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Advertisement Slogans in English-Persian Translations: In Search of Appropriate Persuasive Features



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Abstract

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English advertisement slogans are rarely translated into Persian though they are almost everywhere around us. In the present study, due to the importance of the persuasive language and the rhetorical figures in advertisement slogans, couples of English-Persian advertisement slogans were analyzed to illustrate the persuasive characteristics used in them. The findings revealed that to sell the foreign products well in Iran's markets, translators of related slogans should be aware of the persuasive language of advertisements and find the most appropriate translation strategy through analyzing them. It was also revealed in the analysis of the selected slogans and comparison of their translated versions that the Persian style of advertisements is in some ways different from their counterparts in English, yet they do share a number of features. Based on the findings, it can be concluded that the translation of advertisement slogans should be regarded as a form of featured translation demanding translators' sensitivity.

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Introduction

Translation process involves not only two languages, but also two cultures. In this process, translators are faced with the specific problems of rendering both cultural and linguistic features in source and target texts. They actually find themselves between two different communicative systems (Aminpour & Vahid, 2014). In such situations, translators have to make some choices regarding what strategy to apply in rendering such features properly. Choosing the most appropriate translation strategy would get more complicated when it comes to advertising slogans. According to Cook (2001), advertising slogans – are aggressive yet not annoying calls aimed to stimulate people buying certain products. The word ‘advertise in Latin means “arouse attention”. Advertising has been introduced to every sphere of society including arts, culture, sport, fashion and etc. It is quite simply, everywhere: We can’t walk down the street, shop, watch television, go through our mail, log in to the Internet, read a newspaper or take a train without encountering it. Whether we are alone, with our friends or family, or in a crowd, advertising is always with us, if only on the label of something we are using. Today, advertising agencies use sophisticated methods of research to establish consumers’ desires, tempting and trying to persuade them by means of advertisements to buy what are often identical products. A slogan should be brief, informative, memorable and strongly related to the brand it promotes. All these should be considered by a professional translator of advertising. None of these features should be ignored when translating advertisement. For this reason, a translator of marketing materials should not only be a highly-skilled language professional but also should know the mentality and language peculiarities of certain social groups and classes, understand the mechanism of advertisement making and use the terminology which associate with common promotional concepts such as “the best”, “ideal”, “your choice”, etc. The present study focused on the persuasive elements used in English slogans and the way they are rendered into Persian. In fact, the main aim of the study was to identify such elements and form them into a model that can be used by the translators of this genre. Meanwhile, previous challenges to translate ads and the extent of translators’ knowledge of rhetorical language of advertisements were pointed out. The findings of this study will hopefully be useful for translators to pay more attention to the underlying meaning of advertisement texts and assist them to give preference to certain translation strategies so as to produce effective and operative texts for the target market.

Literature Review

De Mooij (2004) in his article, *Cross Cultural Communications Company*, studied translating advertisement. He mentioned the importance and difficulties of advertising across cultures. He believes two categorizations are most relevant for cross-cultural communications, the distinction between high and low context communication and Hofstede's (2001) dimensions of national culture. Hofstede (2001) developed a model of five dimensions of national culture that helps to explain basic value differences. This model distinguishes cultures according to five dimensions: power distance, individualism/collectivism, masculinity/femininity, uncertainty avoidance, and long-term orientation. The dimensions can be used to explain differences in people's needs and motives, communication styles, language structure, metaphors and concepts used in advertising and in literature across different countries. In another study, Al Agha (2006) studied Translation of fast-food advertising texts from English into Arabic. His study showed that translated fast-food advertising text should result in an advertisement which functions as an original in the target culture. The study identified the reasons why translation strategies such as transliteration and borrowing are inadequate when used to transfer cultural-specific concepts, phrases, logos and terms from English fast-food advertisements into Arabic.

