

International Advertising Translation and Cultural Differences: a Case of Studying Advertising Slogans and Their Persian Translation

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Abstract:

Today, international communication has got a great significance for people around the world. Societies are more concerned with the positive and beneficial relations with other nations. It seems that the need for interrelationship with other communities is moving the world towards globalization. In such a world, 'advertising' is looked upon as a handy instrument to call for others' attention. In an international context 'translation' plays the role of an intermediate, bridging the gap between the advertiser and the advertisee. The present study is trying to look into international advertising from a cultural point of view, i.e. how advertising slogans are treated in a culturally different setting. It is, further, going to investigate how advertising slogans and their corresponding Persian translations are different in terms of rhetorical figures and how the translators deal with cultural obstacles when translating. For this purpose, a selection of English advertisements of various product brands was made by the researcher. 10 MA students of University of Isfahan, majoring in Translation Studies were required to translate the provided advertisement slogans. Their translations were observed for the type of rhetorical figures utilized and their strategies to handle the cultural barriers. The findings of the study show that Ambiguity is the rhetorical figure that occurred dominantly in the Persian translations. However, in the original English advertisement slogans Pronouns were favored the most. The tendency of translations was mostly toward being acceptability-oriented rather than accuracy-oriented.

Keywords: International communication, culture, Advertisement Translation, Rhetorical Figures.

Introduction:

Today, the economy of the world revolves around advertisements. Manufacturers advertise to persuade people to buy their products. Therefore, they enter the field to compete over catching the interest of the consumers. Johnson (2008, p.1) argues: "Advertising today is part of the cultural environment, weaving in and out of our lives on a daily basis. Advertising, as such, speaks as one of the prominent discourses of our time."

In his article on Translation Practices in International Advertisements, Guidere (2001) argues the globalization of economies and trade intensification lead companies to communicate with consumers of different languages and cultures. Therefore, there will be a growing need for communication and thus of translation.

The cultural elements are extremely important in the case of ads translation because it is often impossible to find an exact equivalent for items that belong exclusively to the source culture. The translator is frequently faced with problems such as "culture-specific concepts,

semantically complex source language words and concepts not lexicalized in the target language" (Baker, 1992, p. 21-26).

Advertisement translation and specifically rhetorical figures are one of the areas that have received sustained attention by researchers from whole over the world.

In Iran, Khodabandeh (2007) analyzed some Persian and English ads in order to illustrate the rhetorical domains that were shared in common and concluded figures of rhetoric are used in both English and Persian advertising headlines. Jalilifar (2010) also conducted a comparative study to compare English, Persian and English-Persian advertisements for their rhetorical figures. He concluded that various rhetorical figures incorporated to make advertising vivid, conspicuous, impressive, and readable. The study also suggested no significant difference between various parts of advertisements in the three sub-corpora. Reihani (2012) investigated two advertising strategies, reason versus tickle advertising and how they translate into the actual discourse of Persian print advertisements. The results revealed Persian

copywriters tend to employ a direct, factual approach in including the logical reasons why customers might prefer a certain commodity over similar ones in their advertising copy.

But on the whole, a limited number of researches were conducted to analyze specifically advertisement slogans in Iran.

According to Haixin (2003) a written advertisement comprises five parts: Headline, Body copy, Slogan, Illustration, and Trade mark.

Slogan: The Slogan, as Christelle (2012) puts it, "is often a brief sentence or expression that enables the company to say in very few words what it intends to achieve or what its products can bring to consumers. The role of the slogan is to attract the attention of readers. The slogan is like the signature of a company: It is most often the element through which the brand is remembered" (p.25).

Rhetorical figures:

According to what smith (2006) quotes from Dyer (1988), rhetorical figures are defined as "violating the normal use of language or the norms of logic, morality, social rules and physical realities ..., suggesting that figures of rhetoric deviate assumes that there is a language norm from which they can deviate" (p.4).

Given the importance of rhetorical figures in contemporary advertising and the positive effect they have in terms of advert recall and persuasion, Smith (2002) believes that "it is important that these elements be translated in such a way as to ensure a positive effect on the target consumer" (p.146).

