

The Translatability of Brand Names in Cosmetic Advertisements

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Abstract:

This paper shows that brand names feature a serious problem in English-Arabic translation. In order to highlight the problem under discussion, the study explores the translation of some brand names in their original context of use. 20 audio-visual advertisements, 10 English advertisement and their 10 Arabic translations that are directed towards Palestinian audience, are used for data collection. This comparative/ contrastive study focuses on the different translation strategies (domestication or foreignization) that are followed in rendering brand names in audio-visual advertisements (Venuti, 2012). The researcher employed an empirical, descriptive and analytical approach where advertisements were selected, categorized according to the different translation strategies that were adopted in rendering them. The findings of this study reveal that brand names are rendered through domestication of English advertisements into Arabic. The aim is to create a similar impact on the target language audience to efficiently promote the advertised products for optimal benefits.

Key words: audio-visual, brand names, domestication, foreignization, translation

1. Introduction:

In daily conversations people tend to use various methods to convince others of their own perspectives. Similarly, in the world of advertising, several techniques are employed to render certain products more appealing to consumers. If producers want to promote their products, and to reach the largest possible number of consumers quickly and efficiently, according to O'Guinn et al. (2014), they ought to resort to advertising. One interesting and popular type of advertising is audio-visual advertising: a form of media that uses and employs animated pictures and sounds simultaneously in order to attract the largest possible number of audience. Batra et al. (2009) state that as a primary and essential step to achieve successful advertising, advertisements should include elements of suspense to attract consumers' attention; this can be achieved with the use of audio-visual advertisements. That is, using this means of media can arouse consumers' interest in the advertised products by combining both attractive language and image.

The significance of this paper arises from the fact that it attempts to shed light on the underlying differences between the two language systems of which translators may not be aware. Such differences are inextricably linked with that which is considered acceptable to the target audience's linguistic and cultural norms. Lack of translators' awareness of such issues inevitably results in mistranslation or misrepresentation of the products; ultimately leading to failure in the marketing process.

2. Theoretical framework:

There are several translation strategies that are utilized to make the translated text meet the linguistic and cultural norms of the target audience. For example, domestication, a technique striving for natural translations, (Venuti, 1995), is used as the major translation framework for the current paper. Taking into account the general purpose of the marketing process, faithfulness to linguistic and cultural norms of the source language is far from being the concern of domestication; indeed, domestication prioritizes the target audience's wants. Venuti (2012) states that translators often intermediate between the source text and target text in order to reduce socio-cultural and linguistic divergence between the two texts so that the translated text meets the preferences of the target audience. Therefore, any comparative study should identify the areas where text and translation depart in their orientations to faithfulness and/or naturalness and accordingly to determine the extent of suitability of domestication as a translation method. Hence, in summary, this research paper intends to study some differences between Arabic and English cultures through comparing and contrasting the selected brand names in English audio-visual advertisements and their translated Arabic versions.

3. Data collection

In this work, the data will be collected from cosmetic audio-visual advertisements that are uploaded on You-Tube. These advertisements include promotion of shampoos, anti-ageing creams, and other types of beauty products. The selected videos involve English advertisements (source language) along with their translated Arabic counterparts (target language). The reason behind using cosmetics advertisements in particular lies in the aim of examining the way advertisers smoothly present their products, which are not of a basic need to the audience but an accessory, without belittling the audience's status or negatively affecting their self-esteem. In other words, using this advertisement category provides an opportunity to investigate the effectiveness of the two different translation strategies in using and presenting brand names in

the advertised products appropriately and cross-culturally. For the sake of objectivity, this research used 20 audio-visual advertisements (10 English advertisements and their 10 Arabic counterparts) related to a variety of brands.

4. Discussion and Analysis

A controversial issue that preoccupies researchers' minds is how to present the translated text to the target audience; that is whether to render the translation exactly similar to the target language linguistic norms, or to involve foreign elements to show that the presented text is a translation of a text from another language and culture. Some translators prefer *naturalness*, but others prefer *accuracy* in translation. These two opposite trends are, in Venuti's terms (1995), *domestication* and *foreignization* respectively. According to Venuti, domestication means that the translated text has to match the target language at all levels without including any alien or foreign features. As such, invisibility is a term used by Venuti (1995) to reflect the role of translators, showing that when domestication is used no traces of translation can be noticed and it is as if the text was created originally in the target language setting. Domestication strategy is closely associated with "fluency" and "transparency". These are terms that Venuti (1995) used to describe the "Anglo-Saxon" (p. 1) preference to make the imported text close to the original text in order to meet the target audience's linguistic and cultural needs. Nevertheless, Venuti opposes domestication strategy since it violates the source language linguistic norms by making the translated text completely symmetrical to the target language linguistic norms, and hence not giving the target audience access to the original text. Still the purpose for translating the text plays an important role to which translation technique must be used, and for advertising the overall aim is to sell the advertised products. Therefore, the used language ought to be as simple and easy to understand as possible for consumers. Thus, domestication seems to be more appropriate to achieve that purpose than foreignization. I would argue that in advertising, the translated text should not be hindered by strange elements from the source language that would intrude its smooth presentation to the target audience. For example, the English advertisement *Olay Total Effects Re-launch 2013 30sec TVC* is recreated so as to be suitable to the Arab audience by translating the English advertisement into the Arabic language (through dubbing, voice-over and subtitling (to be explored in other studies). Moreover, domestication of this advertisement is done by replacing the foreign actress with an Arabic one to give the audience an impression that the advertisement is Arabic in its nature.

