

NAME TRANSLATION

After searching on the internet, I found that in many occasions English names are transliterated into Chinese, like the drug names. As regard to the majority names of foreigners, they are also transliterated. It seems being a practice to handle in this way.

The following is a brand name story about Lexus from Toyota. At the beginning of importing Lexus auto into domestic market, sellers called it Lingzhi(凌志). This name had been widely used for over one decade, and gained brand recognition in Chinese market. However, Toyota changed the Chinese name Lingzhi into Leikesasi(雷克萨斯) officially in 2001, which was a transliteration of Lexus.

According to the company statement, in one aspect, this name changing event complied with the policy to gain global recognition. Whatever language it was in, the product name should be unified; the other purpose was a business strategy on brand reestablishment. This is just a positive transliteration example in business, and then I will turn to personal names translation.

As early as in 4th century AD, Sengrui, a Chinese monk generally considered as Kumarajiva's principal disciple who also participated in Kumarajiva's translation project, had investigated problems in translating the names of things. He was critical of his teacher's casual practice in translating names, and attributed it to Kumarajiva's lack of familiarity with the Chinese tradition of linking names to essences.

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As per his point of view, probably most transliterated names of foreigners' are not serious, in which pronunciation overwhelming meaning. But exceptions do exist. Gladys Yang, the British translator together with her husband Yang Xianyi dedicated to translating Chinese into English, has the Chinese name Dai Naidie (戴耐德). But now, the name Gladys is more commonly translated into Ge Ladisi(葛拉迪丝) or quite similar ones.

The former one is definitely more readable to Chinese by its Chinese name style and with much more literary connotation than the latter. After all, not all Chinese is able to give English names a profound Chinese translation as deep literary attainments is required. Maybe the overwhelming name transliteration has the same reason as that rooted in the business event by Toyota.

However, naming has never been a casual thing, especially personal naming. Being part of Somatic Science, a name could influence a child's future or even personality. After he died, the body passed while his name and reputation passes on.

Thus, many parents prefer to have a study before giving their child a name, hoping that the name could ensure their child a lucky and successful life. Each character in a name carries some good meaning, beauty, brilliance, health, strong will, optimism, generosity, loyalty and so forth. Hence, only after the translated foreign names contain those meanings and follow Chinese naming style, can they be perfect both in pronunciation and meaning.

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