

# A Study on E-C Translation Strategies of Sports Brand Slogans from the Perspective of the Cooperative Principle

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**ABSTRACT:** Grice's Cooperative Principle (CP) provides a basic guideline for daily communication, but in the specific field of advertising translation, translators often violate the CP through "creative treason" to achieve the effect of attracting consumers. This paper takes the Chinese translation of sports brand slogans as its research object, adopting literature research and case analysis methods to investigate the phenomenon of CP violations in slogan translation. It summarizes three major characteristics of these translations: conciseness, appeal, and value. Based on the CP, this study attempts to summarize translation strategies that can enhance the dissemination power of slogans and strengthen consumers' brand identity, with a view toward providing reference and guidance for the E-C translation of sports brand slogans.

**KEYWORDS:** Cooperative Principle, C-E translation, translation strategies, brand identity

## I. INTRODUCTION

With the improvement of economic levels, people's lifestyles have undergone tremendous changes. More people have begun to pay attention to their health status and actively engage in fitness activities; daily exercise has now become a part of residents' everyday lives. At the same time, a large number of sports brand franchise stores have sprung up in cities, and a dazzling array of sports products attracts the attention of sports enthusiasts. Meanwhile, promotional posters for sports brands are overwhelming, covering the windows of major stores, subway entrances and exits, and streaming media platforms. In such a fiercely competitive market environment, the quality of the Chinese translation of advertising slogans holds a very important position. A high-quality Chinese translation of a slogan can not only accurately convey product information but also effectively stimulate consumers' interest and enhance their desire to purchase. From the perspective of pragmatic communicative function, an advertising slogan can be regarded as a communication activity, so compliance with the Cooperative Principle is the foundation for the existence of sports brand slogans. However, in the actual process of E-C translation, advertising translators sometimes do not strictly follow Grice's CP; instead, they deliberately violate it to do the opposite, conveying implied meanings beyond the language itself, thereby stimulating consumers' purchasing desires and achieving the goal of seizing the market.

## II. LITERATURE REVIEW

Since the late 1980s, Chinese scholars have successively studied pragmatic theories. With the development of the times, an increasing number of scholars have integrated pragmatic theories with specific life realities, continuously exploring new perspectives in pragmatic research. In 1993, scholar Yang Yongjian focused on analyzing the duality of language, speech acts, and conversation attributes, demonstrating that relevant pragmatic research helps enrich foreign language teaching activities<sup>[1]</sup>. Qu Weiguo and Chen Liufang used the politeness principle in pragmatics to explore interpersonal social relationships, analyzing the long-standing "Mianzi" phenomenon in society<sup>[2]</sup>. Subsequent scholars' research became more specific; for example, some scholars comparatively analyzed the similarities and differences in kinship terms between English and Chinese linguistic cultures,

initiating discussions on the translation of kinship terms from a pragmatic perspective<sup>[3]</sup>. In addition, in subsequent studies, pragmatic principles have also been widely applied to specific social fields such as medical disputes, news reports concerning China, and legal judgments<sup>[4][5][6]</sup>.

By searching CNKI with the keywords “Cooperative Principle, advertising slogans,” the author found 59 academic journal articles related to pragmatic advertising research, but only 2 degree theses. Analyzing the research themes reveals that most focused on the pragmatic analysis of cosmetics and food slogans<sup>[7]</sup>, indicating that there is still huge room for research related to advertising slogans from the perspective of the CP. The author also searched CNKI using the keywords “Cooperative Principle, advertising slogans, translation,” and found only 3 academic journals and 1 degree thesis related to the translation of pragmatic advertising slogans. Moreover, the case perspectives in these 4 documents were too broad and did not focus on a specific area of life for case analysis, resulting in conclusions that lack practicality and operability. Based on this, this paper focuses its perspective on sports brand slogans in daily life. Taking Grice’s pragmatic CP as the entry point, it dissects the Chinese translation characteristics of such sports brand slogans entering the local Chinese market to investigate the linguistic features behind the translation. The study decodes the translation methods advertising translators use to better attract consumers’ attention while violating the CP during E-C translation, aiming to provide translation strategies and references for the future E-C translation of such brand advertisements.

