

Translation Strategies of Advertising Slogans in a Cognitive Perspective

Nassima BEKKARI نسيمة بكاري

*Laboratory Didactics of Translation and Multilingualism,
Oran 1 University,
Institut National des Télécommunications et TIC, Algeria,
ness27000@yahoo.fr*

Received: 24/05/2020

Accepted: 27/06/2020

Published: 30/06/2020

Abstract:

Advertisements carry a cultural message: ideas, concepts, and beliefs of a country, while slogans carry the central message of a company, and at the same time, transmit a message about the culture and the customs of a country. The translator must first understand the meaning of the culture-bound elements of the source text and then transpose those elements in the target text so as he keeps the same effect. Cultural untranslatability occurs when the elements in the source culture do not have an equivalent in the target culture.

No matter what translation strategy is chosen, it must be tailored to fit audience and customer's psychology. Advertising translation is a cross-cultural communication, due to differences in cultures and cultural properties of advertising, translator should not only convey the meaning of an advertisement, but also take the cultural factors into consideration, because bi-cultural is more important than bilingual a successful translator.

Keywords: Advertisement ; Translation strategies ; Slogans ; Culture ; Cognition.

1- Introduction:

Starting from the observation that it is necessary to « interpret to translate », that is to apprehend and identify the meaning of a message then to transfer it to other cognitive schemes and finally to translate it into another language code. This means that linguistic competence is essential but not a sufficient element, if it is not

supported by conceptual and intertextual competence, whether in literary field or in specialized fields.

It is throughout this observation that we will focus our attention on translation of Advertising slogans. Being a field of specialization, advertising translation has rapidly been expanded in professional practice as well as in the curricula of translators, and it has become one of the most dialectical researches in translation studies.

2- Advertising Slogans and Translation:

Advertising is a semiotic phenomenon which uses mainly two kinds of signs : iconographic signs and linguistic signs. These signs work together a complementary role to persuade people to buy particular product. The importance of signs and their significations has been recognized throughout the development of semiotics and communication sciences.

This is why translators have to turn to the cognitive studies to understand the advertising message and interpret its meaning correctly. Actually, in using words, images and colours, the advertisers can better communicate with customers and persuade them to achieve their goals:

« There is an obvious complementarity between the slogan and the image, both in form and content, it guides the reading of the image by imposing a particular meaning. » (Guidère, 2000 : P. 237)

So, How can we see Translation Strategies of Slogans in a Cognitive point of view ?

According to Linguistics and advertising experts, an advertising slogan is a symbolic expression that usually paired with a company's logo or an image, its main purpose is to clarify the benefits of the product to the customer. Advertising slogans are characterized by being short, memorable, original, competitive and credible. Translation must keep up these aspects to maintain the slogans

effective in different markets with different cultural references, Philippe Villemus has said that a good slogan must be:

- « - *Short to be read* ;
- *Directed to the reader, it talks to him or calls him* ;
- *Surprising, even provocative, to make the reader more attracted to read the advertising* ;
- *Related to the product or the consumer's benefit, but without revealing the whole strategy.* » (Villemus, 2004 :P.133)

Advertising slogans are meant to express the benefits of the product and persuade the customer to buy it. The intended effect of an advertising slogan must be well-defined to the translators before translating it and it takes them to work jointly with advertisers to choose the right translation strategy:

« *Communication becomes effective abroad only after the message has been translated, it is very unlikely to have an impact on the foreign consumer.* » (Guidère, 2004)

Faithful translation can be done through the transference of the original advertising slogan into the target advertising or by literal translation taking into account its complementary relationship with the image. Non –specialist translators are often hired by importers to translate a slogan, risking damage on both the meaning and the originally intended effect. Advertising translators say that big company holders sometimes demand a translated slogan to be translated back to ensure the preservation of the meaning in order to get an accurate advertising slogan.

3. Advertising Slogan's Writing Style:

- Erratic Spelling and Low Frequent words:

Erratic spelling of words makes the slogan attractive. In order to keep the graphic effect, sometimes it serves better when transferred directly in the Source Language to the target Advertising. As well as low frequent words which have their own influence, they make the

slogan remembered from a short glimpse and the sound they create makes the product seem magical.

