Repetition of Sound, Structure, and Meaning: A study of poeticising strategies in English-Chinese advertisement translation[1]

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ABSTRACT

Advertisement translation is highly creative, and poeticising is one type of flexible approach, which is prominent in English-Chinese advertisement translation. There are studies on the poetic textual devices in Chinese and English advertisements, but research is rare regarding the strategy of poeticising in English-Chinese advertisement translation. This investigation studies a corpus of 146 English advertisements translated into Chinese and analyzes the specific examples of poeticising. Poeticising in Chinese translations is mainly realised via the use of repetition, including the repetition of sound, the repetition of structure, and the repetition of semantic meaning. The application of repetition in advertisements helps enhance the poetic essence of advertisements, appeal to readers' aesthetic needs, arouse their interest, increase the impact on the reader, and serve the final goal of promotion. Discussion of the strategies and effects of poeticising is intended to provide a point of reference for translators, concerning the value of being creative in advertisement translation and enhancing the poetical quality of the translations, as well as the Chinese linguistic and cultural characteristics.

KEYWORDS

Advertisement, poetic, poeticise, repetition, translation.

1. Introduction

This article investigates English-Chinese advertisement translation from the perspective of translators, educated readers, and speakers of both languages. Advertisement translation is highly flexible and creative, and in many cases, it can be regarded as rewriting, which means that the translation is different from the original text in both content and form, though they are based on the same advertising message (See Cui 2008). Advertising has the specific purpose of promoting goods or services. For this reason, advertisement translation is not merely a matter of transferring words from one language into another, and traditional translation theories, which have "until recently been relatively quiet" (Munday 2004: 190) in this field, have "proved inadequate to interpret, describe, explain and predict translation problems encountered in commercial translations, including advertising" (Ho 2004: 240). Yet this is not entirely true, because functional theories such as *Skopos* Theory emphasise the purpose of translation and as

such, are applicable to advertisement translation. It is proposed that translations of promotional texts should be assessed "for what they do rather than what they are, or for how well they affect the reader rather than how close they are to the original" (Torresi 2010: 1). It can be seen that the functions of advertisements' translations are given priority here and they are considered to be the key criterion for evaluating advertisement translation. This view is in keeping with *Skopos* Theory, which holds that advertisement translation should be guided by the goal of promotion and can be flexible and creative. (For more details about *Skopos* Theory and consumer-oriented texts, see Nord 1997.) The flexibility and creativity of advertisement translation is embodied in many translation strategies and methods, and one of them is poeticising. Poeticising in advertisement translation can provide target audiences with pleasure and increase the impact on them. In this sense, poetising serves the purpose of advertising.

Poeticising is a prominent phenomenon in the case of English-Chinese advertisement translation, as has been noticed by some scholars (See Li 2010: 236-299). Regardless of how the English original advertisement is designed, the Chinese translation is often poeticised to be rhymed in sound and balanced in structure. As far as English-Chinese advertisement translation is concerned, currently there are only a limited number of studies which have discussed poetic elements in the advertising discourse and proposed that advertisements applying poetic devices be called poetic advertisements. (See Chen 2007, Jiao 2013, Wang 2010, Xiao 2008, Zhang 2010) Some of these studies have analysed the translation methods of poetic advertisements, such as literal translation, addition, deletion, and rewriting (see Wang 2010; Xiao 2008). Generally speaking, research in this field is rare, and "it is surprising how little attention has been paid to" poetic advertisements or the translation of such advertisements (Xiao 2008: iv). This lack of interest can be partly attributed to the fact that the two text types of advertising and poetry are incompatible in that the former has a commercial purpose and the latter has a high aesthetic value. However, the application of poetic devices is of significance to advertising, and it is worth exploring how they are used in advertisement translation.

This research differs from existing studies on poetic advertisements, which either discuss poetic devices applied in Chinese and English advertisements or explore the strategies of translating poetic advertisements (See Wang 2010, Xiao 2008). It aims to focus on and investigate the particular method of poeticising in the case of advertisement translation from English to Chinese, including specific demonstrations of poeticising and its effects, in the hope of providing translators with useful tools for reference. At the same time, this study is related to existing research, because poeticising involves the application of poetic devices, it is a form of rewriting, and it shows the

flexibility and creativity of advertisement translation which is also called as transcreation.