Dávila-Montes (2008) in his PhD Dissertation, *Translation and Advertising: Translating Persuasion*, proposed a lineup of several tools and concepts from psychoanalysis –in a way similar to what marketing surveys overtly do-, Semiotics –after authors such as C. S. Peirce, U. Eco-, Neuro-linguistics –following Lakoff and Johnson (1980)- and Comparative Rhetoric. He identified a series of morpho-syntactical, rhetorical and pragmatic elements as effective persuasive mechanisms that articulate a good deal of the advertising discourse in Spanish and English. Through an analysis based on corpus linguistics, he establishes the existence of a generic “cognitive prosody” in advertising that both languages seem to exploit in a similar fashion, keeping though remarkable divergences arising from the different worldviews that different cultures necessarily purvey.

Jalilifar (2010) studied the rhetoric of Persian and English advertisements. In his study 6 newspapers were chosen for analysis. The materials consisted of a corpus of 300 advertisements– 100 English (advertisements published in Dubai), 100 Persian, and 100 Persian-English (English advertisements published in English newspapers in Iran) –selected from about 600 advertisements

of six leading newspapers. They were listed serially and then every other advertisement was chosen for analysis. This study aimed to scrutinize the rhetorical features and generic characteristics of advertisements in order to identify the characteristic features of the sample advertisements in the two languages. In this regard, Clark's (1998) framework was taken up for the rhetorical analysis of texts. Providing a comprehensive analysis of the verbal techniques used in the language of headlines, the framework takes in 78 figures of rhetoric of which only 24 was observed in the advertisements. The move structure of advertisements was also investigated by Haixin's (2003) framework. The model assumes five parts in an advertisement, namely headline, body copy, slogan, illustration, and trade mark; besides, it reports five kinds of headlines including benefit, provocative, news/information, question, and command headlines. This study can help identifying gaps in cross-cultural understanding of the text and help advertisement writers select the most effective device for expressing their purpose to the audience. In another research (Agha Golzadeh et al, 2012) titled, *The Contrastive Analysis of Gender Factor Manifestation in the language of Advertisement in Iran in 1980's and 2000's*, from among some newspapers and magazines, one hundred advertisements were carefully selected (fifty ads from each decade). The factors were divided into two categories: open and secret. The gender factors were studied in word level and, considering the main hypothesis of the research, divided into two groups of open and secret factors with respect to gender inclination. In order to have a more precise investigation of the collected samples, they were divided into various areas based on their subject and quality; gender influence was studied separately in different advertising areas. In the end, the degree of these effects in each field was compared with respect to two time-spans that were studied in this article.

Christelle (2012) conducted a research regarding the translation of advertisements with a focus on issues of semiotics, symbolism and persuasion. In the research, he had discussed the translation of advertisements based on Coca Cola advertisements and addressed to semiotics and persuasion which are the main issues related to advertising translation. His mainly focus was to identify the different translation strategies used by Coca-Cola translators in order to examine whether they have changed over time. He demonstrated that Coca-Cola strategies have not really changed over time. The rhetorical devices that were used in the advertisements are metaphor, ellipsis and exaggeration. These rhetorical devices enabled the Coca Company to present its drink as unique, universal and special. He also concluded that Coca Cola uses the technique of internationalization

as its main technique. Also, Reihani and Eslami Rasekh (2012) in their research, *To Reason with Them or Tickle Them: Advertising Strategies in the Discourse of Persian Print Ads*, tried to identify the discourse features of two major advertising strategies, *reason* versus *tickle* advertising techniques as employed in the Iranian print ads in magazines. More specifically, the aim was to identify the cultural influences which function to make advertising cross-culturally different. Those ads used in the descriptive analysis within the study had to meet certain criteria. Simpson's (2001) model for categorizing reason versus tickle ads was employed. Being a blended approach, it made use of Bernstein's (1978) typology of reason and tickle ads and incorporates several pragmatic models of how reason and tickle advertising strategies actually translated into the discourse of ads. In addition to Simpson's (2001) approach, Grice's (1975) maximal efficiency in the case of reason advertising and the deliberate flouting of the maxims in the case of tickle advertising were used. The advertising copy was subjected to process of the identification of either the maxims or flouting of them for that matter. A descriptive and detailed approach in dealing with the advertising copy helped identify recurring schemes within Persian print advertisements.

