Study of equivalence in the Persian translation of some English commercial advertisements

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Abstract

Rely on the technological progress, particularly in the fields of communications and global growth of commercialization and consumerism, advertisements become international. Popularity and successfulness of a product shows the using of appropriate advertisement techniques. Transferring the appropriate content is not just for using the best techniques, but an experienced and competent translator who is familiar with language and culture of both source and target country has a very essential effect. The translator acts like a linkage between the advertor and the consumer. The cohesion of this link and relationship depends on the knowledge and competence of the translator. The present research tries to study equivalence in the Persian translation of some English advertisements. The researcher selected nearly 150 sample advertisements randomly. The data were categorized by Newmark’s model of translation. The results show that after communicative translation, literal translation, loan translation, and transcription have the most frequency. And then some data were studied by skopos theory in detail. According to skopos theory commercial advertisement should be translated operative to persuade the potential consumer to buy the product. The present study shows that nearly most of the translators ignore the operative aspect of the advertisement and translate it informatively. This shows the essentiality to pay more attention to translating the commercial advertisements.

Keywords: advertisement, commercial advertisement.
Introduction
Translating commercial advertisements has a complex and special structure that needs paying attention to both cultural and linguistic problems. For example in the advertisement of Pepsi Cola, the slogan was “It makes you alive”, in one country it was translated into “It brings your ancestors back” and there was a caricature photo of some dead people with bloody faces that coming out of their graves and walking in the streets and drinking Pepsi.

Some advertisement translations don’t have the same effect as the original, because nearly all the translations are done by inexperienced translators and the ones who do not know anything about commercial principles and country’s culture and language. Most of them do not consider literary devices such as alliteration, puns, word play, and etc.

Most translators just denote the meaning and informative part of the advertisements, but actually advertisements should be persuasive and encourage the addressee to buy the product. Actually the company’s ad translators, especially brand name translators and the ones who are interested in this ground and also translation students should learn these strategies.

Literature review
DE Mooij (2004) talks about the corporation between the translator and ad writer and also about that the task of the translator is not only to translating the word but also should apply all different aspects of cultural features that are related to both target and source languages. Xiang, Xu (2008) in his research says that the translator can introduce his countries production to international markets by using appropriate and accurate strategies and also by knowing enough about cultural elements in both target and source countries.

Ying, cui’s (2008) research has the same conclusion as Xiang, Xu. He says in his research that because cultures are different from each other, the backgrounds are also different. The translator should try to make the advertisement more comprehensible by changing the structure of the ads.

Tuna (2004) in a research compared cosmetics commercial ads in English to Portugal and point out to an interesting conclusion. According to Tuna(2004) written advertisements are carried into the account of polyhedral texts that word speech elements are just part of a text and the addressee perceive the information from all elements, pictorial and speech elements together.

In spite of all that the translators, just translate speech elements and don’t pay any attention to the conformity of text and graphical elements and neglect the visual elements. According to him, in these kinds of texts speech analysis, text, and situational elements has a great importance in our country.

In spite of the fact that advertisement is nearly a new subject, but there are a few researches about commercial advertisements. Sharifi and Bahrami (2010) believe that transfer, source oriented, target oriented, word for word, literal translation are strategies that are applied in advertisement translation. They gave a few sentences to some translators (without mentioning their names and their level of
experience) and finally come to the conclusion that translators usually use source-oriented method.
They propose that advertisement translation should always consider the target markets. The
main point in this research is that the data are artificial and are the result of experimental work of researches not the real data in advertisement.

Methodology

In the present study, the researcher studied the data from the perspective of mixed method of Skopos theory and Newmark’s model.
Skopos is a Greek word which means the “aim”, Skopos theory considers the function of the translated text.
From the Skopos theory’s perspective the researcher studied the data based on intra-textual and extra-textual elements.

- Intra-textual elements

In this research the intra-textual elements such as: subject matter, content, vocabulary, sentence structure, supra segmental features, non-verbal elements, and presuppositions were studied.

- Extra-textual elements

Extra-textual elements relate to something outside of text. They refer to additional information regarding the nature of the text and the background knowledge and experience, to understand the texts better.
In this research extra-textual elements such as sender of the message, addressee, medium, motive, place of communication and text-function were studied.
Newmark’s semantic and communicative model of translation has been divided into four subcategories, communicative equivalence, literal translation, transcription, and loan translation.

In communicative language the translated text is comprehensible for the addressee and one can say it has the same effect on the target readers and also it has the near and most natural structure and lexical form in accordance with cultural aspects of target country.
Literal translation of a text is actually translating word-by-word rather than sense of the original text, in many cases literal translation results in meaningless and insensible sentences.
Transcription is the conversion of writing the sounds or letters of one language into another language.
In loan translation the source words are transferred into target language without any change.

Results and discussions

This part discusses the findings of the study and shows the results shortly. Some advertisements are discussed in detail and finally the percentage of each strategy.

Ad.No.1. Samsung Galaxy K
The slogan of this product is the word “Zoom”. In the advertisement there is clear and transparent photo that someone zooms on the picture. The Iranian translator translated it communicatively and intelligently into "اره زومه". Actually the translator used pun, the Persian
phrase means “Yes it is zoom” and also “I wish to have this cellphone”. The translator transfer the content and meaning appropriately and encourages the potential customers to buy the product.