The translation of advertisements has to walk a long way to help the product find its place in the mind and heart of the foreign consumer. It is vital that the translator has a great knowledge of translation and its requirements when it comes to serve the purpose of the manufacturer concerning the productivity of the translation plus the consumer' right to obtain the relevant information about the foreign advertised material.

In the present study the researcher has focused on how cultural elements impact on the process and product of translation and

how translators deal with such challenging conditions to produce a work of translation which would have the same effect and impression on the target audience as the source text has on the original audience. Woodward-Smith & Eynullaeva (2009) state that: "Copywriters and translators of advertising texts therefore face a challenge in deciding what kind of information to include in their messages to ensure maximum impact in culturally different settings. They must take into account what is valued by the potential customer in his/her community and adjust the format and message accordingly." (p.122)

For most of advertisements, undoubtedly, there exist some cultural, ideological, political, even ethnical backgrounds, but the important point is that as soon as the advert enters into the target context, all those factors change, due to the fact that it is the speaker of the target language who needs to establish a connection with the ad and comprehend it. Therefore, the translator who is an intermediate between source and target texts, should play according to her/his role and pave the way for the foreign costumer. The translator appears to be responsible towards both the commissioner and the foreign costumer, as s/he is supposed to make it possible for the advert to keep its original attraction and gain acceptance in the target culture.

"The choice of the most adequate translation tools should be driven by the understanding on the part of the translator of a wide range of cultural differences between speakers of the source and target languages, including their attitudes, values and behavioral norms. ... It should also be remembered that advertisers send out a dual message containing a semantic component and an aesthetic one. They are selling not only a product, but also a lifestyle, and a relationship is established between the two." (Woodward-Smith & Eynullaeva, 2009, p.124)

The message of the advert is of a great significance because the advertiser has meant it to appeal to the costumer and encourage the costumer to buy the product. Accordingly, the translator's most important job is to transfer the message. In this light, s/he'll be more

successful if s/he transfers the form of the ad as well. This can be achieved by means of the strategies a translator may employ to produce the same impact on the recipient in the TL.

The present study's objective is to find answers to the following questions:

- 1- What rhetorical figures stand on the top in English and Persian advertising slogans?
- 2- How do the translators deal with the cultural hindrances when translating advertisement slogans in two culturally different settings, with an eye on rhetorical figures?
- 3- Are the translations adequacy-oriented or acceptability-oriented?

According to Toury (1995) Adequacy-oriented strategies are those strategies that are accurate in accordance with source text circumstances. On the other hand, acceptability-oriented translations are those which are adjusted to the target reader's demands, i.e. the target reader's acceptability is a primary yardstick; hence the target culture standards are preserved in the translation (In Liang, 2007).

Methodology

To carry out the comparison between the advertisements and their corresponding Persian translations a corpus of 100 advertising slogans was randomly selected from among millions of advertising slogans available on the internet and in the English printed magazines and press. 11 of them, recognized as having cultural restrictions or being difficult to be rendered in Persian cultural circumstances, were chosen to be translated. 10 MA students of the University of Isfahan, majoring in Translation studies, participated in this study to translate the selected ads from English into Persian.

This study was primarily intended to analyze how rhetorical figures are frequent in English slogans and their Persian corresponding translations and what are the top-standing rhetorical figures of both. Secondly, the translated slogans were examined to find out whether they are mostly adequacy-oriented or acceptability-oriented. For this purpose, the researcher also briefly investigated the

strategies the translators might have resorted to, based on a list of strategies given by Retsker (1974). His proposed list is as the following: transpositions, insertions, omissions, differentiation and specification, generalization, antonymous translation, total transformation (the replacement of a SL word with a TL word that carries a completely different meaning), and compensation (rendering the meaning of a SL word at a different place, using different means) (Cited in Woodward-Smith & Eynullaeva, 2009, p.123).

The distinct features of slogans are the frequent appearance of rhymes, alliteration, pronouns, phrases, idioms, proverbs, repetition, puns, and ambiguity (Cook, 1992; Leech, 1966; Xiaosong, 2004, cited in Khodabandeh, 2007). These features are going to be analyzed at four levels; phonological, lexical, syntactical and semantic levels (Khodabandeh, 2007).

Following Christelle's (2012) statement on the function of slogans, a slogan is commonly intended to attract the attention of readers. "It is often a brief sentence or expression that enables the company to say in very few words what it intends to achieve or what its products can bring to consumers. ...The slogan is like the signature of a company" (Christelle, 2012, p. 25).