- **Rhyme:**

Advertising slogans that rhyme with the brand's name are of common used in the marketing business and have a special effect on the customer, a slogan that does not rhyme with the brand's name might get stolen.

- **Alliteration:**

Alliteration gives the slogan the charming nature that makes it attractive. It deals with the customer's mind by creating a rhythmic beat that is hard to forget.

- **Assonance:**

Advertisers use the same vowel in consecutive stressed syllables to produce a certain degree of vowel harmonization which help make the slogan popular.

- **Homonymy:**

Homonyms are words that are spelled and pronounced alike but are different in meaning, even if words slightly differ in pronunciation they might still be considered homonyms. They are in advertising on purpose to add a little ambiguity.

Words that sound the same are said Homophones, their use in Advertising is of a great importance. They can give a second hidden meaning to the slogan.

- **Rhythm:**

When rhythm is manipulated in an advertising slogan makes it catchy and rings in the ear of every person. The roots of that effect go back to the mother's heartbeat in the womb.

- **Idioms:**

Actually, the idioms are quotes or sayings that are popular among the people of a certain culture, so when slogan containing a

proverb gets translated, even if the actual meaning was preserved it will not be understood by the members of the target language. Translators often look for equivalent idioms in the target language.

4. Translation Strategies of Slogans:

All the advertising effects can be damaged completely or partially by literal translation. For what rhymes in French or English will not rhyme in Arabic and words containing low frequent words in English will not be the same in Arabic, Homonymy and Homophony will vanish after the process of translation, the same for alliteration, assonance and rythm.

Therefore, Mathieu Guidère came up with three strategies, each one corresponds to a certain level of alteration of the original slogan which are : Transposition, Adaptation and rewriting.

4.1 Transposition:

- Transference:

It is the direct use of the source slogan in a target language advertising without translating it. This strategy highlights the foreignness and high-quality of the product. On the other hand, it may cause a misunderstanding of the meaning and thus, the loss of the probable customers.

Such as the slogan of NOKIA : « CONNECTING PEOPLE » :



The slogan remained unchanged, the translator's hand did not use the language of the target culture, and thus it has become a trademark in all the countries where NOKIA is available. The semantic and persuasive change of the slogan is strengthened by the support of the image.

Transferring the original slogan is an effective strategy to avoid the loss of the original meaning and intended effects if the target customers have a profound knowledge of English.

- **Literal Translation:**

Sometimes the literal translation of slogans to the target language is more powerful in meaning than the original, so translators choose to keep it. And even with its disadvantages some international companies use it to have one message that reaches all customers around the globe for the sake of reputation.

Many of the world's most famous companies have adopted this method to translate their slogans, including the slogan of L'Oréal : « *Parce que je le vauX bien* », which has travelled through the languages of the world with a very close translation to the original, English version : « *Because I'm worth it* », and arabic version : "الأنتك تستحقينه حقاً"

4.2 Adaptation:

It can be divided into two kinds : one is formal and the other is ideational.

- **Formal Adaptation:**

It consists of modifying the nature of terms in order to maintain the original idea and come up with a slogan that makes sense in the target culture and means the same as the original even if it has a different form. That is due to the form-meaning interconnection:

« *It consists in modifying the structures of the original statement and conforming them to the syntax of the target language.* » (Guidère, 2000 : P. 119)

In the following slogan of Pfizer is an example of formal adaptation :

- Working for healthier world ;
- Œuvrons pour un monde en meilleure santé ;
- حياة أفضل هي شاغلنا الأكبر

The gerund « Working » of the original slogan has been exchanged with the imperative in the french version « Œuvrons », and with a noun phrase in the arabic version « حياة أفضل ».

This slight change at the syntactic level in both translated slogans did not wreck the Pfizer's ideology transmitted through the original English slogan, but both of them are understood easily in their target cultures.

- Ideational Adaptation:

Ideational adaptation of an advertising slogan gives a target language a slogan that carries the same message and the same form but each word from the Source language is not replaced by its equivalent in Target language, instead translators use words that are close in meaning.

It is a strategy that creates culturally acceptable target language slogans and compared with literal translation, Adaptation is a winner.