2. Corpus and methodology

In this investigation, we have studied a parallel corpus of 146 bilingual advertisements collected in Li (2010), which are mostly printed advertisements from newspapers, magazines, posters, and the Internet, while some of them also appear on audio-visual media such as TV or radio. We do not have a source text corpus or a target text corpus, as the texts are often produced simultaneously in both languages based on the same promotional message about a product or service. This is exactly the essence of advertisement translation, and as we have mentioned earlier, translations of advertisements in actual use are usually rewritten from original texts for the sake of the target audience. In this study, we will treat the English version as the original and the Chinese version as the translation, as most of the products are foreign to the Chinese market. Making this assumption will not influence the research findings, because whether the Chinese texts are translated from the English ones or produced separately for the Chinese audience, they can demonstrate how to better address the Chinese audience's needs and win their favour, and it is of value to analyse the strategies that have been applied and reveal the linguistic and cultural differences that are essential for the translation of advertisements.

We have chosen the bilingual advertisements in Li (2010) for three reasons. Firstly, these advertisements cover a relatively comprehensive categorization of products or services, such as subway, airlines, government, universities, supermarkets, banking, insurance, cars, wine, cell-phones, computers, cosmetics, watches, jewelry, and magazine advertisements. Although these advertising texts and translations cover different products and services, they have one thing in common, that is, their advertising or promotional nature. It is because of this common nature that we can make generalizations about the techniques and contexts of poeticising from this wide range of products and services. Secondly, the bilingual advertisements are authentic texts used in actual marketing. While many examples of creative advertising translation can be found in academic monographs or journal papers, they are not used in actual marketing. (See Xiao 2008: 28-29) Most of them have been translated for the purpose of comparison and academic research, so their relevance and reliability may be questioned. The bilingual materials to be investigated in this research are authentic in the sense that they are used in real marketing and promotion. Thirdly, the time frame of the bilingual advertisements falls under the past twenty years. The collection of bilingual advertisements is the result of the author's years of investigation and can be regarded as the "epitome of bilingual

advertisements in Greater China for the past twenty years or so" (Li 2010: 1). As a result, exploration of the examples can reveal linguistic and cultural differences as well as the recent trends in translation practice.

The examples are selected for and included in the corpus according to the criterion that the Chinese versions of the advertisements have applied one or more poetic devices, which will be outlined in section 3. In addition, we have also taken into consideration the number of advertisements for products and those for service categories, which are supposed be evenly distributed. The product and service categories and the number of advertisements covered in the corpus are summarised in Table 1.

Classification	Categories	Number of advertisements	Proportion
Services	Banking	19	53%
	Mailing	17	
	Insurance	19	
	Institution(university, government)	13	
	Transportation (subway, airline)	10	
Products	Cars	16	47%
	Electronic devices (computer, cell-phone)	18	
	Accessories (watches, jewelry, cosmetics)	22	
	Others (food, drinks, magazines)	12	

Table 1. Products and services covered in the corpus

Although many poetic devices can be used in the discourse of advertising, an analysis of the examples in our corpus shows that the English advertisements are mainly poeticised via repetition in their Chinese translations. To be more specific, the English advertisements are poeticised in the Chinese version in the following three ways: the repetition of sound, the repetition of structure, and the repetition of semantic meaning. In other words, repetition is the major tool for poeticising in our corpus. Section 3 will elaborate the three types of poeticising strategies in detail, referring to research in such fields as linguistics, advertising, psychology, and translation, and based on analysis of the corpus. Specific examples will be analysed and discussed in section 4 to demonstrate the application and effects of such poeticising strategies in English-Chinese advertisement translation.

