Advertising

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Advertising texts have been widely studied from the linguistic and sociological points of view, and are among the favoured objects of semiotic analysis, from Barthes and Eco to later developments in visual and social semiotics. In translation studies, however, advertising translation has only attracted systematic attention since the turn of the century (Guidère 2000a; Bueno García 2000; Adab and Valdés 2004; Torresi 2010). Until then, promotional materials – including sub-genres such as advertising, publicity and tourist brochures – were mainly used in general translation handbooks as examples or special cases of commercial translation (Olohan 2009, 2010) or consumer-oriented translation (Washbourne 2010; Hervey et al. 2006) that are best approached from a functionalist perspective.

A possible reason for the reticence of early translation scholars to address the question of translating advertising material may lie in the verbal (written and oral) connotations traditionally attached to the term translation, which may explain why the crosslinguistic and crosscultural transfer of multimodal promotional texts is often termed localization (Declercq 2011), adaptation, or – less frequently – transcreation or rewriting. The latter set of terms suggest a type of transfer which is less concerned with issues of faithfulness and more with functional equivalence and adequacy. In this context, non-translation becomes acceptable as a deliberate

globalizing translation choice (Prieto del Pozo 2009; Nemčoková 2011; Páez Rodríguez 2013; Comitre Narváez 2015). Another factor which makes it conceptually difficult for translation scholars to engage in a systematic analysis of advertising material is the practice, adopted by several multinational companies, of developing local campaigns simultaneously from a brief that avoids culture-specificity as much as possible. In this glocalization process (Adab 2000:224), there is no source text as such but – at best – only an Ur-text or multitext (Guidère 2009, 2011). Thus, the very translatability of advertising texts can only be accepted if the term translation is understood in its etymological meaning of transfer – across languages, cultures and geographical space.

Research themes

Early research on advertising translation, carried out during a period when multimodality had not yet gained prominence in translation studies, tended to focus on the linguistic analysis of the verbal copy. While these studies did invoke a functional perspective, their scope was limited to identifying the function of single payoffs (taglines, slogans) or sentences in the copy, not the function of the advertisement as a whole. For instance, Tatilon, who advocates "*traduire non la lettre mais l'esprit, non les mots mais les fonctions*" (translating the spirit not the letter, the functions not the words, 1990:245; original emphasis), offers as good examples a few English and French slogans where assonance and puns are recreated in the target language. Similarly, when Quillard (1998) focuses on the rendering of humour in French translations of English ads, she does mention the role of pictures in activating puns but does not include them in her article. In this type of research, function is taken to be the ability of a pun to amuse readers or attract their attention. The assumption is that for the target text to constitute a good translation, this ability or potential must be recreated in the verbal text – which then justifies the extraction of selected fragments of the copy from the rest of the advertisement.

A different type of linguistic analysis restricted to the verbal level attempts a broader understanding of advertising translation by providing verbal-based evidence for the study of cultural adaptation. For example, Quillard (1999, 2010) investigates differences between the Canadian English, Canadian French and French versions of the same advertisements to demonstrate the importance of the localization of cultural values across two communities, French and French Canadians, that share (almost) the same language but not the same geographical and cultural space, as well as across two communities that share (almost) the same geographical space but not the same language (English- and French-speaking Canadians).

