

Domestication and Foreignization Strategies in Transferring Brand Names in Advertising

BOUZIANE Karima
(Université Chouaib Doukkali, Maroc)

Abstract

The amount of research on the translation of advertising has increased since 1995. However, very few studies have investigated translation strategies of brand names from English into Arabic. The aim of the present research is to investigate Venuti's (2001) *domestication and foreignization strategies in the transfer* of brand names from English into Arabic. One has investigated transplantation and transliteration as "foreignizing" strategies, while transmutation has been dealt with as a "domesticating" strategy through which the translator adds, omits, explains and adjusts elements in the target text so that it fits the needs of the target culture. This research also aims at finding out the impact of these strategies on the message of the target products. This study is based on a corpus of 400 English printed adverts (as a source language) and their rendered version into Arabic (as a target language). They have been compared, observed and investigated in terms of the strategies adopted to translate brand names from English into Arabic. The findings indicate that transplantation and transliteration as foreignizing strategies are highly employed in translating brands from English into Arabic, maintaining the foreign identity of the product being advertised neglecting the target cultural norms. Transliteration strategy is found to be more comprehensible than transplantation; still, it does not manage to maintain many of the aesthetic elements present in the original adverts (such as connotative meanings). In order to do this the product name and the advert have to be translated, adjusted or even recreated for the target market.

Introduction:

Although the amount of research on the translation of advertising has increased, very few studies (Guidère, 2000. Qtd in Guinle, 2002; Al-Shehari, 2001; Leonardi and Khoutyz 2004; Al Agha (2006); Smith, 2006) have investigated translation strategies adopted while translating brand names from English into Arabic. Most of the above mentioned studies investigated the translation strategies of adverts are source-text oriented. These studies seem to maintain the foreignness of the product being advertised in the target adverts. Guidère's and Smith's (2006) transplantation strategy, Al-shehari's (2001) transliteration strategy, Leonardi's and Khoutyz's (2007) borrowing strategy are all "foreignizing" strategies that stress the dominance of the foreign identity in the target advertisings. These studies, however, neglected the role that should be played by the translator towards the target consumer. To put it differently, the previous studies did not focus on the "domesticating" strategies in which the translator transfers an advertising text "in a transparent, fluent, invisible style in order to minimise the foreignness of the target text" (Munday 2008, p.169). Only one study (Leonardi & Khoutyz, 2007) mentioned that the translator domesticates (explains, adds, omits or changes) some elements while translating brands names. This gives evidence that there might be a significant use of domesticating strategies in the translation of advertising texts. So, another study should be conducted to investigate the previous strategies of translating brand names to find out whether "foreignizing" strategies (e.g. transplantation or transliteration) or "domesticating" strategies (e.g transmutation) are frequently used in the translation of adverts from English into Arabic.

1. Aims of the Study

Under the assumption that translation strategies adopted in translating brand names are “foreignizing” type of strategies where the translator uses transplantation and transliteration, the purpose of the present study is to investigate the strategies adopted to translate brand names from English into Arabic; one has investigated transplantation and transliteration as “foreignizing” strategies where the transferred brand names preserve the foreignness of the Source text. Transmutation strategy has been dealt with as a “domesticating” strategy through which the translator adds, omits, explains and adjusts elements in the target text so that it fits the needs of the target consumer.

The study also aims at finding out the impact of these strategies on the message of the advertisements and whether the transfer process results in meaning loss and dominance of the foreign aspects in the Arabic brand names. By comparing different translated advertisements about cosmetics in English to their Arabic translations, one has answered the following questions:

- a- Which translation strategies are adopted in translating brand names from English into Arabic?
- b- To what extent do the translation strategies adopted affect the target message being advertised?

2. Methodology

The present study is based on Guidère’s (2000) and Smith’s (2006) model which is a target-oriented approach. The study is also based on Venuti’s “Foreignization” and “domestication” strategies in translation. While Foreignization is a strategy which “deliberately breaks target linguistic and cultural conventions by retaining some of the “foreignness” of the source text, domestication refers to the “invisibility” of the translator in the target text; that is to say, the target text is “perceived as if it was originally written in the target language”

(Venuti's, 2001, p.28).

Following Guidère, and Karen Smith the transfer of brand names has been analyzed according to the three main strategies: Transplantation: One has observed whether the name is transferred, but used only in the logo and not on subsequent occurrences in the body copy, or whether it is transferred and used in both the logo and the body copy.

Transliteration: One has observed whether both the transferred and transcribed names are used concurrently in the text, or whether it is transcribed, except in the logo.

Transmutation: One has observed whether the name is translated and still keeps the meaning of the original or whether a new name is employed.

Based on Venuti's theory, one has tackled transplantation and transliteration as foreignizing type of strategies applied in the transfer of brand names. However, transmutation has been dealt with as a domesticating type of strategies in which the translator adjusts the original brand name.