The extension of action freedom has been rather influenced by Newmark's model for translation, beginning from the lowest degree of freedom (word for word translation) at one end of the continuum to the highest degree (free translation and adaptation) at the other one.

Translators have been required to take into account cultural factors influencing the process and product of translating and to try to make the best of translations to bestow the same impression upon the Persian audience. In this light, they have been asked to feel free to use any appropriate strategy to achieve this goal. According to Smith (2006), translation theory suggests the advertising texts should be translated in such a way that it functions in the target culture as if it were an original. He argues that contemporary translated Russian advertisements are mostly bound to their

origins and the product is a text of foreign origin.

Results and Findings

11 advertising slogans were selected from the internet and magazines to be translated by the assigned translators. The translators were asked to take into consideration what's valued by a potential customer in their community and adjust the appearance and message of the slogans accordingly. The analysis was carried out in two steps. At the start, the English slogans and their corresponding translations were studied for the frequency of rhetorical devices. Secondly, the translations were investigated for being either adequacy-oriented or acceptability-oriented.

The first level consisted of the analysis of the rhetorical figures of the slogans across the two languages. Firstly, each rhetorical figure was multiplied by 10 as the number of participants was 10. The frequency of rhetorical figures of advertisement slogans was estimated and demonstrated in table 1.

According to Table 1, pronoun was the most frequently employed device in English slogans (19.35%), while the Persian translations enjoyed Ambiguity the most (23.07%). The findings show addressing reader and talking about people by pronouns on the whole was the primary method of advertisers. However, raising questions in the addressee's mind seems to be the first method that came handy for the translators. The sequence is reversed in the second position. Ambiguity comes second for the English advertisers (19.35%), while Pronoun device is in a secondary position for the Persian translators (23.07%).

As is demonstrated in table 1, the next rhetorical device that came in use for advertiser was Present tense (16.12%), however the translators found it preferable to use Phrases more frequently than Present tense (12.14%). Imperative structure was the next device that occurred in the English ads (9.67%). It was also employed by the translators in the fourth position along side with Present tense (10.12%). Alliteration and simple sentences occupied one of the lowest positions for the advertisers in this corpus

(6.45%). Rhyme occurred in the fifth position for the translators (7.28%), however it was less trusted by the corpus advertisers and sat in the last position along with phrases and Repetition (3.22%). Simple sentences were another rhetorical figure rarely employed by the translators (6.07%). Repetition (4.85%), Alliteration (3.64%) and Idioms (2.42%) were the least frequent devices utilized in the translations. It is interesting to know that Idioms were not used at all in the original slogans (0%).

The next step in this study was to determine the tendency of translations toward being either adequacy-oriented or acceptability-oriented. For this purpose, the frequency of strategies used by the translators was also estimated. According to the table 2, Total transformation strategy hit the top (26.62%), Compensation came second (21.42%) and Word for word strategy was following the previous ones (13.63%). Other strategies, namely Replacement (9.09%), Omission (7.79%), Insertion (7.14%), Transposition (5.84%), Generalization (4.54%), Antonymic translation (3.89%) occurred respectively. For the translators, the Specification strategy seemed not very interesting (0%). Given that total transformation was the most favored strategy by the translators, the translations appears to be mostly acceptability-oriented.

Discussion

Based on the analysis carried out by Khodabandeh (2007), Rhetorical figures of translated slogans in this study were investigated at four levels: Phonological level, Lexical level, syntactic level and semantic level.

At the phonological level:

The phonological level of analysis consisted of:

Use of rhymes: according to Babylon Collaborative International Dictionary of English, rhyme in prose is "Correspondence of sound in the terminating words or syllables of two or more verses, one succeeding another immediately or at no great distance". In the corresponding Persian translations the example could be:

- عطر هوگو، بوی خوش من و تو!

Transcription: Atr-e-Hugo, Booye khoshe man-o-to!

Literal translation: Hugo perfume, the sweet scent of you and me!

Use of Alliteration: according to Britanica (2010), alliteration is "the repetition of consonant sounds at the beginning of words or stressed syllables".

- شمیم دریا، تقدیم به شما!