Even in later research, where a growing number of studies seem to favour multimodal, intercultural or interdisciplinary analysis, this verbal-centred strand of research into advertising and promotional translation continues to feature prominently. But it is now one of several possible approaches rather than the only viable method of investigation, and tends to be informed by a broader interdisciplinary perspective. For instance, Aiwei (2010) draws up a rather traditional list of verbal features of advertising style and suggests translation strategies for addressing them, but is aware that "conclusions cannot be easily drawn only by counting certain linguistic elements" and that "style is a multi-level concept". In her more in-depth empirical analysis of four textual strategies employed to enhance readers' memory, Ying (2015) focuses only on the written texts of her corpus of ads, even when they make explicit reference to the accompanying visuals, as when they describe the pattern and colour of a shirt being advertised. Nevertheless, she does so in the framework of consumer motivation research as well as psycholinguistics. Ying and Jing (2010), who analyse strategies for rendering verbal humour from English into Chinese in advertising texts, carefully warn readers that their conclusions are based only on the linguistic encoding of humour, leaving aside the fundamental aspect of audience reception. In a later work, Ying and Yanli (2016) analyse the extensive corpus of bilingual ads collected by Li (2010) to discuss 'poeticizing' as a method of adjusting advertising texts to Chinese aesthetics. Similarly, in her analysis of a small corpus of Spanish and German advertisements for cosmetic products, Montes Fernández (2003) explores the way in which different conventions of the (verbal)

language of advertising may reflect different cultural conventions. Calzada Pérez (2011) draws on a corpus of 120 English ads and their Spanish counterparts to investigate the translation of rhetorical figures, and Dávila-Montes (2008) similarly examines the translation of the rhetorical structures of English advertising into Spanish. A final strand of scholarly work that excludes all non-verbal aspects of the advertising language involves the creation (rather than analysis) of terminological databanks; these may include images, but only by way of illustration of certain terms. In automatically searchable corpora (Moreira 2014), likewise, the inclusion of images is technically feasible, but it raises a number of tagging issues that require the adoption of a semiotic perspective which is lacking among corpus linguists (Guidère 2011). As these examples suggest, studying the verbal aspects of texts is fully compatible with studying cultural aspects of advertising in translation; it also does not necessarily exclude the analysis of other semiotic dimensions in the translation of promotional material.

Another trend in the study of advertising translation attempts to take into account the range of constraints imposed upon and opportunities offered to the translator of advertising material by virtue of the modes of expression involved in each advertising text. Baldry (2000) argues that no text is strictly monomodal. For instance, a novel or textbook without illustrations may appear to have only a verbal dimension, but typographical choices (Schopp 2002, 2005) and the physical qualities of the paper it is printed on give the words a particular rendering or inscription (Kress and Van Leeuwen 1996:230-232) that contributes to the construction of textual meaning. At the same time, advertising texts on the whole display a high level of multimodality compared to other genres, because of their simultaneous reliance on different types of stimuli. Print advertisements feature both verbal and visual components, radio commercials rely on verbal and aural (sound/music) effects, and street advertising makes use of verbal and/or visual signs combined with geosemiotic cues such as position relative to the viewer, proximity with other texts, and spatial context (Scollon and Scollon 2003).

Scholars adopting a multimodal approach to the translation of advertisements and promotional material advocate training translators of advertising material and translation students to analyse relationships among the different semiotic (rather than merely linguistic) elements of the text (Laviosa 2007; Torresi 2007a, 2008). Theoretically, they encourage a "move beyond the written word" to incorporate "the visual, and multimodal in general" in research (Munday 2004:216). This proposed move is supported by methodological proposals that involve building extensive multimodal corpora of ads collected across languages and cultures (Guidère 2011; Santafé Aso 2012). In practice, intersemiotic translation is advocated as a means of effectively localizing the advertising message by working on the text as a whole – for instance replacing a visual element in the source text with a new one which can compensate for an unavoidable loss of meaning in the verbal component of the text, or building an entirely new verbal text around the visual one to accommodate market differences (Torresi 2007b). Examples of multimodal, intersemiotic approaches to the study of advertising in translation include Chiaro's (2004) contrastive analysis of intrasemiotic and intersemiotic strategies in international websites and print advertisements for Italian food products, Simões Lucas Freitas's (2004) study of the way in which meaning is conveyed across different modes of expression in multimedia campaigns, and Smith's (2008) study on the relevance of the visual for the reception of advertising across cultures. A more subtle kind of analysis is provided by Valdés (2000), who reveals the importance of seemingly slight typographical changes and adjustments of visuals to accommodate national stereotypes, Valdés and Fuentes Luque (2008), who discuss verbal/visual coherence in the audiovisual translation of TV commercials, and Fuentes Luque (2010), who investigates the verbal-visual co-construction of humour in dubbed audiovisual commercials.