Nevertheless, if advertisements are completely domesticated, then there is a risk of losing the consumers' interest in the advertisement itself. Kemppanen et al. (2012) argues that using excessive strategy of domestication gives consumers an impression that advertisement is 'trying too hard to please' the audience (p. 26) which may cause boredom. The advertisement, this way, does not require any effort by the audience to interpret any foreign elements that may draw the audience attention. Thus, the use of foreignization seems to be important. Foreignization, as Venuti (1995) explains, is a translation strategy by which the target audience faces foreign/strange elements they may not easily understand. For example, the Arabic translated version of *NIVEA Natural Fairness* (an advertisement that promotes anti-wrinkles cream) involves an instance of foreignization such as "هيدرا IQ" (hydra IQ) in "بفضل المكونات الفريدة IQ الطبيعية وتقنية هيدرا" (with natural extract and hydra IQ...). It can be relatively difficult for consumers to understand what "هيدرا IQ" (hydra IQ) refers to, yet after watching the advertisement they would understand that this element will help them to enjoy fair

and natural look. In fact, this may also raise consumers' interest and provoke them to search for the advertised product, and hence the advertised product will possibly become more memorable for them and at a later stage may encourage them to buy it.

Furthermore, violation of the natural reading of the text is noticed when advertisements deal with brand names. A brand, as Sandhusen (2000) explains, stands for "a name, term, sign" which distinguishes "a single seller" from another. This brand can be "local, national, or worldwide in scope" (p. 358). Therefore, a brand name refers to the creator of the product to be promoted among people. When it comes to the translation of brand names, Torresi (2014) argues that they are normally dealt with in the same way as proper names; that is, they are not translated. For example, the brand name *L'Oreal Paris* in all of the selected advertisements in this research is left without being translated or even transliterated into Arabic language. Therefore, it can be said that no translation has taken place or, as Wenjing QI (2014) calls it "zero-translation" (p. 30). The source language words are transferred to the target language preserving its phonetic/acoustic and graphic/written form. This can be noticed in *Keep a Cool Head with Head & Shoulders* advertisement; whereby the overall advertisement was translated/ domesticated into Arabic language excluding the brand name of the product that is foreignized; for reference, please see the following figure:



Figure 1 Brand name-zero translation

<http://tinyurl.com/k68rd79>

<http://tinyurl.com/kfsc654>

In the abovementioned example the brand name *Head & Shoulders* in the English version is simply added with its phonetic and graphic form in the Arabic version. There is no translation of the brand. Nevertheless, sometimes translators deal with brand names by a translation strategy called transliteration: moving from the source language/English writing system to the target language/Arabic language system. The use of transliteration, according to Dickins et al. (2002), is said to convey an "exotic" atmosphere (p. 36). Exoticism in this context can be an appealing element that advertisers use to attract consumers' attention, or in other words using foreignization contributes to add something unusual to the advertisement which may provoke consumers to pay more attention to the advert, and possibly be persuaded to buy the advertised product. For example, the Arabic version of *Dove Nourishing Oil Care Make friends with your*

hair advertisement involves an instance where the brand name *Dove* is transliterated into 'دوف'; consider the following figure:



