, which was evidenced by the fact that the slogans of Coca Cola began to show its desire to expand other markets in the world. In 1949, shortly after the ending of World War II, Coca Cola changed its slogan into "Coca Cola -- Along the Highway to Anywhere", with the aim of minimizing the distance between its products and its consumers. While in China, many things remained to be done at the beginning of the foundation of the newly founded People's Republic of China. Chinese people would chase after nothing but peace and development for it's what secures a better life.

3.1.3 The Late 20th Century to the Early 21st Century

It's a period when the world has generally shaken off the aftermath of the two destructive world wars and a more spiritually related element came into being in people's minds. Since China has established a relatively stable society after half a century's unswerving effort, Chinese government has given priority to people's life, thus forming a people-oriented policy. In the Chinese translation of Coca Cola's advertisements, people are regarded as the subject.

For example, in 2009, Coca Cola's slogan is "Open Happiness", which is translated as "畅爽开怀". The original slogan is a noun phrase about happiness, but its Chinese version becomes a verbal phrase with people being the omitted subject. Such a change can easily get people in the scene where families gather together and drink gleefully, which caters to the Chinese value of attaching great importance to the family. Coca Cola's slogan in 1963 "Things Go better with Coke" is translated into Chinese as "喝可口可乐, 万事胜意". Here "万事胜意" not only shows its original meaning of things getting better, but also involves a kind of peaceful and jubilant feeling which is popular among China's family-oriented culture. Besides, the subject of the translation also changes from "things" to "people".

Backed by the above examples, China in this period features enhancing people's life quality, since a happy and peaceful life is always preferred in China's traditional value and ideology. And, China, as a great country with a large population, has always put people first.

3.2 Poetics and Chinese Translation of Coca Cola's Slogans

3.2.1 The Late 19th Century to the Early 20th Century

In this period, the Chinese society went through significant changes, and so did the Chinese language, with the written language being transferred from the Classical Chinese to the Vernacular Chinese. Looking back, we find people's use of the vernacular Chinese at that time was at the initial stage, thus there were inevitably some

mistakes or faulty wording. In the translation of Coca Cola's slogan, little attention was paid to the overall coherence or the potential meaning, which might cause misunderstanding or confusion.

Coca Cola's slogan in 1917 "Three Million A Day!" was translated literally as "一天有三百万!", with no attention being paid to the unit of the figure "3 million". The same thing happened to Coca Cola's slogan in 1905 "Coca Cola Revives and Sustains", which was translated as "可口可乐—保持和恢复你的体力". Although no mistake was made in it, this translation was not idiomatic, since obviously "和" is usually omitted in such context.

Neither the original American versions nor their Chinese translations were artfully-worded during this period. This was perhaps because the commercial industry was still first shoots at this stage where the focus hadn't been put on the advertising language.

3.2.2 The Early 20th Century to the Mid-20th Century

As the Vernacular Writing Movement became more influential in China, everyday words and expressions were used on more and more occasions, including advertising. The Chinese translation of Coca Cola's slogans gradually began to pay more attention to being idiomatic, smoothness and elegance.

For example, Coca Cola's slogan in 1927 "Around the Corner from Everywhere" was translated into "任何角落, 随手可得". Using two four-word short sentences made it more idiomatic and acceptable to Chinese consumers and the rhythmic Chinese translation could play a crucial part in promoting the coke. Another example was Coca Cola's slogan in 1948: "Where there is Coke, There is Hospitality". Its Chinese translation was "温情与可乐同在". The translator didn't metaphrase it by simply following the source English sentence pattern, otherwise the translation would turn into "哪里..., 哪里...", which sounds a little unnatural. Thanks to the reform in Chinese language, huge progress had been made in the translation of Coca Cola's slogans and the expressions had become more idiomatic and smoother than before.

During this period, American advertisements were developing tremendously with many proverbs and idioms being integrated in the slogans. "Where There's Coke, There's Hospitality" is a typical example transformed from "Where there is a will, there is a way". Against a background of the two world wars inspiring expressions also appeared in Coke's ads of this period. Chinese literature in this period had broken the cord of the feudal thoughts and was making progress under the influence of science and democracy widely spread in the West.

3.2.3 The Late 20th Century to the Early 21st Century

After World War II, translation as an industry was gaining momentum in China. As a large number of western literary works was introduced to China, translators of various fields, like Lin Shu and Xu Yuanhong, were springing up, which also accelerated the progress of the

translation of commercials. Coca Cola's advertisements got polished in many aspects, like sentence pattern, rhythm, idiomaticity, etc.. Meanwhile, free translation was more frequently adopted than before and the translation of advertisements became more flexible and mature.

Coca Cola's slogan in 1964 was "Things Go Better with Coke" that was translated into "可口可乐给你虎虎生气、特别的活力". It was obvious that the amplification method was applied in this translation to detail the abstract concept of "better". Apart from this, the last words of the two short sentences rhymed with each other which made it especially appealing to Chinese consumers. Its slogan in 1987 was "Can't Beat the Feeling" while its Chinese translation was "挡不住的感觉". Instead of using its original meaning "defeat or hit", the translator translated "beat" as "挡", which is more suitable in Chinese context. The English sentence contains a verb and its object, while its Chinese translation is a noun phrase, which involves a transformation of the part of speech. The original verb "beat" is turned into an adjective to qualify the noun "feeling".