3. Poeticising

Rhetoric is "an integral part" of advertising (De Mooij 2004: 181), and advertising "relies massively on poeticalness to form and convey its messages" (Christidis 2002: 10). In advertisement translation, sometimes original advertisements have not applied any poetic or rhetorical devices, yet the translator may use poetic devices in their translations, and this process is what this study refers to as poeticising. The poetic devices that are applied in advertisements are often realized via the use of repetition. (Cui and Zhao 2014: 60) The use of repetition enhances the regularity and poeticalness of advertisements, is in line with readers' aesthetic needs for order, symmetry, closure, system, and structure (Maslow 1987: 25-26), and strengthens memorability and amusement (Leech 1966: 186-193). Research on the physiological and neurological mechanisms involved in memory suggests that they are influenced by emotional arousal (Alexander et al 2009: 226), and engaging audiences' emotional response can enhance their memory (Bristow 1999: 6). The use of poetical devices provides the audience with aesthetic pleasure, and in this sense it involves their emotion and strengthens their memory. It has also been pointed out in research on advertising discourse that repetition in advertising help to stick the product name in audiences' mind (Cook 2001: 156). Such effects are contributive to the final purpose of advertisements, namely promotion. Therefore, the application of repetition in the poeticising process of advertisement translation is justified in accordance with *Skopos* theory and functionalist approaches (Nord 1997; Vermeer 1996; Honig 1997). As mentioned in section 1, the translation of advertisements should be judged by their functions. The purpose or function of the text is the decisive factor in translation (Wang 2014), and as pointed in Yue (2013), the target language features such as sentence structure and lexis should be respected, and source text elements that do not fit in target language and culture can be revised or even neglected. We will now consider the three key procedures used in poeticising the translation of advertisements from English into Chinese.

3.1 Repetition of sound

Regularity in terms of sound effect is "one of the key distinctions, perhaps the key distinction, between poetry and prose" (Strachan and Terry 2001: 10). In other words, the regularity of sound effect is a defining feature of poetry, and the design of sound patterns is an important aspect of poeticising in advertisement translation. The regularity of sound pattern is present in both Chinese and English advertising texts. It is in keeping with audiences' aesthetic needs for symmetry, order and structure which is universal for people of different cultural backgrounds. (See Maslow 1987:

28.) The pattern of sound can be organised via repetition such as alliteration and rhyme. Alliteration refers to the repetition of the same consonant sounds in the initial position of a series of words or phrases (Corbett 1999: 388; Huhmann 2008: 87). Rhyme means repeating sounds at the end of words or phrases (Huhmann 2008: 87). There is difference concerning the sound patterning between the Chinese and English languages. While rhyming is applied in both Chinese and English advertisements (See Li 2010: 275), end rhyme is more noticeable in the Chinese versions of advertisements. Alliteration is not a prominent feature in Chinese, native speakers seldom pay attention to or are aware of this repetitive device in Chinese even when it is present. Therefore, we did not count the use of alliteration in Chinese advertisements in our analysis. The application of alliteration and rhyme in our corpus can be summarised in Table 2.

	English advertisements	Chinese advertisements
Alliteration	29	N/A
Rhyme	10	53
Summary	39	53

Table 2. Repetition of sound in the corpus

It can be seen that, within our corpus, there are ten cases of rhyme and 29 cases of alliteration in the English advertisements, and there are 53 end rhymes in the Chinese versions. Therefore, rhyme, particularly end rhyme, is a major poeticising tool in English-Chinese advertisement translation.

3.2 Repetition of structures

Apart from the repetition of sound, advertisements also apply repeated linguistic structures (McCarthy and Carter 1994: 149). The regularity of structure is embodied in such rhetorical devices as anaphora, epistrophe, epanalepsis, anadiplosis, parallelism, antithesis, and antimetabole. (See Cui and Zhao 2014: 59-60; McQuarrie 2008: 260) The discussion in McQuarrie (2008) mainly covers the English language, but it also refers to the advertising discourse in general, and that in Cui and Zhao (2014) involves both Chinese and English languages. Anaphora refers to the repetition of a word or group of words at the beginnings of successive clauses (Corbett 1999: 390). Epistrophe refers to the repetition of the same word or group of words at the ends of successive clauses (Corbett 1999: 391). Epanalepsis is repetition at the end of a clause of the word or phrase that has occurred at the beginning of the clause (Corbett 1999: 392). Anadiplosis is repetition of the last word of one clause at the beginning of the following clause (Corbett 1999: 388). Parallelism means similarity of structure in a series of two or more related words, phrases, or clauses (Corbett 1999: 381). Antithesis is the juxtaposition of contrasting ideas, often in parallel structures (Corbett

1999: 382). Antimetabole is the repetition of words in successive clauses, in reverse grammatical order (Corbett 1999: 394). Most of these rhetorical devices are strictly regular either in terms of syntactical forms such as parallelism and antithesis, or in terms of word forms such as anaphora, epistrophe, epanalepsis, and anadiplosis, or in terms of both syntactical and word forms such as antimetabole. As the repetition of words often involves a group or series of words which also have their own inner structure to be organised together, it can also be included in the discussion on the repetition of structure. The repetition of structure enhances the rhythm of an advertisement and in this sense it also produces sound effect and is related to the repetition of sound. The application of repetition of structure in our corpus can be summarised in Table 3.

