Strategies Used in Translation of Advertisement Slogans From English to Persian

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ABSTRACT: On the assumption that the translation strategies used to translate advertisement slogans from English into Persian cause the Iranian translations to be not appropriate in Iranian markets, the aim of the present study is to identify such translation strategies. The study was conducted with the aid of questionnaires as a research instrument to obtain data. The findings reveal that the most common translation strategies used for translating cultural specific concepts as well as literary devices and lexical stylistic devices that are used in advertisement slogans have mostly been deletion and free translation without any regard to features of slogans. The overall finding was that inadequate translations of cultural specific concepts produce target texts that have not been successful in Iranian markets. Iranian translators disregarded the features of slogans frequently. Nearly all the translators delete any culture specific concepts in their translation of advertisement slogans.

Keywords: advertisement, slogans, translation, English, Persian, strategy, Leech (1996) says “translating advertising copy is like painting the tip of an iceberg. What you see are the words, but there is a lot behind the words that must be understood to transfer advertising from one culture to another” (p.1).

Statement of the Problem

Advertising text has a particularly complex structure, which requires special attention to both the text’s macro-structure (advertising agency or medium, etc.) and its micro-structure (i.e. words, phrases and sentences). Translating advertisements is not an easy task for they are a microcosm of various prosodic, pragmatic, syntactic and textual elements and rather difficult when encountered in translation (Smith, 1997).

Marieke (2004) in their article refer to some of these problems and provide some examples as follows:

When businesses begin to market across cultures, they frequently encounter linguistic problems. Translating product and company names can be difficult; translating advertising slogans can be downright impossible. Over the years, some of the largest and most marketing-savvy companies have made some of the biggest translation blunders.

Translating English brand-names or slogans into Asian languages can be particularly difficult. When companies chose the closest approximate sound to their brand-name, the resulting word can have an undesirable meaning. In the 1920s, when Coca-Cola was first translated phonetically into Chinese, the resultant phrase meant bite the wax tadpole. Coke finally marketed its product under an alternate phrase, which sounded less like Coca-Cola but carried the more appetizing meaning “can mouth, can happy.”

Pepsi too had problems with Chinese when their slogan Come Alive with the Pepsi Generation was translated for a Taiwanese billboard as: Pepsi brings your ancestors back from the dead. KFC (formerly known as Kentucky Fried Chicken) found that its Finger-Lickin’ Good slogan was translated into Chinese as the admonition Eat Your Fingers Off.

Coca-Cola also had trouble in other markets. A few years ago, the jingle Have a Coke and a Smile was translated into French. Although the translation was technically correct, words are not always heard clearly when they are sung, and the sound sounded like Have a Coke and a Mouse.

Sometimes mistranslations are caused by circumstances beyond anyone’s control. Wind caused an unfortunate alteration of a Coke skywriting ad in Cuba. The ad was supposed to read Tome Coca-Cola (Drink Coca-Cola), but the wind blurred the second letter, making the message Teme Coca-Cola (Fear Coca-Cola).

Even when a translation is accurate, marketing can be undermined by local slang. David (1993) in his classic book, Blunders in International Business (Blackwell Publication), notes that automobile companies have had lots of trouble in foreign markets. For example, when Ford Motor Co. marketed the Pinto in Brazil, they discovered that pinto was Brazilian slang for small penis.
Features of language of advertising and slogans
There are many ways to look at the advertising language. Leech's (1996) comprehensive study looks at the following elements:

Advertising situation, including participants, objects, medium of communication, and purpose or effect.
Type of addressee: direct or indirect
Products, media, audience, and aims and how the particulars of each influences the language used in advertising.
Register, and how it is affected by discourse style, discourse mode, and discourse role.
Clauses, including imperative clauses, interrogative clauses, non-finite and minor clauses, and dependent clauses with "when", "if", and "because"
Verbal groups, including simplicity, tense and aspect and "will" and "can"
Nominal groups, including pre-modifiers such as genitives, comparatives and superlative adjectives and noun modifiers.
Cohesion and lack of cohesion.
Vocabulary, particularly adjectives and verbs
Reference and vagueness of reference.
Creative aspects, including orthographic oddities, grammatical breaches, lexical divergence, semantic infringements, contextual violation, figurative language, and ambiguity, including multiple meaning and homonymy.
Rhetorical devices, such as repetition, alliteration, assonance, and rhyme.