Some scholars who have studied the translation of advertising do not explicitly use the term intersemiotic translation, but nevertheless implicitly draw on the concept. This group includes Millán-Varela (2004), who contrasts a corpus of European, Asian and South American TV commercials of Cornetto ice cream, drawing on Kress and Van Leeuwen's (1996) visual grammar. Bueno García (2000) and Santa María (2012) highlight the importance of elements such as sound and image in the translation of

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advertising, while Guidère (2000b:28) argues that "les signes linguistiques du texte publicitaire sont en relation d'étroite dépendance avec les signes iconiques de l'image" (in an advertising text, linguistic signs are directly dependent on iconic signs). Nomura (2000) and Nogueira da Silva (2011) similarly emphasize the importance of the visual in constructing and translating advertising or tourist promotion texts. Li (2015) argues that the spatial and cultural context in which a bilingual billboard is intended to appear is a key factor influencing translation choices. As early as 1996, de Pedro proposed a scale for describing the transnational adaptation of TV advertisements based on the degree to which both the verbal and the visual are changed, including those cases where an entirely new campaign is created. Many of these studies also engage with cultural issues, often identifying them as a strong argument for intersemiotic translation.

Ensuring that an advertising text is as persuasive as possible involves adopting strategies that are largely culture-specific. In their study of multinational organizations, Hofstede (2001, 1991) and Hofstede and Hofstede (2005) found that different national populations show different orientations towards what the authors call dimensions of culture. De Mooij (1998/2005, 2003, 2004) applies Hofstede's model to advertising, mapping these dimensions onto different consumer behaviours and advertising styles. Rentel (2012) compares French and German ads to highlight how cultural values and emotional leverage travel across different national argumentative styles. In their diachronic investigations, conversely, Ločmele (2016) and Smith (2010) highlight the role played by translated ads in shaping the Latvian and Russian language and culture at key points in the two respective countries' history. But it is not only the form, or style, of advertising campaigns that change across cultures and languages. In order to fulfil their persuasive purpose, publicity material and advertisements have to motivate the target group to change their consumer or public behaviour by appealing either to their aspirations or fears. Such aspirations or fears, however, are often culture-specific and have to be taken into account in the translation of advertising material; research suggests this is true even in the case of values such as cleanliness, which may be assumed to be universal (Torresi 2004). The power of cultural values and stereotypes also has important implications for professional practice and training. Fuentes Luque and Kelly (2000:241) argue that "the role of the translator in international advertising ... can in no way be limited to 'purely linguistic' issues", and suggest that training courses should help would-be translators of advertising material to become "intercultural experts". Guidère (2001) agrees that "to accomplish his mission successfully, the translator is required to think and to integrate a certain amount of data, not only about marketing and basic communication, but also about geopolitics and ethnology". Adab (2000, 2001) similarly stresses the importance of cultural values, placing them in a broader functionalist view that takes into account situational factors as well as linguistic ones in the context of advertising.

The discussion of cultural issues in the translation of advertising material particularly benefits from insights on the cultural adaptation of European or American advertising campaigns and messages for non-western audiences. Important research has been carried out in this area by scholars such as Guidère (2000a), who highlights the difficulties of translating advertisements into Arabic and the many cultures covered by that language. Liu (2003) traces some of the terminological choices made in the translation of a beauty spa advertisement from English into Chinese to differences in religious traditions, and Ying and Yanli (2014) analyse the changes made to cultural images in translating advertisements into Chinese. Agreeing with Sumberg's (2004) conclusions about the need to adjust tourist brochure translation to target readership expectations, Ho (2004) discusses the cultural adaptations he introduced when he translated tourist promotional material about Singapore into Chinese. The didactic applications of these culture-driven approaches are outlined by Kong (2012), who describes how bilingual Chinese/English ads can be used in the advertising translation classroom to make students aware of the impact of cultural diversity on verbal translation. Cultural issues are also prominent in brand-name translation, a sub-type of advertising translation that is particularly relevant when brands are translated into ideograms and into cultures with a strong tradition

of semantic naming (Chuansheng and Yunnan 2003).