	English advertisements	Chinese advertisements
Repetition of structure	18	103

Table 3. Repetition of structure in the corpus

Analysis of the examples in our corpus shows that Chinese and English have more in common in terms of the repetition of words or linguistic structures, although the Chinese versions of the examples tend to apply repetition of structure more frequently. As shown in Table 3, there are 18 repetitions of structure in the English advertisements, and there are 103 in the Chinese versions, which is almost six times of the number of repetitions in the English texts. Using balanced structures with the same number of Chinese characters in each line of an antithetical advertising slogan is especially common in Chinese advertisements. (See Li 2010: 336-338) Similarly, antithesis is frequently applied in the poeticising process of English-Chinese advertisement translation, and more examples will be presented in section 4 to illustrate this feature.

3.3 Repetition of meaning

In addition to the repetition of sound and structure as discussed in sections 3.1 and 3.2, there is also the repetition of semantic meaning in the poeticising process of English-Chinese advertisement translation. As just mentioned in section 3.2, antithesis is often used in Chinese advertisements, which includes two lines, usually with the same structure and length as well as repetitive or related semantic meaning. Such repetition of semantic meaning in the Chinese versions of advertisements frequently appears in our corpus. In some cases, the same meaning is repeated via different wording. In some cases, the meaning of the first line is further developed or elaborated in the second line, while it is still based on and therefore related to the first line. The application of repetition of semantic meaning in our corpus can be summarised in Table 4. There are 6 cases of repetition of

meaning in the English advertisements, and there are 94 in the Chinese ones. It can be seen that the repetition of semantic meaning is applied much more in Chinese advertisements than in English ones.

	English advertisements	Chinese advertisements
Repetition of meaning	6	94

Table 4. Repetition of meaning in the corpus

Repetition of semantic meaning can facilitate readers' comprehension (Cui & Zhao 2013). It strengthens the effects of a persuasive message in general (Alpert et al 1983); it serves as "an aid to memorability" (McCarthy and Carter 1994: 149); it involves receivers' attention and participation (Tannen 2007: 32); and it helps to "reinforce a particular point of view in a way which involves the reader or listener in as direct and co-creative a role as possible" in general (McCarthy and Carter 1994: 148). The next section will discuss specific examples to demonstrate how the poeticising strategy of repetition is applied in English-Chinese advertisement translation in our corpus, as well as the effects of such poeticising.

4. Case studies

The following three examples are selected from our corpus for discussion, which are representative in the sense that they have applied more than one of the poeticising strategies outlined in section 3.

Example (1)
A diamond is forever
钻石恒久远 一颗永留传--De Beers (Li 2010: 18)
[Back translation of the Chinese version: *zuan shi heng jiu yuan, yi ke yong liu chuan*; Diamond is constant and lasting, and one piece will last forever]

Example (2) The Future of the Automobile
领导时代 驾驭未来--Mercedes-Benz (Li 2010: 18)
[Back translation of the Chinese version: *ling dao shi dai, jia yu wei lai*; Leading the times, and steering the future.]

Example (3)
We care to provide service above and beyond the call of duty.
殷勤有加 风雨不改--UPS (Li 2010: 21)
[Back translation of the Chinese version: *yin qin you jia, feng yu bu gai*; Highly attentive, and neither wind nor rain can change it.]

