

Approaches Used in the Translation of English Advertisements in the Iranian Periodicals

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Abstract: *This article is a comparative study which explores the similarities and dissimilarities between the advertising techniques and persuasive strategies used in the English advertisements and their translated versions in Persian. In fact one of the objectives of the study is to see whether the advertising techniques used in the original text, i.e. English and those in the translated versions (Persian) are the same. Furthermore, the study intends to investigate the effects of advertisement text types on the translation approaches taken. The article draws data from two types of advertisements: the health and cosmetics, and the automobile and electronic products. The study has taken a linguistic approach, i.e. it investigates the language function(s) assumed by advertisements. The findings of the study suggest that not only the language of the advertisement but also the advertisement, i.e. the type of commodity which is advertised, can affect the translation approach, strategy and techniques employed.*

Key words: *Advertisement, Advertising techniques, Advertising translation, Marketing, Advertising purpose*

Introduction

Research concerning the language of advertisement is wide and diverse. Nowadays, advertisements are considered one of the most important commercial means in the world. Advertisements, in fact, aim at raising the chances of a company's success in the competitive markets. As a case in point, through effective advertising, Coca Cola has been able to maintain its success for more than a hundred years (Rusta, 2007).

Moreover, reading the advertising magazines, one finds that the same advertisement is shown in several languages. Concerning the widespread use of commercials throughout the world, examining advertising and advertising translation is a significant concern.

This study is significant in that, firstly, it is one of the few instances conducted in the area of advertising translation. Hence, the findings of the study can serve as a basis for a theoretical description of strategies employed in translating advertisements. Moreover, they can be used for pedagogical and translation purposes, as well.

Implications drawn from this article can help translators as well as those involved in the specific fields of translation such as advertising translation and those who work in the field of advertisement. Translators, especially advertising translators, can find the results of this article useful by becoming aware of the effects of text types on the translation approaches pursued. Also, the findings of this article can be used by the Persian advertising companies. That is to say, by revealing the similarities and differences of advertising techniques between English advertisement samples and their Persian translated versions, the advertising companies can develop more effective advertisements. In addition, the findings of the present article yield useful and effective suggestions and pedagogical implications to be considered by language researchers, translation teachers, translation students, text-book writers, curriculum designers and especially advertising translators.

In sum, the present article is an attempt to fulfill the following objectives:

1. To find out whether the techniques used in English commercials and those used in their Persian translations are the same.
2. To determine the effect of text type on the method of translation.

The background of the study

A significant way to transfer information from one language into another language is translation. A dictionary definition of translation is, “the process of changing something that is written or spoken into another language” (Hornby, 2003). However, translation experts have divided the translation into word-for-word, meaning-based, linguistic-based and functionalist-based translation (Munday, 2004; Nida, 1964; Reiss, 1977). The adherents of each translation category consider different characteristics for a good translation; therefore, several translation definitions are offered.

According to Nida (1964), Newmark (1988) and Munday (2004), word-for-word translation is defined as: matching the individual words of the original text as closely as possible to the individual words of the target text. The followers of the first category were the translators of Bible who believed that Bible is God’s word, and therefore, it must be translated exactly (Nida, 1964). To them, exactness meant word-for-word translation.

Nevertheless, the word-for-word translation was not successful, since it did not meet the translators’ needs. In the 4th AD, St Jerome argued that word-for-word method was unsuccessful

and had to be changed into the sense-for-sense translation. He argued that word for word translation did not transfer the sense of the original text into the target text. Baker (1997), for instance, as a proponent of the sense-for-sense translation holds that this type of translation creates fluent target texts which convey the meaning of the original language without distorting the target language. That is to say, scholars turned attention toward the meaning-based translation.

The next translation approach is meaning-based translation which is defined as a process of transferring the meaning of the source text into the target text. Larson (1984) defined meaning-based translation as a process which begins with analyzing the source text changing it into semantic structures, and then restructuring these semantic structures into appropriate receptor language forms in order to create an equivalent receptor language text. Tytler (1978), as cited in Venuti (1995), defines a 'good translation' as something in which the meaning of the original text is so completely transferred into another language as to be exactly apprehended by a native of the target language.