Future directions

Research on advertising translation appears to be increasingly more open to the influence of social semiotics and intercultural studies. However, key marketing concepts such as Country-of-Origin effects (Maher and Carter 2011; Oberecker and Diamantopoulos 2011; Klein et al. 1998; Johnson 2009) and consumer ethnocentrism (Usunier and Lee 2013:18-19) still enjoy more currency in the fields of business and international marketing studies than in translation studies. These fields seem to seldom cross-pollinate with the study of advertising in translation studies, with the welcome exception of the prolific Asian production in this research area. Research on the translation of advertising carried out by Asian scholars is typically published in Asian (mainly Chinese) marketing-centred journals and edited books, pioneering a multidisciplinary trend that is not equally popular outside Asia. Asian research on the translation of promotional texts seems more open to incorporating concerns and concepts from marketing, as in George Ho's (2008) call for a (monetary) value-driven theory of translation that might help commercial translators to attach the appropriate price tag to their work in relation to the additional profits it brings to the client. Research on advertising translation at large – within and outside Asia – would benefit from a more systematic and explicit use of concepts from the area of international marketing.

Similarly, relatively few studies offer postcolonial, feminist or critical readings of advertising translation and the stereotyping it may promote (Calzada Pérez 2005; Sihui 2009; del Saz-Rubio and Pennock-Speck 2009; Torresi 2012; Vid and Kučiš 2014; Lotfollahi, Saeed and Hossein 2015; Corrius Gimbert, De Marco and Espasa 2016). Some make reference to cultural stereotyping without signalling an overtly critical stance (Chiaro 2004, 2009; Di Giovanni 2008:38-40; Chiaro and Rossato 2015). Others adopt a comparative perspective rather than engaging explicitly with translation (del Saz-Rubio and Pennock-Speck 2008, 2009). The culture- and identity-bound nature of advertising translation calls for more in-depth critical explorations of the stereotyping it invariably involves, which in turn can shed more light on the mechanisms for achieving effectiveness in advertising translation in terms of emotional leverage.

Further reading

Ho, G. (2008) *Globalization and Translation: Towards a paradigm shift in translation studies*, Saarbrücken: VDM Verlag Dr. Müller.
Subsumes advertising translation under professional translation types that mediate between the value of a product/service on the domestic market and its value on the global market, and calls for a shift towards a value-driven theory of translation, backing this call with practical advice for translators and several case studies.

Tomei, R. (ed.) (2017) *Advertising Culture and Translation: From colonial to global*, Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing.
A collection of essays that investigates the cultural and postcolonial implications of advertising translation; brings together diachronic and synchronic accounts of advertising translation and investigates issues of migration, diaspora and ethnic prejudice.

Torresi, I. (2010) *Translating Promotional and Advertising Texts*, Manchester: St Jerome.
Covers the translation of promotional material in its various forms, from CVs and personal websites to institutional and tourist texts, down to business-to-business and business-to-consumer promotional and advertising material. The proposed theoretical framework is supported by practical examples in different languages.

Valdés, C. (2013) 'Advertising translation', in C. Millán and F. Bartrina (eds) *The Routledge Handbook of Translation Studies*, London & New York: Routledge, 303-316.
A detailed account of the history of the study of advertising translation, with sections on interdisciplinarity, future challenges and developments in the field.

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