Procedure
The researcher selected 40 English slogans. Some of the samples were not translated into Persian but since they were in use in Iranian markets, they were selected as the sample.
The exact number of slogans concerning their category was:
Cosmetics and beauty products: 8
Food industry: 4
Tourism: 1
Cars: 1
Electronics and digital products: 21
Packing industry: 1
Others: 4

The questionnaire consists of 30 questions regarding strategies used in translation of slogans as well as questions about the role of slogans in marketing. Also it includes questions about if translation students are familiar with slogans or not.
In fact in order to calculate the questionnaire reliability 14 questions out of 30 were designed as parallel questions. The reliability of questionnaire was calculated through 14 parallel questions and it was about 0.9292.

Participants
The data for this study was collected from English translation students of Tabriz Azad University. Since questionnaire was in English researcher limited his population to English students. Both male and female students were selected since age and gender were not an effective factor in this study. Eighty questionnaires distributed among students, but only 70 questionnaires could be gathered as the sample of the study.

In order to run the study, the first procedure was to gather the necessary samples. Forty slogans from different categories were gathered and they were categorized.
In order to find different translation strategies used in translation of advertisement slogans to different procedures were used in current study.
First slogans were discussed from the perspective of literary devices used in them. Researcher analyzed both Persian and English slogans to calculate the percentage of literary devices in English and Persian slogans.
Then, the researcher categorized the literary devices to identify the exact number of every literary device. Researcher compared both English and Persian slogans according to theoretical framework of the study to discuss the strategies used in translation of literary devices.
Secondly, researcher compared the slogans from the perspective of lexical and stylistic devices, grammatical devices and phonological devices. The exact numbers of above-mentioned devices both in English and Persian slogans were counted and the slogans were categorized in to three categories. The researcher compared both English and Persian slogans one by one and he extracted all the strategies used in translations describing what has done during the process of the translation in every translation.
Also researcher used a questionnaire as an instrument in this study. The questionnaire was administered in Tabriz Azad University among English translation students. Seventy questionnaires were gathered and the data
was analyzed. All the relevant data was reported in chapter 4 in the questionnaire section. During the administration of the questionnaire, researcher had a close contact with students to answer any question regarding the questionnaire.

RESULTS

The aim of this chapter is to discuss the findings of the study and to report the results shortly. In addition, the respondents’ feedback as regards the questionnaire will be discussed.

*Number of Translated and None Translated Slogans*

![Figure 1. Translated and not translated slogans](image)

This data presented in Fig. 1 clearly reveals that translation of slogans is common in Iran, but how do translators translate them is the question, which will be discussed in next sections. None translated slogans might were in result of some policies that some companies have had in their marketing through the world to release their slogans in world market in English.

*Literary devices used in English and translated Persian slogans*

*Puns*

From the perspective of puns in English advertisement slogans, slogans like: Digit all, I think therefore IBM, Be a star, Like no other and five another slogans in English contained pun/s. comparing with translated Persian slogans this literary device had a small role in Persian slogans.

Only two translated slogans contained pun. This was a good to conclude that English slogans were not translated pun to pun and most of the puns were deleted during the process of translation in to TL. Comparing the slogans it get obvious that the none of the puns were transferred to Persian and the two above mentioned puns in Persian were not the result of translation of pun form English slogans.

(less wire more music) and (there is no sound in a wire ) were two Persian slogans which contained puns, Zhang Li(2004)referred to them as “parody pun”(p.89). These slogans English pairs were Discover freedom and Dabble Sim, they did not have any pun in their structure.

*Alliteration*

Only three English slogans (7%) contained this literary device. Two slogans with alliteration were translated into Persian but these translated slogans did not have any alliteration in their structures. Therefore it was easy to say that alliterations in English slogans were not transliterated pair to pair or in other word the strategy of deletion was used by translators in translation of alliterations.