Ad.No.2. LG television
The slogan of this T.V is “Pen Touch”. In the advertisement there is picture of someone who’s writing and drawing on the T.V screen. The phrase was translated communicatively into “روی تلویزیون خود نوشته بکشید “. Actually the content has totally changed. In the Persian translation there is no reference to the digital pen that is the main focus of the ad.

Ad.No.3. Samsung Galaxy Tab S
This product’s slogans are “Tab into Color” and also “Turn up the Color”. In the original advertisement the focus is on the vivid colors and pictures in this tablet. The Iranian translator translated it communicatively into “ری تلْیسیْى خْد ًقاضی تکطیذ”. Actually the content has totally changed. In the Persian translation there is no reference to the digital pen that is the main focus of the ad.

Ad.No.4. Nokia’s cellphone
The slogan of this product is “Life goes mobile”. The Iranian translator translated it literary into “زًذگی رّی ثلفي ُوراٍ هیرّد”. Actually the content has totally changed and the translator didn’t understand the vocabulary and mistranslate it. The word “Mobile” in English means something that is moving but mistakenly in Persian it is used instead of cellphone as a loan word. Maybe it was better to translate it into”زَیگَی در حركة است”.

Ad.No.5. Dog’s Food
The slogan of this advertisement is “Everybody wants to be a dog”. The Iranian translator didn’t understand the target culture and the addressees. In Iranian culture dog is the simple of irascibility and dirtiness and the translated phrase is offensive. The translator should change the content of the translation and translate it according to Iranian’s culture.

Ad.No.6. PSP’s battery
Here the slogan is “Use it or lose it”. The phrase was translated literary into “اًِا را استفادٍ کٌیذ یا گن کٌیذ”. Actually the Iranian translator didn’t consider the word play. Maybe it is better to translate it to”روغٌ ثفاش دوسلی دل و Dell دّ دل ًثاضیذ ”.

Ad.No.7. Dell laptop
In this advertisement the slogan is” It’s not just a deal, it’s a Dell”. There is a word play between the words”Deal” and “Dell”. The Iranian translator didn’t consider the word play. Maybe it is better to translate it to”دّ دل نیکشید و Dell نیکشید”.

Ad.No.8. QV products
In this advertisement QV products are presented in a catalogue. Actually the Iranian translator just transcript the English words into Persian. The translator didn’t consider source structure and also the addressees. The catalogue is translated for laymen, not a special group of educated people. For example “QV wash” was just transcript into “کیّْی ّاش”. Here the translator didn’t translate it into “روغٌ حمام وASH”. The translator didn’t consider the Persian language structure. It was better to translate it to”روغٌ حمام کیّْی”.
Ad.No.9. Charity ad.
Here the slogan is “Your pocket change, his lifesaving water”. The phrase is translated literary to “پول تو جینی شما، آب زندگی بخش برای ایشان”. Actually the translator didn’t consider the Persian collocations. It was better to translate it to “آب زندگی بخش” instead of “آب حيات”.

Ad.No.10. Flu vaccination ad.
Here in describing the flu symptoms in a catalogue, one of them was “chills and sweat”. In its translation it was translated literary to "لرز ّ غرق". Actually the translator again didn’t consider the Persian collocation. It was better to translate it to "کم و لرز". According to Baker (1992) naturalness is better than accurancy.

Ad.No.11. Shampoo ad.
Here the slogan is “Energizing and protective shampoo”. It was translated to "ضاهپْ اًرژیذٌُذٍ ّ تقْیت کٌٌذٍ". The translator didn’t consider the vocabulary and mistakenly thought that “energizing” is a loan word. Maybe it was better to translate it to "شامیو تقویت کننده و هحافظ".

Graph 1- Pie Graph of Translation Strategies
Now, here is the pie graph that shows the frequency of Newmarke’s strategies. As it is shown most of the ads were translated communicatively (nearly 47%). But if we consider communicative translation the best strategy because it follows the rule of translating advertisements, that means it consider the operative function and skopos of ad translating, the frequency of inappropriate strategies are more than it (nearly 53%). It should be noted that the literal translation should be rarely used, because it’s not the form, but the content. But here nearly (42%) of all the advertisements are translated by literal strategy. That means a great deal of advertisements are not appropriate and they are just informative rather than being operative. Then we have transcription (nearly 6%). Sometimes translators just transcript the words and don’t consider the addressee and just want to keep the prestige of the product and say that this is not an Iranian product. Finally near 5% of all ads are loan translated. Loan translation is used when there’s no appropriate substitution in the target language.

Conclusion
From these statistics and analyses one can find out that translators usually don’t consider the content, addressee, vocabulary and of course the operative function of ad translation, because ads should persuade the costumers to buy not just inform them about the product.
Suggestions for further studies

This study examined translating English commercial advertisements into Persian with respect of operative function. Still many questions remain in relation with how to translate other kinds of advertisements. I suggest other researchers who are interested in these grounds to study political, religious, athletic, and other kinds of advertisements.

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