Tahmasbi and Ghorgani Kalkhajeh (2013) had a critical overview on the discourse of Iranian banks Advertisements through CDA framework. They tried to investigate mechanisms of manipulation in the discourse of Banks' commercials and to see how the purposes manifested in Banks' commercials. A corpus of 16 commercials broadcasted on Iranian national television was subjected to a quantitative analysis. They referred to Fairclough's (1992) three-dimensional framework to analyze the Iranian banking advertisement. Embedded in Fairclough's (1992) three-dimensional framework are three aspects of discourse which present some closely-related layers called: 1) description of textual analysis 2) interpretation of production and reception and 3) explanation of social conditions which affect production and reception. To describe the text as a whole, the type of the text, the sequence of the materials and the overall layout and even visual or auditoria aspects of the text were also considered.

Method

Materials

This study is based on fourteen notable English sales advertisement slogans taken from the websites of the companies, billboards and their advertising brochures. The slogans belong to the

following brands: *Nike, Sony, LG, Apple, Yahoo, Google, Adidas, Canon, Kodak, Jaguar, Teletext, EBay, PlayStation, and Olympus*. The slogans of these brands were selected because the translators mostly are familiar with the brands and their services; also, these slogans could be found almost everywhere.

Model of the Study

In *Towards a Science of Translating*, Nida (1964) asserts that “There will always be a variety of valid answers to the question, ‘Is this a good translation?’” (p. 164). In the professional translation environment, the whole question of how to evaluate a translated text is one which poses a challenge to the client, the translator and those responsible for training the translator. The aim of this study was not to mark the translations as good or bad, but to discuss the possible ways that makes an advertisement slogan catch a person’s attention and quickly create a memorable impression. Different versions of the TL texts will be analyzed to see if the translators attended to the persuasive characteristics used in the ST or not. Here, the persuasive characteristics of the advertisement slogans are categorized into three groups: 1) Sentence characteristics 2) Language characteristics and 3) Rhetorical characteristics. Knowing these characteristics can give the translators a better understanding about the people whom the company wishes to influence, help the translator to present a better translation in the target language and also keep the company’s aim to persuade users in the TL to buy its product.

Data Analysis and Results

In *American Marketing Manager’s Handbook*, it is pointed out that an advertisement should have four functions: AIDA, which represent four words: Attention, Interest, Desire, and Action.

Attention—a good advertisement should attract the consumer to direct their attention to the product being advertised.

Interest—the introduction and publicity of an advertisement should arouse consumers’ great interest.

Desire—the advertisement should stimulate consumers’ desire to buy the product, and make them realize that this product is just what they want.

Action—advertising is supposed to make consumers respond to the advertised information and evoke them to take the action of purchasing.

Broadly speaking, an advertisement has at least one of two functions: informing or persuading, though overlapping may often take place in one single piece. Informative advertisements inform “customers about goods, services, or ideas and then tell people how to get them by means of an identified sponsor” (Bolen, 1984). An advertisement of this type supplies basic factual information and sometimes shows a photo or an illustration of the product/service to give the target audience a better view of the advertised product. Persuasive advertisements are the instruments used by advertisers “who have defined their target audiences and determined the effect they hope to achieve through persuasive advertisements in the media” (Bolen, 1984). A persuasive advertisement should try to persuade the potential customers to buy the new product (Bolen, 1984). The persuasive function is directed not only at attracting the potential customers to buy a certain commodity, but also at the selling of services, ideas, norms and values.

There is no single best medium for all advertising situations. Each has its own character, and each advertising situation presents a unique set of circumstances. Yet few could dispense with words. Words must be translated into target languages of the geographic area where the products are to be sold. Here the translators play a very significant role. They not only should know about the product, the intention and aim of the slogan and needs of the target reader, but also should be aware about the persuasive linguistic characteristics of advertisement slogans. Advertising take place with pictures, signs or simply colors and etc.; however, this study concentrates on advertisement slogans in text format.

In the following, the slogans will be analyzed based on their persuasive characteristic, and a comment will be given for the different corresponding translated versions.

❖ **Life’s Good (LG)**

Concision is one of the significant features of this slogan. The aim of using this feature is usually to make a very short slogan to be memorable in the reader’s mind. The structure of an ad slogan is frequently vital. Capitalization is often used deliberately and maintaining that structure can be important and sometimes difficult depending on the target language.