Figure 2 Brand name transliterated

<http://tinyurl.com/oant66o>

<http://tinyurl.com/oowymg3>

This figure exemplifies the treatment of brand names in some Arabic translated advertisements. Although the translation 'دوف' (Dove) involves Arabic letters, the element of strangeness can still be felt here. In other words, the brand name was not completely domesticated into its Arabic equivalent 'حمامة' (dove/pidgin). This is because brand names are supposed to be known to consumers in order for products to be sold. Therefore, if the brand name is completely domesticated or translated into its Arabic equivalent, not only there is a risk that the target audience may not recognize the brand name, but also the translation will sound odd. Torresi (2014) says that sometimes brand names undergo "phonetic/graphic adaptation" (p. 21): their phonological and writing systems are adjusted from one language system to another in order to meet the target audience expectations. This is done by using transliteration strategy; whereby, the English word is transferred from the English writing system to the Arabic writing and phonetic system; this is probably to make the advertisement more familiar and closer to the Arabic audience. Nevertheless, most of the advertisements, in this work, resort to zero translation as noticed in figure 2. In fact, out of the 10 Arabic translated advertisements only 3 advertisements transliterated brand names, these are: *Dove Nourishing Oil Care Make friends with your hair* advertisements, *Cristiano Ronaldo Clear* advertisement where the brand name *Clear* is transliterated into 'كلير' (*Clear*), *Dove Men* in which the brand name *Dove* is transliterated into 'دوف' (Dove), and finally *That Glow Love or Dove* whereby the brand name *Dove* is transliterated into 'دوف' (Dove). In brief, translators seek to bring advertisements as close to consumers as possible by using domestication strategy, but regarding brand names they prefer to use partial or total foreignization. This is because complete domestication of brand names may negatively affect the marketing process: consumers might not recognize the brand of these products, and hence they may refrain from buying such products due to lack of mentioning of a reliable source.

Furthermore, using extreme foreignization, in cases other than brand names, makes translated texts too strange and hence difficult for consumers to understand. Therefore, it is crucial to tone down foreignization. For example, the English version of *NIVEA Visage Q10* advertisement uses what is called abbreviation. Olohan & Salama-Carr (2014) define

abbreviation as “combining initial letters of each word in long technical term” (p. 384). When it comes to translating English abbreviations into Arabic language, translators usually utilize explanation strategy since the Arabic language is not accustomed to the use of abbreviation. Please see the figure:



Figure 3 Abbreviation in Advertisements

<http://tinyurl.com/q87tsox>

<http://tinyurl.com/ogxzn45>

Although audio-visual advertisements usually employ dubbing or voice-over for the translation process, sometimes another strategy called subtitling is used. According to Panek (2009) subtitling is a means through which parts of the language spoken in audio-visual advertisements is written on the screen. However, translators need to take into account the limited space of the screen, hence they cannot subtitle every single word of the advertisement script; thus, translators tend to pinpoint key words in a written form. This is done to attract the audience’s attention to these words, also, to provide additional clarification of certain vague words to the target audience. Subtitling strategy according to Diaz-Cintas & Remael (2014) aims to provide a translated text that meets the wants of the target viewers. Subtitles (within the same language) are used in the English advertisement to highlight certain words and phrases as in “*improved UVA protection*” (figure 4). This subtitle is translated into the Arabic target language for the same purpose: to draw consumers’ attention to certain features of the advertised product. Nevertheless, the subtitle involves the abbreviation “UVA”, which stands for: ‘ultraviolet radiation of relatively long wavelengths,’ which is translated into the Arabic subtitle *يحمي من الأشعة فوق البنفسجية* (protection against ultraviolet radiation of relatively long wavelengths) instead of merely saying “*حماية مطورة من UVA*” (improved protection against UVA). Although using strange elements as the abbreviation “UVA” may attract consumers’ attention, in this context it may cause further confusion and probably lack of understanding by the audience. Consumers may not fully understand why this product is special, and hence question their actual need to buy it. Thus, it seems that the best solution for this issue is to clarify what is meant by “UVA” in order to make the language more accessible to the audience. Therefore, the translator decided to add further information, using translation by addition, to make the advertisement more intelligible to consumers and at the same time to attract their attention to the effectiveness of the product by using the subtitling strategy.

In brief, using foreign elements reflects that the advertisement provides important information, yet the main reason behind using English terms in the translated Arabic

advertisements has to do with foreignization and domestication strategies. That is, advertisers try to maintain a balance between these two strategies: not being too foreign in order for consumers to be able to understand it nor being too domesticated that the advertisements will bore consumers. In other words, using domestication strategy makes the advertisement very easy to comprehend but potentially dull. Therefore, the addition of foreign element seems to be crucial in order to seize and maintain the consumers' interest in the advertised product

5. Conclusion

Advertisers are in most cases aware that values, attitudes, and beliefs vary between cultures and thus attempt to adjust their advertisements in order to meet the cultural norms of their target audience. This comparative/ contrastive study explores the different translation strategies (domestication or foreignization) that are followed in rendering brand names in audio-visual advertisements. In fact, presenting advertisements that are created for an English audience without modification to an Arab audience may not be a wise decision. The study has indicated that the renditions of brand names can be investigated taking into consideration two criteria: accuracy and naturalness. The study reveals that accuracy and naturalness in translation are two far-fetched aims in translation. Translators sometimes sacrifice form in favor of naturalness while translating brand names in an attempt to create a similar impact on the target language audience to efficiently promote the advertised products for optimal benefits.

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