Transcription: Shamim-e-darya, Hadiye be shoma!

Literal translation: the sweet odor of the sea, given to you!

At the lexical level:

Use of pronouns: using different kinds of pronouns is another method that advertisers and translators took advantage of to make the slogan appealing. Below are some examples:

- Treat yourself well, everybody! (Mineral water)

- با خود مهربان باشید!

Transcription: Ba khod mehrban bashid!

Literal translation: Be kind to yourself!

Use of repetition: another device that could help to attract and arouse interest.

- Miss Fits, run by ladies, for ladies

- میس فیتس! مدیریت بانوان، فقط برای بانوان!

Transcription: Miss Fits! Ba modiriat-e-banovan, faqat baraye banovan!

Literal translation: Miss Fits! Run by ladies just for ladies!

At the syntactic level:

Use of simple sentences:

Khodabande (2007) argues that in using present tense the idea is to present one message per sentence so that it can be grasped with a reduced level of attention.

- If you really want to touch someone, send them a letter! (Australia Post)

- فقط با نوشتن نامه است که می توان تمام فاصله ها را پر کرد! (پست استرالیا)

Transcription: Faqat ba neveshtan-e-nameh ast ke mitavan tamam-e faseleha rap or kard!

Literal translation: only by writing a letter you can bridge all the gaps! (Australia Post)

Use of phrases: the translators also found it advantageous to trust on the brevity and vagueness of phrases.

- Alive with pleasure! (Cigarette Company)

- زندگی و سرزندگی!

Transcription: Zendegi-o-sarZendegi!

Literal translation: life and sprightliness!

Use of imperative sentences: The use of the imperative mode is very common in advertising in English (Dyer, 1982, p. 139). They are used to create personal style as they involve implicit first and second person reference. Myers (1994) suggests that "imperatives are effective precisely because the politeness devices are removed. The form reminds us of daily conversation ..."(p. 48).

- The skyline is the limit! (Hugo perfume)

- به کرانه ها سفر کنید!

Literal translation: Take a voyage to the boundaries!

- use of present tense: the use of present tense as a rhetorical device may imply that something is a state of fact and taken for granted.

- Power is nothing without control! (Pirelli Tires)

- قدرت بدون کنترل هیچ است!

Transcription: Qodrat bedoon-e control hich hast!

Literal translation: Power is nothing without control!

- Use of idioms and proverbs: this characteristic decides the translation cannot be a literal one, for the equivalences in both cultures are very rare. The English corpus of the study has no instance of idioms or proverbs, although the translators were creative enough to get help from idioms and proverbs exclusive to Persian language.

- It ain't bragging when it's true! (Whiskey)

- مشک آنست که خود ببوید، نه آنکه عطار بگوید!

Transcription: Moshk Anast ke khod bebooyad, na anke attar begooyad!

Literal translation: a good musk needs no bragging!

At the semantic level:

- Use of ambiguity: Britannica dictionary (2010) defines ambiguity as "the use of words that allow alternative interpretations".

- Alive with pleasure! (Cigarette company)

- ریه های لذت پر اکسیژن مرگ هست!

Transcription: Rieh-haye lezzat por-e oxygen-e marg ast!

Literal translation: the pleasure lungs are full of death!

The next step is dedicated to the discussion on strategies and methods adopted by the translators to deal with cultural obstacles and consequently translations tendency toward being either adequacy-oriented or acceptability-oriented. Here are some examples of slogans and their translations.

The following slogan advertises Navy perfume:

- Navy wants you! (Navy perfume)

"Navy" itself refers to military operations at sea. Simultaneously it's the name of the product and wants the addressee to notice both semantic usages. The word play is amazing, yet rather difficult to render both meanings into Persian at once. Some translators preferred to transcribe the name that is نیوی in Persian. Transcribing or even transferring the name into Persian would lead to losing the attraction and the message of the advert. The sole act of translation without any sign of creativity would result into a soulless translation. No impact, even no comprehension occurs when there is no translation of the main sense-making element. One translation of the headline was:

- شمیم دریا، تقدیم به شما

Transcription: Shamim-e-darya, Hadiye be shoma!

Literal translation: the sweet odor of the sea, given to you!