In the three examples, the Chinese translations are all related to their English originals in that their meaning is based on the English

advertisements. In Example (1), the English version mentions the point of the diamond's standing for forever, and the Chinese version emphasises and repeats this same quality of diamonds in the two lines. In Example (2), the English version says Mercedes-Benz represents the future of automobiles, and its Chinese translation also mentions the times and the future. In Example (3), the English version stresses the efforts they make to provide customers with the best services, and its Chinese translation also emphasises the company's highly attentive attitude. Meanwhile, although the semantic meaning of the Chinese translations is related to their originals, there is still some adjustment, for they have reiterated the selling point, changed the perspective, or added details. In Example (1), the Chinese version reiterates the diamond's quality of being lasting via two adjectives, "恒(*heng*, constant)" and "久远(*jiu yuan*, lasting)," an adverb, "永(*yong*, forever)," and a verb phrase, "留传(*liu chuan*, last)", while the English version mentions the point once via the adjective "forever." In Example (2), the Chinese translation changes the perspective and emphasizes the brand's quality of being a pioneer and leader via two verb phrases, 领导(*ling dao*, leading)" and "驾驭(*jia yu*, steering)," while the English version only says Mercedes-Benz represents the future of automobiles. In Example (3), the Chinese adds the detail that neither rain nor wind could stop them from carrying out their duty, "风雨不改(*feng yu bu gai*, and neither wind nor rain can change it), while the English version does not mention the adverse weather. Aside from the minor adjustment in the presentation of meaning, the Chinese versions of the three examples are also flexible in the sense that they have poeticised the wording via repetition, and such poeticising can be analysed according to the strategies outlined in section 3.

4.1 Repetition of sound

Firstly, repetition of sound is applied to form end rhymes when English advertisements are translated into Chinese. In Example (1), the English version is composed of one sentence "A diamond is forever" which does not use any poetic device of sound such as alliteration or rhyme. It is poeticised in the Chinese version which has two clauses, with the first clause ending with the Chinese character "远," which is pronounced as [juan], and the second with "传," which is pronounced as [tʃuan]. Both of them end with the sound [uan], and the two clauses are rhymed. Similarly, in Example (2), the English version is a noun phrase "The Future of the Automobile" without any rhyme or alliteration. It is also poeticised in the Chinese version, which is composed of two phrases, with the first ending with the Chinese character "代," which is pronounced as [dai], and the second with "来," which is pronounced as [lai]. In this way, the two phrases are also rhymed. Poeticising the English advertisements in their Chinese translations via the repetition of sound to form rhymes in the advertising slogans increases

readers' pleasure in reading them, addresses their aesthetic needs, and helps to win their favor. Such emotional response increases the impact on the reader and facilitates the potential success of promotion.

4.2 Repetition of structure

Secondly, the advertisements are also poeticised via the repetition of linguistic structures. In the three examples, the Chinese versions have one thing in common. That is, all of them are composed of two parts such as two clauses or two phrases, and the two parts both have the same structure and the same number of Chinese characters, which forms antithesis. In Example (1), the Chinese version "钻石恒久远 一颗永留传(*zuan shi heng jiu yuan, yi ke yong liu chuan*; Diamond is constant and lasting, and one piece will last forever)" has two clauses, each with five Chinese characters. In Example (2), the Chinese version "领导时代 驾驭未来(*ling dao shi dai, jia yu wei lai*; Leading the times, and steering the future.)" has two verb phrases, each with four Chinese characters. In Example (3), the Chinese version "殷勤有加风雨不改(*yin qin you jia, feng yu bu gai*; Highly attentive, and neither wind nor rain can change it.)" also has two phrases, each with four Chinese characters. As each Chinese character is a separate syllable, the number of Chinese characters in the advertising lines is closely related to the rhythm, and having the same number of Chinese characters can strengthen the rhythm. In this sense, creating repetitive structure via manipulating the number of Chinese characters has the similar sound effect as achieved by rhyme, being able to provide readers with amusement and pleasure in reading the translations. In addition to the number of Chinese characters, the translations are also repetitive in terms of the inner structural organization. In Example (1), the two parts of the Chinese version can both be divided into "a two-Chinese-character noun phrase + a one-Chinese-character adjective or adverb + a two-Chinese-character adjective or verb phrase." To be more specific, the first part "钻石恒久远(*zuan shi heng jiu yuan,* Diamond is constant and lasting,)" is composed of "钻石 (*zuan shi*, diamond)", "恒(*heng*, constant)," and "久远(*jiu yuan*, lasting)". The second part "一颗永留传(*yi ke yong liu chuan*; and one piece will last forever)" is composed of "一颗(*yi ke*, one piece)," "永(*yong*, forever)", and "留传(*liu chuan*, last)". In Example (2), the two parts of the Chinese version are strictly regular and both of them have the structure of "a two-Chinese-character verb phrase + a two-Chinese-character noun phrase." To be more specific, the first part "领导时代(*ling dao shi dai,* Leading the times)" has the verb phrase "领导(*ling dao*, leading)" and the noun phrase "时代(*shi dai*, the times)," and the second part "驾驭未来(*jia yu wei lai*; and steering the future)" has the verb phrase "驾驭(*jia yu*, steering)" and the noun phrase "未来(*wei lai*, the future)." In Example (3), the two parts of the Chinese version have the structure "two-Chinese-character adjective or