Slogans with alliteration in English were:

1. Design Desire(Braun)
2. Simple and Simplicity(Philips)
3. Battle of Brushes(Sun Silk)

One of these slogans was not translated at all but the translations of other two slogans were:

1. (Braun)(new ideas are gifts of Braun)
2. (Sun Silk)(representing your beauty)

On the other hand there was no alliteration in translated Persian slogans and this was a good reason to say deletion had a great role in the process of translation of this literary device from English to Persian.

*Allusion*

Two English slogans in English included allusion. These slogans were:

I think therefore IBM(IBM)
Globally yours (Turkish airlines)

Like the translation of other literary devices again the process of deletion was in work in translation of allusion.

Only one slogan containing allusion was translated but the allusion was not transferred into Persian.

Globally yours was translated as:
(along with you in more than 130 places in the world)

This slogan not only was not translated properly according to the allusion and the allusion was not transferred in to Persian but also the conciseness of slogan was not regarded.

About the translation of allusion will be discussed more in next sections because as mentioned [5] referred to the as “Parody pun” (p.89) and more discussion will be available in puns section.

In addition two allusions could be seen in translated Persian slogans but they were not in result of process of translation and transferring the allusions from English slogans and comparing with English pairs there were no allusion in English slogans .These two translated slogans were:

1) Dabble Sim((there is no sound in a wire)
2) Discover Freedom((less wire more music)

These slogans referred to well-known expressions in Persian:
1) (no sond in a hand )
2) (the less the children the better the life)

The exact number of literary devices used in English and translated Persian slogans is presented in table 1 below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Literary Devices</th>
<th>English (out of 40 slogans)</th>
<th>Persian (out of 32 slogans)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pun</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alliteration</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Allusion</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Also table 2 presents the exact number of the grammatical devices used in English and translated Persian slogans.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grammatical Devices</th>
<th>English (out of 40 slogans)</th>
<th>Persian (out of 32 slogans)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Imperatives</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Repetitions</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adjective graduation</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Translation Strategies Regarding Lexical and Stylistic Devices

Puns

Pun as a lexical and stylistic device had a respective role in English slogans. The percentage of slogans containing pun was 20%. This rate was lower in Persian slogans and only two slogans contained pun.

Regarding the translation of puns in slogans four slogans were not translated into Persian. As an example life’s good is the slogan of LG Company that was not translated into Persian during marketing of this company in Iran.

This slogan contained a really smart pun. The name of LG was embedded in this slogan. In other word LG is an acronym for life’s good.

This could be a reason why LG never release its products in Iran with a Persian slogan.

In addition there was another pun inside this simple slogan. This pun was related with word “good”. In English this word has two meanings:
1) (good, product)
2) (good)

So this slogan could be translated literary as:
1) (life is good)
2) (goods for life )

Therefore LG preferred to use its English slogan in order to maintain above mentioned puns, although there could be other reasons behind releasing this slogan in English.

Digit all and like no other are other two slogans which were not translated in to Persian.

The next slogan which was a very sharp slogan was the slogan of IBM Company: I think therefore IBM. This slogan contained a kind of pun,Zhang Li (2004) referred to as “parody pun” (p.89). This slogan refereed to well-known sentence:
I think therefore I am.

The slogan maker has used this sentence sharply and just by adding the letter B has made a great slogan. Translation of this sentence is really a great effort and translator not only should transfer the meaning but also s/he should transfer the pun.
But Iranian translators had not translated this slogan and the reason behind this fact may was: sacrificing meaning or pun.

Be a star was a slogan in English which contained a pun. The word star has two meanings:

1) (star)
2) A well known person or actor/es.

This slogan translated into Persian as:
(you will shine like a star )

Translator not only deleted the pun and translated pun to non-pun but also the imperative structure of this slogan was not considered. It seems this slogan was translated through paraphrasing the sentence and just massage was transferred to TL.