According to Munday (2004) although the practice of translating has a long history, the systematic study of this field as an academic discipline began from the second half of the 20th century. As he states, some systematic and more linguistic-oriented approaches to translation began in the 1950s and 1960s. The linguistic-based translation is considered as the first systematic approach in this field. In addition, the main systematic and scientific approach in translation was founded by Eugene Nida. He offered a different definition for translation:

“Translating consists of reproducing in the receptor language the closest natural equivalent of the source-language message, first in terms of meaning and secondly in terms of style. But this relatively simple statement requires careful evaluation of several seemingly contradictory elements.” (Nida and Taber, 1982: 12)

Furthermore, Nida (1964) believed in giving priority to the message and equivalence. He argued that the best translation was the one which did not sound like a translation. Also, he held that a good translation must create the equal effect as the original text into the target text readers. Afterwards, Nida considered two types of equivalence: formal and dynamic. Formal equivalence focuses on the message itself. Dynamic equivalence has the same feature as formal equivalence plus some more features. That is, it must be natural in the target language, as well (Nida, 1964). The notion of equivalence remained the main issue in linguistic-based translation in 1970's and after that.

As Nord (1991) mentioned, since the linguistic approach of translation, which is based on equivalence model, could not meet the needs of professional translation in a modern society, experts looked for an alternative which was the functionalist approach. This approach of translation was founded in order to meet the experts' expectations.

According to Karoubi (n.d. p: 5), “Functionalist approach is a kind of cover term for the research of some scholars who believe that the purpose of the target text is the most important criterion in any translation. Functionalism is a major shift from linguistic equivalence to functional appropriateness”. During this time several translation theories interested in text types and text purposes emerged, e.g. the theory of Reiss (1977) and the Skopos theory of Vermeer (1978).

By the same token, Reiss (1977) and Vermeer (1978) as the functionalist translators built their theories based on the concept of equivalence which took the text, rather than the word or sentence, as the linguistic unit to work on. In regard to the functionalist approach, the level of communication is the text, so a translator must look for the equivalence at this level. In addition, the functionalist approach led to the classification of a text into four main categories: informative (reference work, report and lecture), expressive (play, poem and biography), operative (sermon, electoral speech and advertisement) and audiomedial (written or graphic signs). Then, according to the intended purposes and the function of the target text, different translation approaches were offered (Schaffner, 1997). That is to say, the translation approaches for the advertisement as the operative text is different from the informative texts like a report.

Throughout history, different translation theories have put emphasis on different aspects of translation. In the first approach, word-for-word translation, the focus was on the style of the target text. That is to say, the exact matching of the individual word of the original text to the individual word of the target text was considered true translation. Not only is the role of the target style almost ignored by the meaning-based approach, but also the great emphasis is put on the target meaning. The linguistic-based approach combines the important factors of the previous approaches by emphasizing the concept of the equal effect. In other words, they seek to make the equal effect as the original text on the target text readers. And the last approach, functionalist-based translation, contributes new ideas to this field. In other words, the effect of text type on translation is paid attention to and then different translation approaches are provided for different text types. Moreover, the intended purposes and the function of the target text, which determine the translation strategy, are considered as the main factors in this approach.

As such, one of the most common approaches which can be applied to the advertising translation is the functionalist approach. The underlying theory of this study is the functionalist approach-derived translation theories developed by Reiss (1977) and Vermeer (1978).

Methodology

The consumer market involves different types of consumers, including adults, car enthusiasts, fashion enthusiasts, women, men and children.

Different types of advertisements attract different types of consumers. Automobile and Electronics advertisements mostly attract men and Health and cosmetics products advertisements

attract women more. Every group of consumers has its own specific characteristics. Making advertisements or translating advertisements for women as the consumers is different from that for men. Then, both advertising technicians and advertising translators should consider the type of their addressees (Doragy, 2007).

The Subjects of this study were divided into two groups: the public and the experts. The Iranian women were considered as the public and the advertising technicians as the experts.

First, a questionnaire was given to women from different social classes. 54 female participants filled out the questionnaire. Based on the results of the questionnaire, two magazines were chosen as the most popular magazines among the public. These magazines were 'xaanevaade' (The Family) by 35.2 readers and the 'xaanevaadeye sabz' (Green Family) by 24.1 readers.