1.3 The Corpus

The corpus under investigation comprises 400 printed advertisements in English and their matching pairs in Arabic. The adverts are randomly selected and are all published in 2009 and 2010. They are all about cosmetics and fragrances. They are selected from online magazines and online shopping catalogues.

2.3 Data Analysis

The strategies (transplantation, transliteration or transmutation) adopted in translating brand names are measured quantitatively using statistics to provide the percentages of the mentioned strategies in order to find out the most frequent strategy that the translator tends to use and, therefore, confirm or refute the past findings. The study is also

based on a qualitative analysis to provide a complete, detailed description and interpretation of the impact that each strategy has made on the target version.

3.3 Results and Discussion

The findings of the study show that 95 % of brands are transplanted, 80% are transliterated and only 5 % are transmuted. This confirms the hypothesis that brand names in adverts translation are frequently transplanted (mainly the logos) and transliterated (in brand names and in the body of the text).

3.3.1 Translation Strategies Adopted

3.3.1.1 Transplantation

Out of 400 samples of advertisements collected for the study, nearly all (ninety percent) of the logos are transplanted with no instances where the logo has been redesigned. This logo is “a special design of the advertiser’s name that appears in all the advertisements” (Smith, 2006). The logotype gives advertisers individuality, so that they can be quickly recognized by consumers. These logotypes are under copyright, so they cannot be easily changed and adapted for different alphabets.

As the previous studies have already demonstrated, the presence of English can be noticed everywhere in the advertisement. This stresses the fact that all the adverts display an element of foreignness , that is to say the dominance of Latin text being apparent in all the adverts in the Arabic component of the parallel corpus. The corpus contains fifteen adverts that use only the logotype in the advert; the product or advertiser is not mentioned again in the text. These adverts rely heavily on visual iconic images, rather than linguistic elements. In *Dior* fragrance advert, the advertiser is mentioned. The advert shows a half naked woman strategically positioned not to

show the whole of her body. On her left, there is the logo bearing the name *Dior*. The only other text is the headline; the brand is not mentioned again.

There is a significant category of those adverts where the product is transferred in both the logotype and the body of the text. This means that within the body copy of the advert, there is a mixture of Arabic and Latin scripts. With this method there is more pressure on readers to be able to read non-Arabic elements. This is more problematic in printed adverts than televised. In televised adverts the speaker is likely to read out the names, so consumers are not obliged to read for themselves. There is also the possibility of deceiving the consumer, when famous brand names are altered slightly and changed eg. *Camille*, *Camilla* and *Dior*, *d'ore*, they are not perceived by potential customers as they are unfamiliar with the alphabet; they, then, purchase the fake products, thinking they are buying the right brand.

Some non-transcribed product's names carry meanings which are lost if there is no attempt to render the name in Arabic. For instance, *L'Oréal's* nail varnish *Jet-Set*. In the English advert the name of the product *Jet-Set* has more than one meaning. "*Jet*" refers to "fast" and *Set* to "harden or solidify"; they are combined to suggest that it is a "fast drying nail varnish". The meaning of *Jet-Set* is also emphasised with the image of the plane (*Jet*, plane, fast). Since this is not translated into Arabic, the latter has to provide more explanation than the English. Since the English version refers to the idea of "fast drying nail varnish" or "one minute" so, the readers should understand that the nail varnish will set in one minute. *Jet set* also refers to the lifestyle of the user. People who use *Jet set* are rich, successful and live luxuriously; these connotations of fast drying and fast living are lost for the Arabic ordinary reader, unless they master English well.

3.3.1.2 Transliteration

Eighty percent of the adverts employed some kind of transcription. Forty-two of them used transcription in combination with the Latin product name. In *L'Oréal's* advert for its moisturizing lipstick, both the Latin product name and the transcribed Arabic version are used together; the company's name, *L'Oréal* remains in English in the logo. In the rest of the adverts, the name is transcribed within the text of the advert, and the Latin equivalent is not used, yet it can be found in the logo.

These transcriptions do not respect any particular system; yet, their purpose is to offer a rough guide to pronunciation of the words in Arabic. This is useful for the Arabic reader, but it only offers a partial solution, as it doesn't indicate the meaning of the original brand. Normally, advertisers should choose names that fit the product that they are trying to advertise, but not distort its intended meaning or connotation. *Vichy* for example, produces a skin care product called *Lift Active* this name has been chosen since it describes the function of the cream. The English speaking consumers will not be confused by what the product can do for them; the name has also the added charm of the concept of "being active". When this product's name is transcribed into Arabic *لِفت اِكتِف*, the name may not help reveal the merits of the product; in fact it may even cause confusion. In other words, the concept of "the action or act of lifting" caused by the cream that stops one's face looking saggy may not be instantly understood by the Arabic readers. Only through reading the remaining advertising text, it becomes possible to decipher the meaning of the brand name. This, however, defeats the object of having a meaningful name in the first place. So, these transcriptions into Arabic are most of time nonsensical and they evoke negative connotations that may have a harmful effect on future sales. The transcription of product names may

not always convey the meaning of the original product names. In order to achieve this, the names should have to be translated.