Globally yours is the slogan of Turkish airlines. This slogan also contained a parody pun and it was made from the expression sincerely yours which is a common expression in letter writings. This slogan is translated as:
(along with you in more than 130 places in the world)

In translation of this slogan not only the shortness and conciseness of the slogans was not regarded but also the pun was sacrificed. This slogan was completely paraphrased and a long sentence was transferred into Persian.

Regarding the translation of puns from English to Persian in translation of advertisement slogans pun to pun translation was never concerned by translator and all the puns are deleted. Nearly all the translations were free translations and adaptations. The exact number of pun to pun translation was zero.

Phonological Devices:

Phonological devices could be seen only in 3 English slogans as follows:

1) Design Desire(Braun)
2) Simple and Simplicity(Philips)
3) Battle of Brushes(sun silk)

Two phonological devices were obvious in these 3 slogans: alliteration and rhythm. The alliteration of the letter B in battle of Brushes was not transferred in to Persian and this slogan was translated as:
(representing your beauty)

The original English and translated Persian slogans were completely different from each other from the perspective of meaning and it seemed there was an adaptation in the translation. This slogan was translated quiet free and the massage of SL and TL were rather different.

Also design desire was translated as:
(new ideas are gifts of Braun)

There was transference in translation of this slogan and the brand name was transliterated into Persian. Other translation strategies were rather same as the above mentioned example.

Simple and simplicity was not translated in to Persian and it was obvious that Iranian translators have acted quiet week in translation of slogans containing phonological devices.

Like the translation of puns, translators never translated the alliterations in to alliteration in Persian slogans and none of the alliterations were transferred in to Persian.

Translation Strategies Regarding Grammatical Devices:

Adjective graduation:

Adjective graduation a lexical and stylistic device was seen only in one English slogan. This slogan belongs to Close Up tooth paste.

The slogan was the closer the better .There was two lexical and stylistic devices as well as one literary device in the structure of this simple slogan.

The repetition of the article “the” and adjective graduation were lexical and stylistic devices and pun in the word of close has made this slogan really attractive.

This slogan was translated as (much cleaner with CloseUp) and the pun was sacrificed. In addition translator was unable to transfer the adjective graduation in to TL. Also there was transference in this translation and the brand “Close up” was transliterated from English to Persian. It was obvious that due to above mentioned devices used in this slogan translator had a great effort to translate the slogan, but s/he was unable to transfer any of these devices to TL.

Imperatives

The difference between English and Persian slogans regarding imperative structure in their structure was big. Fourteen English slogans were imperative while on the other hand only four imperative structures could be seen in Persian slogans. In English imperative sentences start with a verb and continues, while in Persian translations there is a shift in the structure of slogans and the verbs were moved to the end of the slogans.
As an example the English slogans discover the power of simplicity was translated into: (discover the power of simplicity). In this translation not only the verb was moved to the end but also the second person was changed to plural.

Four imperative English slogans were not translated at all. For example Digit all is the slogan of Samsung Company which is an imperative slogan and it is not translated into Persian at all. This fact may be due to the pun used in this slogan. The slogan maker divided the word digital to two words digit and al and by adding the letter “L” made a new word which in first look it couldn’t be recognized.

There were other examples which were translated like the slogan of HP Company invent, this slogan is a very simple verb but it was not translated by Iranian translators. This may be due the fact that some companies prefer to release their slogans in English or other factors which are related to the companies’ policy in marketing.

Repetition

Analyzing the English and English and translated Persian slogans, one repetition was seen in English slogans while in translated Persian slogans there were four repetitions of words in structure.

Eat good feel good was another slogan which there was a repetition of the word good in this slogan. This slogan was translated into (good food good feel). Although in this translation the repetition was conveyed into TL but another lexical and stylistic device was ignored and the imperative structure was not transferred. Also in order to transfer the repetition of the word good into TL, the strategy of shift transposition was used and verbs were translated into nouns.

Questionnaire

As reported in previous chapter, a questionnaire of 30 questions was designed to obtain data about people’s familiarity with slogans and their ideas about translation of slogans.