And some other translators also referred to the word دریا (sea) to compensate for the lost. In the above instance of translation the word "Navy" is not mentioned at all. However, it carries sea connotations besides its military connotations. The Persian translator seems to have the sea connotation in mind when translating. Even if not equally giving the idea of navigation, it reminds the audience of sea at least. Additionally, the translation product has some other positive points which are missing in the original. The word شمیم (fragrance) was deliberately used to act as a motif to remind the audience of the perfume and its aroma. The translator appears to prefer getting help from Total transformation strategy. Also the usage of rhyme, alliteration and rhythm in the translation has resulted into something poetic that can be very effective and memorable in its own right.

Another advertising slogan that challenged the translators was:

- Where's your mustache? (Milk Company)

It was literally translated as سیبلیت کجاست/کو؟ in most cases, without any reference to the idea of Milk. This would definitely not work for the Persian audience, unless the picture is available. 1 person translated it as:

- خط سفید آشنا!

(back translated: the familiar white line!)

This would indeed push the recipient to think and relate the concept to the act of milk-drinking, reminding her/him of the milky line that may be stamped above the upper lip when drinking milk. This could also be an instance of Total transformation.

- Power is nothing without control! (Pirelli Tires)

This slogan was literally translated as قدرت بدون کنترل هیچ است/معنا ندارد for several times. The slogan in English is self-descriptive, but when one tries to literally translate it into Persian some questions may arise; what power? Whose power? What to have control over? Yet there were cases of translation

bearing the idea of "security", which would play the role of "control" in the headline.

- قدرتمند و مطمئن، تایر پیرلی.

Transcription: Qodratmand va motmaen, tire-e-Pirelli.

Literal translation: Powerful and secure: Pirelli tires!

Changing the parts of speech may be very helpful. By changing nouns into adjectives the questions are answered and the problem is solved to some extent. To have control brings "safety and security"! Using the "effect" or "result" instead of the "cause" can pave the way to transfer the idea and make it rather comprehensible. The translator may have reached the idea by the help of Compensation, Replacement, Omission and Antonymic translation strategies.

In translation of the following slogan:

- The skyline is the limit! (Hugo perfume)

a simple explanation would open the way to grasp the message:

- عطر هوگو: رایحه ی خوش آن تا به آسمان خواهد رسید!

Transcription: Atr-e-Hugo, Rayehye khoshe aan taa be aseman khahad resid!

Literal transition: Hugo Perfume: Its fragrance would reach for the sky!

that means the odor of this perfume ultimately reaches the skyline and even in there you can smell it.

- If you really want to touch someone, send them a letter. (Australia post)

"Touching someone" needs to be modified in Iranian context, specially in cases about someone of the opposite sex. Bearing this in mind, the translators tried to compensate for it with Persian versions such as:

اگر دلت برای کسی تنگ شده، اگر می خواهی با کسی در ارتباط باشی/ در تماس باشی و ...

Transcription: Agar delat baraye kasi tang shode,,agar mikhahi ba kasi dar erbat bashi/dar tamas bashi va ...

Literal translation: if you miss someone, if you want to be in touch,...

Yet, by means of a very general generalization the compensation is more easily achieved:

- فقط با نوشتن یک نامه می توان تمام فاصله ها را از بین برد.

Transcription: Faghat ba neveshtan e yek naameh mitavan tamam e faseleha ra az bein bord.

Literal translation: only by writing a letter one can bridge all the gaps.

- It ain't bragging when it's true! (Whiskey)

The above headline advertises whiskey, yet the use of all types of alcoholic drinks is forbidden in an Iranian context. Some translators bravely transcribed it as *اویسکی*! It could circumspectly be translated as; *یک نوشیدنی فوق العاده!* (back translated as: A Fantastic Drink) without any reference to its alcoholic nature.

- Actually he's my boyfriend, my son is slightly older! (Eye anti-aging cream)

In the Iranian culture, to have a boyfriend (also a girlfriend) is not publically approved of. Therefore, most of the translators preferred to translate it as "نامزد" (Fiancé, which is something legal), rather than "boyfriend" or anything else.