Then, another questionnaire was given to twenty advertising technicians of Rangsar Advertising Company as the expert in this field. The 'mohandesiye tabliqaat' (Advertising Engineering) magazine was chosen by all of them since it was the only specialized advertising magazine in Iran. Finally, the researchers chose a number of advertisements taken from these magazines.

Materials of the Study

Advertisers have always used advertising as part of marketing for companies. With the growth of mass media, advertising was divided into two groups: TV, cinema, radio, newspapers and magazines belonging to the first group, and direct mail, sponsorship, public relations, sales promotions or merchandising to the second one (Emami, 2006).

According to Brierley's statistics in 2002, 46% of advertisements appeared in magazines. Magazines have more advantages than other mass media. They are more available for people. One copy of a magazine can be read by all members of a family with different age groups. Also, they can be read almost everywhere. Another advantage of magazines is that they provide better printing and colorful advertisements. Colorful advertisements attract more readers, so advertising technicians make use of them more.

Moreover, magazines provide a variety of advertising texts and slogans which make up good samples for advertising translation studies. Considering the above-mentioned advantages of magazines over other types of mass media, the samples of the present study were taken from the magazines, as listed below.

The English magazines used in this study were: "Glow", "An ITP Business Publication", "Asian Sources-Electronics Components", and the Persian Magazines were "xaanevade" (Family), "xaanevaadeye sabz" (Green Family) and 'mohandesiye tabliqaat' (Advertising Engineering).

Some English company web sites, such as Moulinex and VW web sites and Persian catalogues, such as NIVEA catalogue were used for data collection, as well.

The first and the second Persian magazines are bimonthly and the samples were taken from six issues of each, released for three consecutive months. As for the third magazine, '*mohandesiye tabliqaat*' two volumes borrowed from an advertising company were used mainly because only a few volumes of this magazine were available in Shiraz. Furthermore, these two issues covered the most common types of advertisement required. The chief reason behind choosing these magazines was that they were the most popular ones among Persian readers. As for the English magazines, two volumes of 'Glow' and one volume of 'An ITP Business Publication' and 'Asian Sources-Electronics Components' were used.

Out of the numerous types of advertisements, due to their popularity and frequency, two types of advertisements form the materials of this study, namely, the health and cosmetics products (30 samples) and the automobile and Electronic products (10 samples).

Data Collection and Analysis Procedure

First, the original version of the advertisements in English language was gotten from the English magazines and companies' web sites. Then the translated versions of the advertisements were collected from the Iranian magazines and catalogues. Advertising techniques are based on different persuasive strategies. The persuasive strategy used in one country is usually different from that used in another country, since every country has its own specific culture, consumer market's condition and consumers. Rusu (2000) classifies the English persuasive advertising strategies into six categories: 'the unfinished claim', 'We are different and unique claim', 'Water is wet claim', the 'vague claim', the 'scientific or statistical claim' and the 'rhetorical question'. Mohammadian (2007) classifies the Persian persuasive advertising strategies into six categories as well: the 'brand claim', the 'attractive claim', the 'short claim', the 'cultural claim', the 'informative claim' and the 'rhetorical question'.

In this study, the most common advertising techniques, the English persuasive advertising strategies of Rusu (2000) and the Persian persuasive advertising strategies of Mohammadian (2007) were used for data analysis.

The tables below present the common advertising techniques: the English persuasive advertising strategies of Rusu (2000) and the Persian persuasive advertising strategies of Mohammadian (2007).

Table: 1

Common Advertising Techniques

Common Advertising Techniques	Definitions	English Examples	Persian Examples
1. Attention-getting headlines	Attention-getting headlines are advertising phrases or sentences that attract the reader's attention. But it is not remembered easily or used for other products of that brand. Sometimes a characteristic of that product which is written by capital alphabets or in the unusual form is used as the attention-getting headline.	VO5 company: "Long lasting extra firm hold for difficult styles."	Tannaz Makeup company: " <i>dar tule yek maah saachebe pusti deraxshaan shavid!</i> " (<i>Within a month, you'll have a shiny skin.</i>)
2. Slogans	Slogans are short advertising phrases or sentences which are remembered easily and used for other products of that brand. Each company uses a few slogans but several attention-getting headlines.	Johnson's Baby Shampoo company: "No More Tears!"	Bic company: " <i>bik mesle bik minevisad.</i> " (<i>Only Bic (pen) writes like Bic.</i>)
3. Testimonials	The advertisement is endorsed by a celebrity. Mostly, the ad is combined with a photo of a celebrity.	Max Factor company: "The make-up of artists"	There is only the photo of Mohammadreza Golzar (a famous Iranian actor) in the