### III. GRICE’S COOPERATIVE PRINCIPLE AND CONVERSATIONAL IMPLICATURE

In a speech in 1967, the famous philosopher of language H.P. Grice proposed the well-known “Cooperative Principle (CP)”<sup>[8]</sup>. This principle posits that while humans engage in verbal communication, in order to make the dialogue proceed effectively and rationally, both parties will jointly observe a basic principle<sup>[9]</sup>. It should be noted that the “maxims” mentioned by Grice here are not mandatory regulations, but rather universal standards guiding daily communication and interaction, ensuring that both communicating parties can interact efficiently. Specifically, dialogue participants need to adhere to the following maxims: the Maxim of Quantity, meaning the amount of information conveyed in the dialogue should exactly meet the required information volume for language communication; the Maxim of Quality, meaning the language used in the dialogue must be true and accurate; the Maxim of Relation, meaning the information conveyed by both parties in their utterances should be relevant to the topic; and the Maxim of Manner, meaning the expressions of both parties during communication must be clear and explicit. In actual conversational interactions, people often inevitably or deliberately violate the Cooperative Principle. Superficially, the communication between the two parties seems to be “interrupted,” but in reality, it is not. The purpose of one party violating the Cooperative Principle is to convey the implied meaning within the utterance to the listener, namely the “Conversational Implicature”.

### IV. FEATURES OF SPORTS BRAND SLOGANS

An advertisement slogan is a type of promotional terminology, often introducing its products, culture, and other service contents to the public through posters or streaming media. The primary purpose of an advertising slogan is to guide consumers in their selection process and to stimulate their desire to shop, thereby achieving the goal of selling goods or services. A good advertising slogan can quickly arouse consumers’ interest in a certain type of product and even become a part of popular culture. It can make people energetic and even change deep-rooted speech habits<sup>[10]</sup>. For example, “Receive no gifts this holiday season, except for Naobaijin” and “Naobaijin, youthful state, health product” are slogans for the health product Naobaijin. Naobaijin is a health supplement primarily composed of melatonin and oligosaccharides; by regulating human sleep rhythms and improving intestinal function, it can help relieve insomnia and promote health. In an instant, these two catchy slogans swept across the country, triggering the “Naobaijin phenomenon” and successfully forming a conditioned reflex among the public. Sports brand slogans are a subset of advertising slogans, characterized by three major features: conciseness, appeal, and value.

① Conciseness: Conciseness is one of the most prominent features of sports brands. Currently, almost all successful sports brand slogans on the market adopt a minimalist advertising language model, concentrating the core concept of the product while simultaneously conveying the brand spirit. For instance, Nike’s “Just Do It”

and Adidas's "Impossible is Nothing"; such slogans are usually restricted to 3-5 words. This conciseness ensures that the slogan is easy to remember and spread, leaving a deep impression in consumers' minds.

②Appeal: Sports brand slogans also possess strong appeal. These slogans often contain a compelling call to action and spiritual encouragement, such as New Balance's "Fearlessly Independent," which conveys a challenging spirit of "my destiny is up to me, not heaven," conforming to the Chinese social values of fearing no challenges and forging ahead to achieve self-independence. This type of slogan primarily uses positive language to arouse consumers' enthusiasm for sports and their desire to challenge themselves, thereby stimulating their purchasing desires.

③Value: Value is also a crucial component of sports brand slogans. Excellent sports slogans carry the specific values of the brand and can convey the brand's core concepts to consumers. For instance, the slogan "Impossible Is Nothing" reflects Adidas's core value: to believe in one's potential, continuously surpass oneself in life, and achieve impossible goals. In fact, this slogan is also the life creed of the brand's founder, Adolf Dassler, who once said: "As long as one has a firm belief, then he can achieve anything". This slogan also represents Adidas's mission, which is to help athletes and ordinary people release their strength and realize their dreams.