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noun + two-Chinese-character adverb or verb.". To be more specific, the first part "殷勤有加(*yin qin you jia,* Highly attentive)" is composed of "殷勤(*yin qin,* attentive)" and "有加(*you jia,* highly)". The second part "风雨不改(*feng yu bu gai,* and neither wind nor rain can change it.)" is composed of "风雨(*feng yu,* wind and rain)" and "不改(*bu gai,* not change)." The repetition of organizational structure further enhances the regularity and rhythm of the slogans, which is in line with readers' aesthetic needs, provides them with amusement, and serves the final purpose of promotion.

4.3 Repetition of meaning

Thirdly, aside from the repetition of sound and structure, there is also the repetition of semantic meaning in the Chinese translations of the three examples. In the Chinese version of Example (1), "钻石恒久远 一颗永留传 (*zuan shi heng jiu yuan, yi ke yong liu chuan*; Diamond is constant and lasting, and one piece will last forever)," the two clauses both describe the diamond's quality of lasting forever. The first clause mentions this quality and the second clause reiterates it by saying that one piece of diamond will last forever. In the Chinese version of Example (2), "领导时代 驾驭未来(*ling dao shi dai, jia yu wei lai*; Leading the times, and steering the future)", the first phrase says the brand leads the times, and the second phrase says the same thing, for steering the future is one type of leading the times. Or it can be interpreted that the two expressions have a causal relation. Just because it leads the times, it can steer the future. Still the two parts present related or repetitive meaning. In the Chinese version of Example (3), "殷勤有加 风雨不改(*yin qin you jia, feng yu bu gai*; Highly attentive, and neither wind nor rain can change it," the second clause is the further elaboration of the first one. The first part describes their attentiveness, and the second part provides a detail to demonstrate how attentive they are. In this sense, the semantic meaning of the two parts is related. The repetition of meaning also adds to the regularity of the design and in combination with the formal designs it increases the poeticalness of the translations. As noted in 3.3, repetition of semantic meaning gives prominence to the selling point, enhances persuasion, involves receivers' participation, and deepens their memory. Therefore, the repetition of semantic meaning is also contributive to realizing the advertisements' final goal of promotion.

5. Conclusion

To summarise, this research studies a corpus of poetic advertisements, explores the poeticising feature in English-Chinese advertisement translation, and discusses three types of poeticising strategies in advertisement translation, including the repetition of sound, the repetition of structure, and the repetition of semantic meaning. It differs from the

current studies, which tend to cite random examples and analyse the rhetorical devices that are often applied in poetic advertisements and the methods of translating such textual devices, in that it takes the perspective of poeticising, focuses on the poeticising strategies in the case of English-Chinese advertisement translation, and presents discussions and draws conclusions based on the corpus. Foregrounding the notion of poeticising is of significance to deepening translators' awareness and understanding of the importance and value of being creative and applying poetical devices in advertisement translation. The prominent phenomena that Chinese translations often apply rhyme, antithesis, and repetition of meaning, which have been demonstrated in our corpus, can also provide reference to translators concerning the Chinese linguistic and cultural implications. Many poetic devices are outlined in section 3 and so far only rhyme, antithesis, and the repetition of semantic meaning are discussed in this study, which are more frequently applied in the examples within our corpus. As this study has focused on the strategies related to repetition that have been identified in our selected corpus, in the future research, a larger corpus can be studied and the application of other poeticising strategies can be further explored.

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