3.3.1.3 Transmutation

Only five percent of the brand names have been transmuted. They have undergone only partial translation as the original brand name remains in Latin script in the logo. Two of the English product names (that are less known) are given in brackets as a literal translation *Silk & Smooth* نعومة وحرير ; *AloeVera* , مجموعة الصبار . By translating the product's name, the advertisers ensure that their brand remains are universally recognizable while the product has a meaningful name for which the target consumers can ask.

Generally speaking, there are very rare adverts where a translation of the product name has been employed, but once again the company's name remains in Latin script in the logo. An example about that is the range of cosmetics from *Max Factor* known as *Midnight Passion* in the Arabic advert. Changing the name creates a shift in emphasis. The English refers more to the product being advertised, while the Arabic focuses on the effect that the products will have on the user.

3.3.2 The impact of translation strategies adopted

Based on the results from this corpus study, it seems that transplanted and transliterated strategies for transferring brand names suggested by Guidère and Smith are highly being employed in translating adverts from English into Arabic, but with different frequencies. This confirms the previously mentioned hypothesis. Transplanted and transliterated strategies are two foreignizing strategies that stress the existence of foreign elements in the Arabic version and maintain the foreign identity of the product being advertised without taking into consideration the target culture norms. The foreignness of the target product is emphasised through the

dominant use of the English language (in logos and brand names) despite the fact that the adverts have been produced for the Arab world. This supports Al-Shehari's findings which show that nearly all adverts in the Arabic target text corpus show the Latin brand name somewhere in the advert texts. This indicates that advertising is based on pictures and images rather than language that carry the advertising message which also stresses Guidère's comments that the brand name should be regarded as an image element, rather than a linguistic one (2000, p. 96). Many modern adverts do not use language at all; they don't need to show the company's name. The meaning of the logotype is equated with the characteristics of the product or company concerned and not with the semantics of the linguistic elements that compose that name.

Another reason behind maintaining English as the dominant voice of the advertisement "is the growing number of national companies that choose to communicate with their public through English in an attempt to improve their commercial status or boost international recognition. The dominance of English language in adverts is also a linguistic strategy to attract the attention of the potential customers and increase their appetite for buying their product. The overall majority of mixed texts (English- Arabic) exploit the emotional appeal of the global tongue by using it in the names of their products" (Bulakwa, 2006). The use of English language can also function as mitigating some elements and rendering the text less shocking and, therefore, socially acceptable. However, this sometimes creates a highly negative effect, stressing the unnaturalness of the message which creates alienation and negative reactions if it is read by a person who does not speak English (Bulakwa, 2006).

While transplanted and transliterated strategies are significantly

used, transmutation strategy as a domesticating type of strategies is hardly used (eg. *Silk & Smooth* وحرير نعومة ; *AloeVera*, مجموعة الصبار) ; in this strategy, the translator resorts to “domesticating” strategies (explains, adds, omits or changes elements) to adjust the source words to the Arabic culture. That is to say, the translator transfers the brand names into a fluent, “invisible” way and, thus, “minimises the foreignness of the target text”. A Literal translation or/and explanation of a product name might cause confusion when trying to purchase the product in the target market; there seems little point in using a new name if the original name remains on the packaging. If an advertiser is going to make changes, it is prudent to cover the whole of the marketing campaign.

The fact that the foreignizing strategies are highly used in translation of adverts from English into Arabic suggests the dominance the “Otherness” which is used so positively. This indicates that that the Americanization is still seen as attractive in the Arab world. Advertisers strive to ensure that the product/company name plays a part in the selling process in the original English advert. For example, they describe the benefits of the product and its function in English or even use alliteration to make it more memorable. This study has, thus, shown, that many of these devices are lost when the product is advertised in the Arab market where the names are relying on their foreignness in order to make sales, thinking that the power of the foreignness is enough to add a kind of prestige to the product and, therefore, make the consumer purchase. They don’t take into consideration that these foreignized products appeal only to a small social class category.

The high percentage of the transliterated brand names focuses on the fact that the Arab companies start to shift away from transference of Latin names, towards some form of

transcription. This transcription, although potentially more comprehensible than transplantation, does not manage to maintain many of the aesthetic elements present in the original adverts (such as rhyme, puns, figurative style, connotative meanings). In order to do this the product name and the advert have to be translated, changed, adjusted or even recreated for the target market. If a product has a meaningful name which describes its advantages and makes the product memorable, the reader is more likely to remember the name when shopping. It is, thus, necessary to ensure that product names are understandable, meaningful for the target audience. In other words, products must be successfully harmonised with the local realities” (Leonardi and Khoutyz 2007, p. 4). They should be adjusted or reorganized so that they fit the needs, the expectations, “and the frames of reference of the target culture” (Newmark 1988, p. 94). Still, an effective domestication of brands doesn’t seem to be happening now and only time will tell whether the trend will turn towards transmutation (as domesticating strategy) not only in the Arab world but in the global advertising market.

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