Conclusion

This study aimed to investigate the most frequently used rhetorical figures in English and Persian slogans and also the translators' tendency toward producing either an adequacy-oriented translation or acceptability-oriented translation while translating the rhetorical figure in accordance with Iranian culture. For this purpose, the type of translation strategies was examined as well. The translators were recruited to consider all facets of a naturally and culturally accepted translation of advertisements. Some of them turned to a 'Total Transformation' strategy in terms of translating adverts which resulted in

the production of a 'Version' rather than a 'Translation', as a result of attempting to produce a text with the same impact on the Persian recipient. The situation would seem to confirm Vermeer's scopos theory: 'the goal or purpose defined by the commission and if necessary adjusted by the translator'. (Vermeer, 2000, cited in Woodward-Smith and Eynullaeva, 2009, p.133)

As Woodward-Smith and Eynullaeva concluded in their research on translating ads for beauty products and is consistent in the findings of the present study, the translation of advertisements is based on treating different groups according to their cultural values, their need, expectations and social norms. Therefore, translation of advertisements is much more focused on the intended function of the text in the target culture.

Pronouns were applied the most in the English advertising slogans; however Ambiguity was the rhetorical figure that Persian translators took advantage of the most. One may conclude that the difference in the type of employed rhetorical figures may be related to the culture the writer or copywriter lives in. Among the strategies proposed by Retsker's, Total Transformation was the most employed one; therefore the translations were mostly concluded to be acceptability-oriented.

Further research:

Further research could also be done on comparing the impression the translated advertisement has on the foreign consumer to the impression the original buyer may feel by the advertisement. In this sense, the inclination of the foreign consumer to buy the product can be measured and then compared to that of the original buyer.

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Appendix

The advertising headlines translated in this study:

- 1- Alive with pleasure! (a cigarette company)

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- 2- Actually he's my boyfriend, my son is slightly older! (eye anti-aging cream)
- 3- Miss fits, run by ladies for ladies!
- 4- Power is Nothing Without Control (Pirelli Tires)
- 5- Where's your mustache? (Milk ad)
- 6- Snow spike, feel a new attraction. (Fila shoe)
- 7- Treat yourself well, Everybody! (water company)
- 8- It ain't bragging when it's true! (whiskey)
- 9- If you really want to touch someone, send them a letter. (Australia post)
- 10- The skyline is the limit! (Hugo perfume)
- 11- Navy wants you! (Navy Perfume)

Table 1. . Distribution of the rhetorical figures in English and Persian advertising slogans

| No | Rhetorical features of slogans | English | | Persian | |
|----|--------------------------------|-----------|-------|---------|-------|
| | | N | % | N | % |
| 1 | Alliteration | 2*10=20 | 6.45 | 9 | 3.64 |
| 2 | Rhyme | 1*10=10 | 3.22 | 18 | 7.28 |
| 3 | Pronoun | 10*10=100 | 32.25 | 50 | 20.24 |
| 4 | Phrases | 1*10=10 | 3.22 | 30 | 12.14 |
| 5 | Simple sentences | 2*10=20 | 6.45 | 15 | 6.07 |
| 6 | Imperative sentences | 3*10=30 | 9.67 | 25 | 10.12 |
| 7 | Present tense | 5*10=50 | 16.12 | 25 | 10.12 |
| 8 | Idioms or proverbs | 0*10=0 | 0 | 6 | 2.42 |
| 9 | Ambiguity | 6*10=60 | 19.35 | 57 | 23.07 |
| 10 | Repetition | 1*10=10 | 3.22 | 12 | 4.85 |
| | Total | 310 | 100 | 247 | 100 |

Table 2. . descriptive statistics of the strategies employed by the translators based on Retsker's model.

| No | Strategy | Frequency | % |
|----|-----------------------------------|-----------|-------|
| 1 | Replacement | 14 | 9.09 |
| 2 | Transposition | 9 | 5.84 |
| 3 | Insertion | 11 | 7.14 |
| 4 | Omission | 12 | 7.79 |
| 5 | Differentiation and specification | 0 | 0 |
| 6 | Generalization | 7 | 4.54 |
| 7 | Antonymic Translation | 6 | 3.89 |
| 8 | Total Transformation | 41 | 26.62 |
| 9 | Compensation | 33 | 21.42 |
| 10 | Word for word | 21 | 13.63 |
| 11 | No translation | 0 | 0 |
| | Total | 154 | 100 |