The following slogan of Philips do represent the ideational adaptation:

- Let's make things better ;
- Faisons toujours mieux ;
- معا لحياة أفضل

When reading these three slogans, we will immediately see that the common between them is the « betterment », but it is used differently. In the English slogan « things » are concerned with the betterment whereas in the french and arabic versions « we » (le nous,

معا) is in charge to do the betterment. So words are changed but the meaning is kept.

4.3 Adaptation:

Sometimes advertisers use whole different slogans for target culture advertisement to avoid the disadvantages of traditional translation. Rewriting an original advertising slogan results in the creation of a new slogan.

This strategy requires rewriting the slogan in the target language, so that the original spirit of the slogan is maintained, and its relation with the rest of the advertising elements. The translator here is having a liberty in rewriting, but it should not affect the spirit of the original slogan. Therefore, the translator must be loyal to the original effect to achieve the advertiser's goals.

Here is the Clarins slogan:

- L'expérience et l'efficacité de la beauté ;
- The art of beauty

The word « beauté » of the original french slogan is kept in the translated english slogan, but it is written in a different way. Actually, the rewriting is an effective strategy for several criteria: stylistic criterion which includes accuracy and briefness, and rhetoric and pragmatic criterion which takes into account the cultural elements that determine the languages uses.

5. Advertising Translation process and Cognition sciences:

The Knowledge Studies or the Cognition is a field that encompasses three different domains together: Psychology, Philosophy and Linguistics, whereas the Psychology of language seems to be an indissociable partner of knowledge studies. But the psychology of language was only very late in the discipline of translation, when it found bilingualism a particularly fertile field of exploitation.

Moreover, it is true that psychologists have at first looked at language only to the extent that it could reveal certain psychological

disorders. Sigmund Freud understood that language is a privileged way of access to the mind and particularly in the field of psychopathology. (Mattens, 2006)

Actually, Cognition is the mechanism that allows us to understand and acquire knowledge, as well as to treat it. This mechanism plays a vital role in understanding and thus also in translation. We could say in a more familiar way, it is a mechanism helping us: to understand, to interpret, to store, to memorize and above all to apply and use for new purposes, what interests us in Translation.

One thing that should be taken into account was clarified by Jeanne Dancette:

« The economical and commercial domain is characterized by linguistic exchanges that undergo complex influences, and reflects practices that belong to different cultural systems. »
(Dancette, 2013)

Being considered as a mediator between languages and cultures, the translator must possess the conceptual and knowledge tools to put the language at the service of the company. However, the only linguistic knowledge cannot be enough to make of an honest professional an excellent translator. Actually, it requires a solid culture and skills based on the versatility that global economy forces dictate to advertisers and thus advertising translators.

To understand the meaning in a specific domain requires not only taking a step back toward the lexical units -and this is not new- but also understanding the different conceptualization modes implemented and the way in which they are revealed in both languages : the source language and the target language.

In order to better see the field of our interest here, namely advertising translation, from a cognitive point of view, it seems appropriate to briefly discuss some of the essential concepts of cognitive linguistics, and which will enlighten the translating practice.

Linked to a functionalist and anti-formalist tradition, cognitive linguistics is configured as a dynamic, holistic and experiential approach of the language studies and cognitive motivations, advocating a dialectical relationship between language faculty and the other aspects of human cognition. Language, according to its categorization functions, is not limited to reproducing objective reality but it imposes on it an interpretative grid. This is the position of the experientialists who look at the cognitive linguistics as a way of organizing our knowledge of the world which its semantic categories vary according to our real life, our needs and our experiences, and they actually differ greatly according to the cultures.

Linguistic categories are only conceptual categories put into words at the lexical or grammatical level:

« The linguistic expression only testifies the underlying conceptualization. » (Vandaele & Lubin, 2005)

Moreover, the process of meaning has bodily bases that directly affect the structures of thought. One of the innovative concepts of Cognitive linguistics is precisely that of embodiment or « embodied cognition », according to which the human mind is not an abstract entity, but is incorporated into the organism that interacts with the environment outside and gives him sensory perceptions. The mind is therefore conditioned by the bodily and biological dimension of the speaker (perceptual and motor properties) as well as by the laws of the external world (like the law of gravity). The identification of an experiential foundation of thought and language is the evidence of the motivational principle upon which language is based as a system.