		(There is a photo of a famous artist in the original advertisement sample.)	Ikat ad, without having any text.
4. Product characters	Using fictional people, animals or characters in advertisements over a long time.	Using the character of the “Spider man” in the boys’ advertisements	Using the character of “ <i>baabaa qurquri</i> ” (an Iranian animated character) in the advertisements of Darugar company
5. Comparison	Comparing the product with other similar brands and putting emphasis on advantages of the advertised product.	7-Up company: “The Un-Cola!”	_____
6. Repetition	Reprinting the advertisement again and again in mass media.	Coca-Cola company: a. “I’d like to buy a world a Coke.” b. “What you want is a Coke.” c. “Friends for life.”	Iransel company: a. “ <i>az key taa haalaa?! digar moatal nemishavam!</i> ”(Since when, I have had to wait no more?) b. “ <i>az key taa haalaa?! sedaaye man az hame behtare!</i> ”(Since when, my voice has been clearer than others?) c. “ <i>az key taa haalaa?! digar tanhaa nemimaanam!</i> ”

			<i>(Since when, I haven't been left alone?)</i>
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Russo (2000) suggests the following persuasive strategies.

Table: 2

English Persuasive Advertising Strategies

English Persuasive Advertising Strategies	Definitions	Examples
1. The unfinished claim	It is an unfinished comparison.	The Chiswall Company: "Simply better!"
2. 'We are different and unique' claim	This type of persuasive advertising strategy claims that, 'We are the best and unique. We are different from others!'	The Contemporary Edge Company: "Unique by design"
3. 'Water is wet' claim	Something is said about the product which is true for other brands in that product	The Sofa Workshop Company: "We'll make you a sofa for your life"

	category.	
4. The Vague claim	The vague claim is an unclear claim.	The Bic Soliel Company: “Everything should feel this good!”
5. The Scientific or statistical claim	This type of claim concludes some sorts of scientific proof or experiment, very specific numbers or appealing information.	The Biotherm Company: “Visible reduction of wrinkles up to 63%!”
6. The rhetorical question	In this persuasive strategy, the advertising technician attracts the reader’s attention by asking a question.	The Cover Girl Company: “Wish your moisturizing lip color would last?”

Mohammadian (2007) suggests the following Persian advertising strategies.

Table: 3

Persian Persuasive Advertising Strategies

Persian Persuasive Advertising Strategies	Definitions	Examples
1. The Brand claim	This strategy uses the brand name in the advertisement. The Iranian advertising technicians frequently use this strategy.	Bic Perfume company: “ <i>atre bik, atre javaani</i> ” (Bic perfume, the juvenile perfume)

2. The Attractive claim	An advertising technician, by using an attractive claim, persuades readers to buy the product. Mostly, a kind of rhyme and rhythm is used in this type of advertisement.	Sa-Iran company: <i>“har ruz, behtar az diruz”</i> <i>(Every new day, better than the day before)</i>
3. The Short claim	This strategy uses short phrases or even one word in an advertisement.	Saypa company: <i>“ motmaen” (Reliable)</i>
4. The Cultural claim	Using cultural elements e.g. the name of Iran or showing a cultural symbol in the advertisement	Zam-Zam company: <i>“ zaaeqeye iraani, nushaabeye iraani” (Iranian taste, Iranian drink)</i>
5. Informative claim	The advertising technician, by providing enough information, tries to attract the readers’ attention.	Himalia company: <i>“kereme taqziye konandeye pust, haafeze taraavat va letaafate pust dar tamaame tule ruz” (Skin nourishing cream, protective of skin vitality and freshness the whole day)</i>
6. The rhetorical question	In this persuasive strategy, the advertising technician attracts the reader’s attention by asking a question.	Garanti-e Sabz company: <i>“aayaa mitavaan be hame e?temaad kard?!”(Can you rely on every producer?)</i>