In the ST, the sentence characteristic (tense) is used. Almost all the advertising slogans use simple present tense to satisfy the customers' desire to know the present state of the product they want to buy but there is another aspect of the simple present: its implication of universality and timelessness.

The provided translations for this advertising slogan are as following:

1- زندگی خوب با ال جی

2- طعم شیرین یک زندگی

3- زندگی زیباست

In the first translation, the translator attempted to reflect the Brand's name as it was mentioned in the slogan by capitalizing the first letter of each word.

In the second translation, while maintaining the true meaning, the translator tried to instill a positive sense to the target reader. By this way, the translator mostly focused on the linguistic characteristics of a slogan, which is the emotion and attracting aspect.

The third translation implies that the sentence characteristics of a slogan were the center of the translator's focus: translator keeps the simple short sentence of the source text in the target text with the same number of words. A sense of alliteration (in /z/ sound) is also used in the TT (/ZendegiZibast/), though no alliteration found in the ST.

❖ **Make. Believe (Sony)**

1- لحق یک روئا

2- به روزها ایمان جامه حقیقت بپوشازید.

3- هم چون واقعیت

While the slogan is made up of two simple known words, the deep meaning is not as simple as it shows. According to the definition of the slogan given by the company, the concept of the point (.) which is located between the two words shows the cross point where imaginations change into reality.

In the first rendering, the translator has found the message and attempted to reflect the point (.) in the form of words. On the second one, the slogan addressed directly to the public and has been translated into a sentence form. The third one considers the slogan as an adjective.

❖ Impossible is nothing (Addidas)

- 1- غورممکن، غورممکن است.
- 2- غورممکن ها را با ما ممکن ببینید.

3- هیچ چیز غورممکن نیست.

In this slogan, the Language characteristics have been used to hyperbole about the product's services. Using the word "nothing" can differentiate the brand's services and grab the reader's attention to its eye catch slogan that there is no impossible thing for Adidas. In the first rendering, the translator used the repetition in order to bold the mentioned language characteristics. The sentence form of the slogan in the SL text is positive, though it has a negative meaning. The translator also used the positive form but reflected the corresponding TL concept for "nothing" by the repetition of the corresponding TL equivalence for "impossible" (/gheyremomken/).

The second translator directly attended that "It is our product which makes everything possible for you!", though the pronoun "we" were not use in the SL text. The translator preferred a meaning-based kind of translation instead of literal (word for word) translation.

The word "nothing" has a negative meaning but it is used in the positive form English sentences. In Persian (here as the TL), the word "nothing" usually comes in the sentences with a negative form. In the third rendering, the translator tried to translate word for word but as the result of the mentioned difference between the SL and TL, the form of the TT changed to negative one.

❖ Connecting people (Nokia)

- 1- ارتباط مردمی
- 2- ما برای وصل کردن آمدیم.
- 3- بل ارتباطی شما

The present SL slogan has been used in phrase form without any rhetorical characteristics. No alliteration, rhyme or the brand's name is used in the SL text. The Sentence Characteristic (using simple, short phrase form) of this slogan made the translation more difficult for the translator.

In the first rendering, the translator focused on the simple phrase form and attempted to keep shortness of the phrase by render the ST into TT using the same number of words.

The translator in the second rendering didn't pay much attention to the simple phrase form of the ST and used a sentence form in the TT. In fact translator's focus was on the aesthetic effect of

the slogan in TT, so preferred to translate it in the Cliché form (using a verse of a poem) and added Language characteristic to the TT, though it did not exist in the ST one.

The third translator made some changes to the word formation, though considered the simple phrase form of the ST. The word “people” changed to a direct form “You” and “connecting” changed to “connecting bridge”. The translator may have believed that word for word translation might harm the persuasive effect of the ST.

❖ **Think different (Apple)**

- 1- میناوت بوندیترید.
- 2- با ما میناوت باشید.
- 3- میناوت بودن را با ما تجربه کنید.

The present slogan made up of two simple words and used sentence characteristics in order to make a simple short memorable slogan and persuade its users to buy the product.