## V. APPLICATION OF THE CP IN THE E-C TRANSLATION OF SPORTS BRAND SLOGANS

Sports brand slogans are, in essence, a communicative act, so adhering to the Cooperative Principle is the foundation of their existence<sup>[11]</sup>. However, in real life, in order to achieve promotional purposes and generate impulsive shopping desires among consumers, merchants often deliberately violate the Cooperative Principle during translation to amplify promotional effects, utilizing unconventional discourse patterns to highlight their brand's selling points and increase the market transaction rate. Below, the author uses specific examples of sports brand slogans to illustrate instances of Cooperative Principle violations in the Chinese translation of such advertisements and reveals the underlying conversational implicatures.

### 5.1 Translation Strategies Violating the Maxim of Quantity

The Quantity Maxim requires that utterances should contain the appropriate amount of information necessary for the communication purpose—neither insufficient nor excessive. In the Chinese translation of sports brand slogans, violations of the Maxim of Quantity are widespread. In actual translation, out of consideration for adapting to both cultures and the target market, advertising translators often adopt addition and omission translation strategies to appropriately adjust the amount of information contained in the slogan, thereby enhancing the localization of foreign slogans. Specifically, there are the following two translation strategies.

#### 5.1.1 Appropriately Increasing the Amount of Information

**Example 1:** SL: TESTED TOUGH

TL: 要玩就玩真的

This slogan comes from the Columbia sportswear brand, literally translated as "经过测试的坚韧". It is evident that if a literal translation is adopted, the slogan is somewhat awkward and rigid; when consumers see this slogan, they will feel indifferent and have no desire to buy. Here, the advertising translator deliberately violates the quantity maxim by adding the element of "play" and the value judgment of "real", instantly giving the slogan a "subject". When consumers read this advertisement, they will involuntarily picture themselves as the owner of the brand's apparel, briefly generating the illusion of owning this sportswear, which greatly enhances their purchasing desire. Simultaneously, "for real" acts as a warm and sincere commitment from the merchant to the consumer. On the other hand, the original English slogan TESTED TOUGH uses alliteration with the letter T, making it catchy to read; if a literal translation method were used, this effect would be lost. By increasing the amount of information, although the repeated syllables of the two "玩" in the translated text do not completely replicate the reading experience of the original text, they achieve a similar phonetic effect. This phonetic compensation translation method not only adds information but is also more conducive to the brand's dissemination and acceptance in the Chinese market.

#### 5.1.2 Appropriately Decreasing the Amount of Information

**Example 2:** SL: L'AVENTURE COMMENCE ICI

TL: 轻户外·悦旅行

This slogan comes from Lafuma, a famous French outdoor clothing brand; the original text is in French, literally translated as “Adventure starts here,” expressing a simple and plain semantic meaning, emphasizing the expectation of an unknown journey. Obviously, if a literal translation is used as the brand’s slogan, although semantic equivalence can be achieved, it is inevitably too straightforward and lacks tension. The translated version “轻户外·悦旅行” violates the quantity maxim, but semantically fits the value positioning of outdoor products much more closely. The word “commence” in the original sentence means “to begin”; the translation deliberately omits this information, weakening the ritualistic nature of “starting out,” and simultaneously adapting to the contemporary pop culture of a “Instant trip,” which more accurately targets consumers’ intentions. At the same time, this conscious omission reflects the creative application of the Cooperative Principle in advertising translation as a special communicative activity.

**5.2 Translation Strategies Violating the Maxim of Quality**

The Quality Maxim requires that dialogues possess authenticity and that the speaker should not state things that lack evidence. However, in the field of advertising translation, merchants, acting as one party in the dialogue, will undisguisedly exaggerate their products to enhance selling points and strengthen the rhetorical appeal of the slogans<sup>[12]</sup>. They often resort to rhetorical devices such as exaggeration to prove that their products can achieve “having what others do not have, and being better at what others do have,” thereby promoting their merchandise.