All these aspects must be taken into consideration by a translator who, when passing from one language to another, is called to put in place a real cognitive, semiotic, lexical and terminological reflection, in order to trace the conceptual map or mapping that underlies this or that discourse in its conceptual constructive elements (semantics of key words, logical and semiotic relations between concepts, ...) with a view to a correct equivalence (Dancette & Halimi, 2005). This is true when translator is dealing with pragmatic texts concerning particularly important issues, such is the case of

advertising discourse often having a persuasive purpose, where the presence of misinterpretations, missense or ambiguous terms may impair the overall meaning of the message and compromise the understanding of the target audience.

During the translation process, the source text, developed by the transmitter according to his repertoire of cognitive scenes, and provided by his linguistic components frames that in turn call up, in the mind of the translator-receiver, a series of cognitive scenes composed of central (prototypical) and marginal (peripheral) elements. These scenes reflect the translator's representation of the world according to his own perception, personal experience and cultural model reference; based on the activated scenes, he will have to find appropriate frames in the target language so as to recreate an appearance or « a gestalt ». (Snell Hornby, 1996)

The constructed frames are all the more similar as the cultures of belonging are closer; if the source language-culture and the target language-culture do not share the same models or the same scenes, the translator will have to focus the evoked elements differently and choose another element, which is prototypical in the target culture and therefore lexicalized.

Finally, the concept of situational context, strongly reevaluated by cognitive studies, also plays a key role in the elaboration of semantic definitions, involving consideration of both the areas in which the socio-cultural differences between the various languages are manifested, as well as professional job situations. Context often modifies part or all of the meaning of a term or sentence; the only use of the dictionaries, without taking into account the situational context and cultural background of each speaker or group of speakers, may thus be insufficient or even misleading when choosing the most appropriate expression in the target language.

« It is [...] clear that language is not written in dictionaries but in the minds of those who speak it. Therefore, to fully understand its nature, it is necessary to look at the conceptual

universe from which these signs were formed. » (Delbecque, 2002)

6. Conclusion:

As a result of international exchanges and transactions in a market which is increasingly competitive and efficient, advertising translation is configured as a specialized work requiring the implementation of deep and well-grounded knowledge on several levels : Linguistic, semiotical, technical, social, translational and cultural.

Calling various disciplines, advertising translation can not ignore the consideration of theoretical notions that will fuel and support the translation practice. This is the central aspect of this study, in which we have tried to demonstrate, with the help of few practical examples, the importance of cognitive backgrounds in the activity of the translator, as highlighted by Mathieu Guidère : « *Specialization training has become an all-encompassing framework that links the academic world to the professional one.* » (Guidère, 2000)

We have seen how certain concepts from cognition can help to dissect texts and to identify conceptual and translational particularities so that the advertising slogan translator can best manage and solve the issues he faces.

Therefore, future theoretical contributions and studies led in the academic field must find application in the specialized translation market, in this case advertising, and that professionals in the sector can rely on the acquired experience in this field and on solid and reliable theoretical tools, which allow them to overcome many difficulties that occur in the exercise of their profession.

References:

- Dancette, J. (2013). Le vocabulaire économique et social: entre termes, formules discursives et noms propres. *Meta* , pp. 261-478.
- Dancette, J. & Halimi, S. (2005). La représentation des connaissances ; son apport à l'étude du processus de traduction. *Meta* , pp. 548-559.

- Delbecque, N. (2002). *Linguistique cognitive. Comprendre comment fonctionne le langage*. Bruxelles: De Boeck-Duculot.
- Guidère, M. (2000). *Publicité et Traduction*. Paris: Nathan.
- Guidère, M. (2001). Translation Practices in International Advertising. *The Translator Journal* .
- Mattens, P. (2006). *Freud Cognitiviste ?* Paris: Seuil.
- Snell Hornby, M. (1996). Translation Studies – An Integrated Approach. *TTR* .
- Vandaele, S. & Lubin, L. (2005). Approche cognitive de la traduction dans les langues de. *Meta* , pp. 415-431.
- Villemus, P. (2004). *Créations commerciales et publicitaires*. Paris: d'Organisations.