Sixty three participants out of seventy reported that they pay attention to advertisements of any kind. This fact clearly shows that advertisements play a great role in people’s everyday life and 65 participants reported that they are familiar with slogans. Seventy two percent of students suggested that slogans should not be translated, also 42 participants reported that they liked English slogans more than Persian ones in addition they believe English slogans are more attractive than Persian pairs.

Seventy percent participants believed that slogans were persuasive and they persuaded by slogans to buy something. Sixty six participants believed cultural factors are important in translation of slogans and only 3 were against this belief. Fifty six students said that literal translation was a good approach to translate slogans and it is enough to translate slogans from English in to Persian in addition 57% of students believed these slogans were not translated by professional translators or advertisement agencies while 42% said that translated slogans were professional.

Sixty students (80%) were not able to translate a given slogan with a literary device and in other hand nine students translated the following slogan as:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>IBM (IBM is my preference)</th>
<th>IBM (just for IBM)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>IBM (the best choice IBM)</td>
<td>IBM (finally IBM)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IBM (since today with IBM)</td>
<td>IBM (I’ll go after IBM)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IBM (so I’ll prefer IBM)</td>
<td>IBM (my choice is IBM)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IBM (I think so I choose IBM)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Ninety two percent of participants believe there is tight relationship between a good translation of a slogan and marketing of a company in the target country or countries.

Regarding two given slogans (slogan of Nokia which is a well-known brand in Iran and slogan of Jabra Bluetooth headset which is not a well-known brand) revealed that only 23% of students knew the second one, but 96% of students were familiar with the slogan of Nokia. (Connecting people was the slogan of Nokia and discover the freedom was the slogan of Jabra)

Fifty four percent of students suggested that it is impossible to translate figurative language or literary devices in slogans and they believe adaptation could be an approach toward translation on such slogans. The last question was about employing native translators for translation of slogans and it get clear that 70% of participants agreed on this suggestion.

Dealing with English and translated Persian slogans it gets clear that English slogans include more devices (lexical, grammatical and phonological) than translated slogans and in some cases English slogans are not translated. This can be due to some restrictions in translation or some policies forced by companies to release their product with original slogans in Iranian markets. Regarding the questionnaire most of Iranian people (students) is familiar with slogans and they believed that these slogans have encouraged them to buy
products many times in their life. Participants believed there is a close relationship between translation of slogans and marketing of slogans, in other word they believed good translations lead in successful marketing and vice versa. Participant believe English slogans were more interesting and attractive than Persian slogans and this may be due to difference between English and Persian slogans using lexical and stylistic, phonological and grammatical devices.

About 43.12% of participant reported that they were satisfied with translated slogans and almost all of them suggested using native translators to translate slogans. The core aim of study is to describe translation strategies used in translation of advertisement slogans as well as differences between English and Persian pairs concerning literary devices and features considered in translating slogans.

The periphery aims were to discuss Iranian students’ familiarity with slogans and their ideas about translated and original pairs regarding some questions in a questionnaire. Also some questions are designed to test English student ability to translate advertisement slogans including figurative language.

The main reason for translating advertising text is to broaden the advertiser’s market in another culture and language. Contemporary studies of translated advertising text advocate translation strategies that favor the target culture and the role of the linguistic message.

CONCLUSION

The study showed that translated advertisement texts should result in advertisements which function in the target culture as like as function of the advertisement in the SL culture. This study identified the main differences between English and Persian and some strategies in translation of slogans from English to Persian concerning lexical and stylistic, grammar and phonological devices. Slogans and the questionnaire revealed that Persian slogans are inadequate and not attractive as English pairs. The reason behind the use of inadequate strategies (and also blatantly incorrect translation strategies) is that the slogans were mostly translated by nonprofessional translators. These translators are not familiar with basic facts of advertisement and they translate the slogans simply without any regard to marketing and factors needed in creating or in other word recreating a slogan in TL. They use translation strategies such as deleting most of literary devices included in original slogans without any attentions to their importance in slogan making and their influence to make the slogans seem more attractive and memorable.

REFERENCES


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