**Example 3:** SL: Extremely tough. Extremely elegant

TL: 飞跃巅峰 无尽优雅

**Example 4:** SL: Fearlessly Independent

TL: 由我主宰

Examples 3 and 4 are the slogans of the outdoor sports brand Suunto and the sports brand New Balance, respectively. Both translations adopt exaggerated rhetorical devices, violating the quality maxim of the Cooperative Principle while also violating the relation maxim, which states that one should not say things irrelevant to the topic. Analyzing the structure of the original language, Example 3 is a coordinate sentence structure of “adverb plus adjective,” literally translated as “very tough, very elegant”. The translation concretizes the spiritual quality of toughness into the exaggerated “leaping over the peak”; this situational processing shortens the distance between consumers and commodities, conveys the core characteristics of the product, and establishes a solid connection between the product and consumers’ life beliefs. The structure of Example 4 is similar to Example 3; the translation creatively betrays the descriptive expression “fearlessly independent” in the original sentence, transforming it into “dominated by me”. This four-character idiom-style language structure is highly memorable, conveying a challenging spirit of “my destiny is up to me, not heaven,” calling on the “我” in society to have the courage to achieve self-independence, and gradually establishing consumer identity through the first person “I”.

**5.3 Translation Strategies Violating the Maxim of Relation**

The Relation Maxim requires that the information displayed by both communicating parties in a dialogue be closely related to the topic of communication. However, in sports brand slogans, we often find that many slogans seem completely irrelevant to the products themselves, and such slogans frequently use personification to endow goods with human characteristics.

**Example 5:** SL: YOUR BEST WAY TO NATURE

TL: 生性自由

Example 5 is the slogan of the South Korean sports brand Kolon Sport. At first glance, both the original text and the translation seem unrelated to sports products, and consumers might find it difficult to associate them with sportswear and equipment. Obviously, this sentence violates the relation maxim within the Cooperative Principle. Yet, it is precisely this violation that allows the translation to resonate better with the mass consumption psychology of the local Chinese market. In handling personal pronouns, the translation chose to delete the

limitation brought by “your,” adding a layer of ambiguity to the product’s ownership; this form of expression is more universally applicable. “Nature” here is not translated as natural environments but cleverly utilizes the meaning of “human nature,” acting as a pun to some extent, thereby adding double meaning to the slogan and making it more intriguing. Human beings are products of nature; getting close to nature and returning to nature is an inherent instinct of urbanites. The rapid pace of modern changes inevitably causes people to lose their way. Material desires bind everyone, while holy souls long for freedom, hoping to step into the natural world and return to their true selves. Consumers can freely enter Kolon Sport stores to choose their tools for returning to nature. Thus, a connection is established between the products and human needs, and consumers shift from “being guided to shop” to “actively heading towards nature”. This transformation also neatly fits the collective anxiety of “escaping the city” in contemporary China, endowing the functional products of outdoor equipment with a sense of spiritual redemption.

#### 5.4 Translation Strategies Violating the Maxim of Manner

The Manner Maxim requires speakers to express conversational meanings clearly and concisely, avoiding ambiguity. In commercial advertising, many translated slogans deliberately violate the manner maxim of the Cooperative Principle, using this translation strategy to create product selling points.

**Example 6:** SL: Built For The Bold

TL: 生来踢不烂

This slogan comes from Timberland, a globally leading outdoor brand. In addition to having excellent outdoor sports performance, its products also appeal to people seeking physical and mental joy in nature<sup>[13]</sup>. The adjective “bold” in the original sentence means “brave,” which is translated into the colloquial “踢不烂” in the translated text. This is a phonetic pun on the brand name Timberland. It directly expresses the excellent characteristic of the product being tough and durable, while also triggering consumers’ tactile imagination of the brand’s shoe upper material through the verb “kick,” thereby establishing a deeper cognitive association with the brand. Adopting the translation strategy of “free translation” as well as “transliteration” here not only introduces the product’s performance but also humorously expands the promotional effect.

## VI. CONCLUSION

By analyzing cases of sports brand slogans that violate Grice’s Cooperative Principle, we find that in the field of slogan E-C translation, appropriately violating the Cooperative Principle can attract consumers and stimulate their desire to purchase. When conducting translation tasks, translators specializing in advertisement can take Grice’s conversational Cooperative Principle into consideration and select appropriate translation strategies to translate advertising slogans into Chinese based on the characteristics of the commodities themselves and the traits of the target consumer groups. In fact, the core of advertising translation does not lie in achieving absolute word equivalence, but rather in constructing a brand discourse system with the greatest sales power. As the head of Nike’s Chinese team once stated, “We are not translating languages, but translating desires”.

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