The first translator considered the sentence characteristics of the ST and tried to reflect it in the TT.

The second translator added Language Characteristics in TT. The pronoun “we” was not mentioned in the ST but added to the TT. The ST concept was “think different” and in TT it has been changed to “Be different with us”.

The third translator ignored the sentence characteristics and preferred to translate the ST simple phrase into a sentence form.

❖ **Just do it (Nike)**

- 1- نقطه انج امش بده.
- 2- همین درس به

Another sentence characteristic which is used in the language of a slogan is using everyday sentences. This sentence tends to be overly used in everyday life, but it can be very forceful when used in an ad slogan. These sentences travel very fast, because anyone can remember it without any effort. It can just hang upon people’s lips. It’s something popularized without much publicity. The first translator had a word for word (literal) kind of translation. The second translator believed that literal translation (like the first rendering) may not be understandable by the TL reader, so he changed “just do it” in ST to “That’s it” in TT.

❖ **Share moments. Share life (Kodak)**

لحظت را به اشتراک بذار، زندگی ات را به اشتراک بذار

Repetition of the same words or words of the same semantic field is to be used to convey forcefulness. The delivered translations for this slogan were the same. It could be the result of the simplicity using in the language of the slogans in order to make it memorable in the mind. The same features have been reflected in the TT though as the result of forcefully using some prepositions, the length of the TT is more than the ST. The translator has also reflected the repetition which was existed in the ST.

❖ **At the heart of the image (Nikon)**

در قلب تصویر

For this slogan there was just one version of Persian translation. That might be because the slogan is a short simple phrase without using any difficult unknown words in it. Even the name of the brand was not mentioned in the ST slogan. So, the translator didn't have much space to show his creativity and preferred to give a literal kind of translation.

❖ **Live in your world. Play in ours. (PlayStation)**

در دنیای خود زندگی کنید، در دنیای ما بازی کنید

This slogan might be not very short but it had directly pointed out to its provided services. The sentence characteristics and the imperative forms were used in this slogan in order to make it persuasive to the reader. The same was done in the TT.

❖ **Grace, space, pace (Jaguar)**

زیبا، پیشرو، مطمئن

Here, the rhetorical characteristic used in ST is rhyme without mentioning the brands name. This characteristic is not reflected in the TT.

❖ **Buy it. Sell it. Love it (Ebey)**

بخر، بفروش، عاشقش شو

This is another example of using sentence characteristic as it's short and simple. It also used the repetition of "it" to indirectly refer to the brand. The TT version matches with the ST in their sentence characteristics but the repetition feature has been omitted in the TT.

❖ **Don't get vexed. Ask Teletext. (Teletext)**

- 1- وُت نلف نكن. از ناه نكست بخواه.
- 2- وُنی ناه نكست هست چرا وُت نلف كردن!

با ناله نکست درگه درچ وؤنای نالف زمبش ه. 3-

The rhyming with the brand's name is the rhetorical figure used in this slogan. By this kind of rhyming, the brand name is highlighted. The ad slogan is thus highly purposed. It can differentiate a slogan from others by the brand name and the special rhyming which is the identity of the slogan. The translators couldn't make the same rhyming in the TT versions only have reflected the brand's name in them. The first translator used the imperative sentence and directly attends to the reader. The second translator used the positive form of directing and the third one bold the brand's name by bringing it on the beginning of the sentence. The ST slogan used two sentences while it was translated into one sentence in the TT.

❖ **Don't be evil. (Google)**

1- شیطون زباش

2- شیطونی نکنوا!

The slogan maker for the Google brand used a sentence characteristic in his persuasive kind of languages and directly pointed out to its users. Using the imperative sentences is the most direct way to achieve the ideal effect. The given translations for this slogan were somehow the same. Though it is believed that using the negative form of advertisement might have a negative effect on the reader but here both the ST and TT were used in the negative form. The translators also used the informal and intimate tone of calling the TT readers. No other rhetorical or language characteristics could be found.

❖ **See what we mean. (Canon)**

1- هدف ما را ببینید.

2- ببینید آنچه را که ما تعریف می کنیم.

3- تعریف ما را ببینید.