The present study mostly has taken a linguistic approach, studying the language and the function assumed by advertisements. To accomplish the objectives of the study, first, advertisement samples were categorized into two groups; the health and cosmetics products and the automobile and electronic products. Afterwards, the original advertisements were compared with their translated versions, taking the type of advertising technique and the persuasive strategy used into account. Since the study intended to find out whether the advertising technique in the

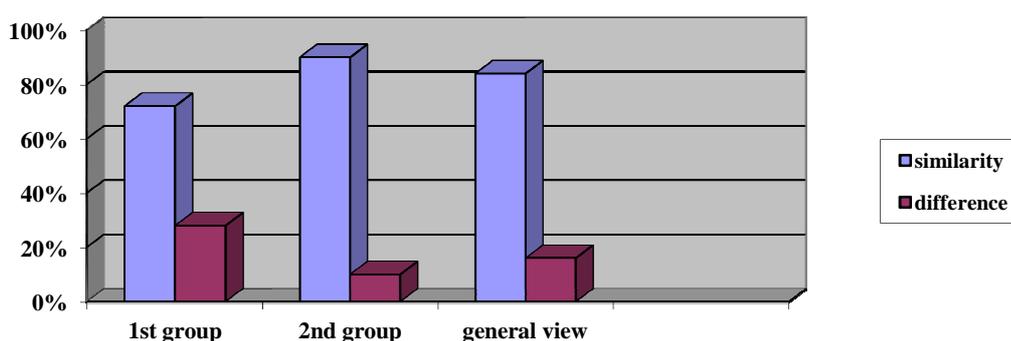
original advertisement and its translated version was the same or not, and also whether there was a consistency in English advertising persuasive strategies and in the translated versions of the advertisements, the average frequency of each technique and strategy used in the English advertisements and their Persian versions were calculated. Furthermore, in order to investigate answers to the proposed questions, the study focused on the similarities between each group, as well.

Findings

Analyzing the advertisement samples in both languages, we found that there was a strong similarity between the advertising techniques employed in the English advertisement samples and their Persian versions. This similarity was mostly evident in the advertising techniques employed. Changing from the slogan to the attention-getting advertisements was found to be the main difference between the English and Persian advertisement samples.

The most significant similarity of advertising techniques was found in the second group of samples which involved advertisements on automobile and electronic products. In other words, about 90% of advertising techniques used in English advertisements resembled those used in their Persian versions. Furthermore, the advertising technique ‘slogan’ was found to be more common in the two languages than the attention-getting technique. It should be added that the similarity of advertising techniques used in the health and cosmetics samples was less than that in automobile and electronic products. In these samples, about 72% of advertising techniques were similar and the rest (28%) were different (Figure 1).

Figure: 1

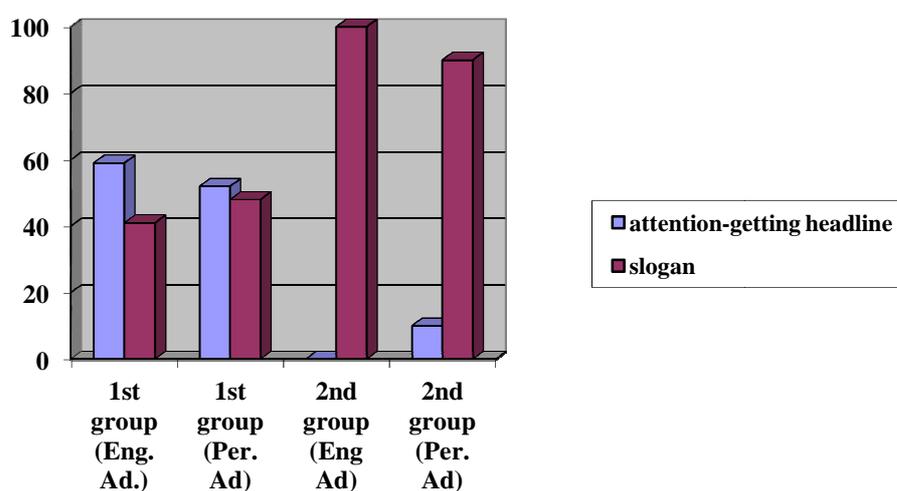


The Similarities and Differences of Advertising Techniques (1st group: health and cosmetics; 2nd group: automobile and electronic products)

The findings indicated that although the most frequent advertising techniques in the first group of English advertisement samples were 'slogan' (59%) and 'attention-getting headline' (41%), the only prominent advertising technique in the second group was 'slogan' (100%). The most frequent advertising techniques in the translated versions of the first group of samples were 'attention-getting headline' (52%) and 'slogan' (48%) and in the second group 'slogan' (90%) and 'attention-getting headline' (10%).