During this period, the beat generation had a great impact on the American literary style and poetics. More inspiring words were needed in order to rejuvenate the literary world and bring energy back to Americans' spiritual world. Meanwhile, many western works had poured into China, thus promoting the quality of translated works, including commercial translation.

3.3 Patronage and Chinese Translation of Coca Cola's Slogans

With respect to the patronage of the translation of Coca Cola's commercials, it is just Coca Cola Company itself. It is the patronage that plays the most important role in the ad translation since it gives both monetary and social support to translators who must in turn follow their sponsors' requirements. And what is required on translators by their patrons' changes in pace with consumers' characteristics and demands.

3.3.1 The Late 19th Century to the Mid-20th Century

In this period, the turbulent situation and slow economic development posted challenge on people's well-being in China. Few people in China could afford the goods shipped from Western countries, which meant coke was a kind of luxury for common people. At that time, only a small number of rich landlords, officers or royal members could enjoy Coca Cola. The Coca Cola company aimed to show the high quality of its products and establish its market positioning by attracting the rich. Therefore, the Chinese translation of its slogans fully showed its status as a high-end drink.

For instance, Coca Cola's slogan in 1906 was "The Great National Temperance Beverage" translated as "高质量的饮品" and the Chinese version of its slogan in 1929 "The Pause That Refreshes" was "世界上最好的饮料". Adjectives like "最高" and "最好" were used in these

Chinese slogans to suggest coke's status in beverage as a luxury to catch the attention of the rich.

In America, since the Coca Cola company was still newly founded at this time, coke was little known and not everyone could afford it, which was similar to the situation in China. Then during World War II, a campaign, which rendered American soldiers the main target group, was launched by the company to provide coke for soldiers at a low price. In summary Coca Cola's English slogans highlighted its high-end positioning to show it was for the rich and soldiers fighting for the USA.

3.3.2 The Mid-20th Century to the Late 20th Century

Since the founding of People's Republic of China, China gradually started to import a large number of Coca Cola products. In a gesture to meet common Chinese people's psychological needs, the sponsor --Coca Cola Company -- shifted its Chinese slogans' emphasis from its rarity and supereminence to its function of bringing energy and replenishing strength. With the public being the main target group, words like "energy" and "power" frequently appeared in the Chinese translation of Coca Cola's commercials.

In an above-mentioned example of Coca Cola's slogan in 1964, the original ad "Things Go Better with Coke" was translated as "可口可乐给你虎虎生气、特别的活力". The English slogan didn't mention anything about energy while in its Chinese translation "better things" was defined particularly as energy and power. Also, Coca Cola's slogan in 1976 was "Coke Adds Life" which was translated as "可乐增添活力". The translator changed "life" in the source text to "energy" in that it was what the common people needed in that special period of China when everything remained to be done after the war.

During this period, in America, Coca Cola had become the beverage commonly seen in daily life and its commercials were targeted at all Americans. By adding words like "life" into its slogans, the Coca Cola Company wanted to show that coke had had a place in people's life.

3.3.3 The Early 21st Century Till Now

During this period, China has undergone the reform and opening up, thus bolstering its economy to a new stage. With the tremendous increase in people's living standard, Coca Cola has gained popularity in the past decades, becoming as commonly seen as milk and tea in China. Hence, the Coca Cola Company follows this trend and aims to make coke the beverage for every individual on this land. In accordance with sponsors' requirements, the translation of its slogans no longer caters to a specific consumer group; rather, it focuses on the happiness for everyone.

For example, the Chinese translation of Coca Cola's slogan in 2006, "The Coke Side of Life", was "生活中的可乐一面". Here "可乐" not only refers to the product itself, but also reveals the happiness coke can bring to people's life. Coca Cola's slogan in 2020 was "Together Tastes Better" which was translated as "聚在一起, 味更好".

It emphasizes on people's community life and suggests that coke tastes better when it is integrated with friendship and love, and that's what really counts in daily life. The two examples clearly show that coke has entered Chinese people's life and become a frequently drunk beverage at different kinds of gatherings.

In America, compared to the past, Coca Cola's current slogans are more internationalized. Having target consumers all over the world, the company has to make the advertisements themed at universal love and compassion, which is a commercial strategy to introduce the product to people from all walks of life in different countries.

CONCLUSION

This paper researches the advertising translation from the perspective of the manipulation theory. Translation of advertisements is to transform the expressions in the source language in an idiomatic way to cater to the culture, literature, ideology and consumers' demands in the target language. The Chinese translation of Coca Cola's slogans is consistent with the core of the manipulation theory and complies with China's ideology, literature and patrons' preferences in different periods. By analyzing Coca Cola's advertising slogans and its Chinese translation, this paper also studies its commercial strategies and the similarities and differences between China and the USA in ideology, poetics and patronage at different times.

It's apparent that a company has to sufficiently investigate the culture, mainstream values and consumers' demands before entering the market in order to ensure a commercial success. When translating slogans, the translators are supposed to, on the basis of the sponsors' requirements, make the translation more acceptable to target consumers by using idiomatic expressions and taking ideology into consideration.

All things considered, the manipulation theory is a typical example that breaks the routine and studies translation from external factors. Translators should concentrate not only on the linguistic factors like the selection of words and sentence pattern, but also on the cultural and ideological factors in a particular environment. The combination of the two can highly improve the translation quality, and that's one of the reasons why the Coca Cola Company, which adopts ingenious English advertising slogans and optimal Chinese translations of these English slogans, has become a powerful beverage magnate.

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