The present slogan used the sentence characteristics. It is short, simple and also used in the imperative form of sentences. All the three TT versions reflected the mentioned characteristics in their work. Different versions of Persian translation have been found as the result of ST using words with more than one meaning. The translators also used different meanings in the TT for the word "mean". In the first TT version "mean" has been translated as "goal" while in the second and the third ones it has been translated as "defining".

Discussion

One of the decisions that translators have to make in translation process is whether to translate literal or meaning based. In translating advertisements, the persuasive language use has made the translating process a big deal for the translators. The slogan makers use some specific characteristics in order to make people buy their products. Here the translators play a very important role. They should be aware of the persuasive language characteristics of the slogans and then go for translation. The present study analyzed samples of slogans and presented a model that can be useful both for translators and linguists. The persuasive language characteristics of the slogans have been divided into three main parts: sentence characteristics, language characteristics and rhetorical characteristics.

Sentence characteristics are as follow:

- ✓ Short simple sentences,
- ✓ Imperative sentence,
- ✓ Use of tense,
- ✓ Creative use of idioms or proverbs,
- ✓ Use of everyday sentences,
- ✓ Use of phrases,
- ✓ Use of questions.

Language characteristics are:

- ✓ Use of unqualified comparison,
- ✓ Use of “every” “always”,
- ✓ Use of “no” “none”,
- ✓ Semantic ambiguity.

Rhetorical characteristics include:

- ✓ Use of alliteration,
- ✓ Use of rhymes,
 - Rhymes with brand name,
 - Rhymes - brand name mention,
- ✓ Use of puns,
- ✓ Use of coined words and Transliteration.

Advertising is a form of mass communication closely linked with the world of commerce and marketing. It is a powerful tool for the flow of information from seller to buyer. It influences and persuades people to act or believe in a certain way. It not only influences any human society but also reflects certain aspects of that society's values and structure. In the process of creating advertisements meeting all these criteria, language is of crucial importance. Advertising language as a special kind of language is very different from common language. Cook (1992) believes that advertisements as a separate genre possess their own language, which differentiates them from other kinds of genres such as news, letters, or research articles. Advertising language has its own features in morphology, syntax, and rhetorical devices. Rhetorical devices are variations of literal or ordinary form of expressions (McQuarrie and Mick, 1996). Their use is to make the thought more striking and effective, for they have the power to vivify and illustrate. A fresh apt rhetorical device appeals to the imagination, creates mental pictures, and makes the speech or writing vivid, impressive, and interesting (Chuandao, 2005; Goddard, 1998; Leech, 1966; Nayak, 2002). For this reason, advertisers often use various rhetorical devices to increase the readability and appeal of an advertisement and to arouse consumers' interest in buying the product.

Concluding Remarks

Because of the importance of the persuasive language and the rhetorical figures in advertisements, in this research, a sample of English advertisement slogans together with their Persian translation were analyzed in order to illustrate their persuasive characteristics and a model was presented that could be useful for analyzing the persuasive language of the slogans. Translation theories suggest that advertising texts should be translated in a way to create a target-language advertisement which will have a positive impact on the target audience. It is, thus, not of primary importance whether a particular rhetorical figure is translated by the exact same figure in target text. What is important is that the target-text advertisement should have the same attention-grabbing function as the original. In fact, when working with a slogan, there is a long list of considerations. The present study presented a model of specific analysis for the advertising genre that can be helpful both for linguists-to analyze a slogan structure- and translators of the advertising texts.

This study concludes that advertisement translation should be regarded as a featured translation that demands translator's translation sensitivity and flexibility. Unlike the simple and short

structure of an advertisement slogan, a translator might find the translation process a very big deal but difficulty can't be a good reason to see a text untranslatable.

Just as a poetic writing style is unique, so the style of advertisement writing has its own particular characters. What has been mainly discussed here is English into Persian translations of the advertisement slogans. To sell the English products well in the Persian markets, translators should know well about the persuasive language of advertisements and find the most appropriate translation strategy by analyzing them. In this study, analyzing the slogans and comparing the different translation versions of advertisements also showed that Persian style of advertisement is in some ways rather different from its counterpart in English, although they do share a number of common features.

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