Figure 2 demonstrates the frequency of the 'slogan' and 'attention-getting headline' techniques used in the English advertisement samples and their Persian translated versions.

Figure: 2



The Frequency of Advertising Techniques Used in the English Advertisement Samples and Their Translated Versions

Concerning the second objective of the study, it was noticed that the text type of advertisements affects the translation approaches and its frequency.

Moreover, according to the comparison of persuasive strategies between English advertisement samples and their Persian translated versions, it was noticed that there are three types of translation approaches/strategies for advertisements (It should be mentioned that because of a considerable overlap between the two terms 'strategy' and 'approach', they are used interchangeably in this article): direct translation, functionalist-based translation and the compound translation. Direct translation is the use of the exact English persuasive strategies in their Persian translated versions. The substitution of the original persuasive strategies by the

Persian ones in the translated versions leads to the second type of translation, the 'functionalist-based approach', which is based on the translation theory of Reiss (1977) and the Skopos theory of Vermeer (1978). The compound translation is the combination of the two above-mentioned translation approaches: direct translation approach plus functionalist-based approach. In other words, a combination of both English and Persian persuasive strategies is used in the translated version.

Concerning the use of persuasive strategies, the type of the text can be a determining factor. Our findings indicated that the most common translation approach for advertising texts is the direct translation approach. That is to say, more than half of the English advertisement samples were translated through direct translation (57%). In other words, in the translated version, the original persuasive strategies were employed. Regarding the functionalist-based approach, about 42% of the translated advertisement samples had used this approach. Finally, only 1% of the advertisement samples were translated through the third approach, the compound translation (Figure 3).

Figure: 3

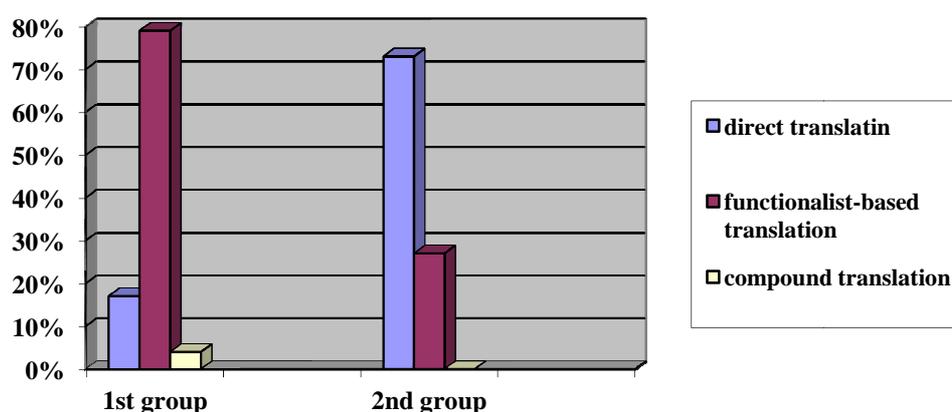


The Frequency of Different Translation Strategies Used in the Translated Versions of the English Advertisement Samples

Furthermore, by expanding the area of comparison within each group of advertising texts, it was found that the functionalist-based approach was the dominant translation approach in the area of health and cosmetics advertisement samples (79%) and direct translation for automobile

and electronic products (73%). The compound translation had only been used for the health and cosmetics advertisement samples (Figure 4).

Figure: 4



The Frequency of Different Translation Strategies Used in the Translated Versions of the First and the Second Groups of the English Advertisement Samples

Conclusion

To sum up, the translated versions of English advertisements in Persian use most of the techniques and strategies in the original advertisements. Furthermore, the text type of advertising has great effects on the translation approaches taken.

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