



STRATEGIES OF CULTURAL ADAPTATION AND PRAGMATIC TRANSFORMATION IN TRANSLATION OF ADVERTISEMENTS AND MARKETING SLOGANS

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Today, international communication has got a great significance for people around the world. Societies are more concerned with the positive and beneficial relations with other nations. It seems that the need for interrelationship with other communities is moving the world towards globalization. In such a world, advertising is looked upon as a handy instrument to call for others' attention. In an international context translation plays the role of an intermediate, bridging the gap between the advertiser and the advertisee. The translation of advertisements and marketing slogans represents a complex form of intercultural communication in which linguistic transfer is inseparable from cultural adaptation and pragmatic transformation. Unlike literary translation, advertising translation is primarily persuasive and commercially driven, aiming to influence consumer behavior within a specific socio-cultural context. This paper examines the evolution of strategies used in translating advertising discourse, with particular emphasis on cultural adaptation, pragmatic transformation, and the concept of transcreation. Drawing on functionalist and culture-oriented translation theories, the study argues that effective advertisement translation prioritizes communicative impact and cultural resonance over formal equivalence. The translator is thus positioned not merely as a linguistic mediator but as a strategic decision-maker operating within cultural, pragmatic, and marketing frameworks.

Advertising discourse occupies a unique position within translation studies due to its hybrid nature: it combines linguistic creativity, cultural symbolism, and persuasive intent. Unlike purely informative texts, advertisements are designed to evoke emotional responses and shape consumer attitudes. As Cook (2001) notes, "Advertising is not simply about conveying information, but about constructing meaning in a way that persuades". This persuasive dimension makes the translation of advertisements particularly sensitive to cultural and pragmatic factors.

Translation in advertising contexts cannot be reduced to lexical substitution or formal correspondence. Instead, it involves the reconfiguration of meaning to suit the expectations, values, and cultural codes of the target audience. In this regard, translation becomes a strategic act of cultural negotiation. As Venuti (2001) states, "Translation is a process that inevitably involves cultural transformation", highlighting the dynamic relationship between language and culture. In advertising translation, this transformation is not incidental but central to communicative success.

Early approaches to translation emphasized formal and semantic equivalence, assuming that meaning could be transferred across languages with minimal alteration. However, such



approaches proved insufficient in the context of advertising, where meaning is often embedded in cultural references, humor, wordplay, and implicit associations.

Nida's concept of dynamic equivalence (1964) introduced a more flexible perspective by suggesting that translation should aim at producing "the closest natural equivalent" in the target language. In advertising, this principle is particularly relevant, as the ultimate goal is to achieve a similar persuasive effect rather than to replicate linguistic form. The slogan must resonate emotionally and culturally with the target audience, even if its structure differs significantly from the source text. For example, global brands often adapt slogans to reflect local cultural values. A literal translation may fail to capture humor, connotation, or cultural symbolism, thereby weakening the intended marketing impact. Consequently, advertising translation frequently requires cultural adaptation, which involves modifying references, imagery, and rhetorical devices to ensure cultural compatibility.

Strategies of cultural adaptation. Cultural adaptation refers to the adjustment of textual elements in order to align them with the norms, values, and expectations of the target culture. In advertising translation, this strategy may involve the substitution of culturally specific references, modification of metaphors, or alteration of social norms reflected in the original message.

Baker (2018) emphasizes that translation decisions must account for cultural differences in conceptualization and communication patterns. Advertising slogans often rely on shared cultural knowledge, including humor, idiomatic expressions, or culturally bound metaphors. When these elements are transferred to a different cultural context, direct translation may result in misinterpretation or loss of persuasive force.

Functionalist approaches, particularly those associated with Skopos theory, reinforce the importance of purpose in translation. According to Reiss and Vermeer (1984), "The prime principle determining any translation process is the purpose (Skopos) of the overall translational action". In advertising, the purpose is persuasion and brand positioning. Therefore, adaptation is justified whenever it serves the communicative goal of influencing consumer behavior.

Cultural adaptation may also involve adjusting visual and symbolic elements accompanying the slogan. Since advertising operates multimodally, linguistic transformation is often coordinated with imagery and design. The translator thus participates in a broader marketing strategy rather than merely translating text.

Pragmatic transformation and transcreation. Beyond cultural adaptation, advertising translation frequently requires pragmatic transformation. Pragmatics concerns the relationship between language and its users, focusing on intention, context, and communicative effect. In advertising, the pragmatic function of a slogan - its ability to persuade, attract attention, and evoke desire - is paramount.

Hatim and Mason (1997) argue that translation involves "a process of pragmatic adjustment" in order to maintain communicative effectiveness. In the case of marketing slogans, this adjustment may include changing tone, register, or rhetorical structure to align with cultural expectations. What is perceived as humorous or persuasive in one culture may be ineffective or inappropriate in another.

The concept of transcreation has emerged to describe this creative and strategic approach to advertising translation. Transcreation goes beyond translation in the traditional



sense, allowing for substantial modification of linguistic form while preserving brand identity and communicative intent. As Torresi (2010) observes, advertising translation often involves "rewriting that adapts the message to the target culture while maintaining promotional effectiveness". In this sense, the translator acts as a copywriter who reconstructs the slogan to achieve maximum impact.

Pragmatic transformation may also involve shifts in politeness strategies, emotional appeal, or cultural taboos. For instance, direct and assertive slogans may be effective in some Western contexts but require softening in cultures that value indirectness and modesty. Thus, pragmatic considerations shape the final form of the translated slogan.

The evolution of strategies in advertising translation redefines the role of the translator. Rather than functioning as a neutral linguistic intermediary, the translator becomes an active participant in brand communication. Toury (1995) emphasizes that translation norms are influenced by the target culture, suggesting that advertising translators operate within market-driven constraints and cultural expectations. The translator must balance brand consistency with cultural relevance, ensuring that the core message remains recognizable while adapting it to local sensibilities. This balancing act requires intercultural competence, creativity, and awareness of marketing principles. In advertising translation, fidelity is measured not by formal similarity but by functional effectiveness.

Slogans are usually created for a specific type of audience. For example, the tagline, *Come Alive! You're In The Pepsi Generation* that Pepsi Cola used in the late 1960s was created for the American audience. At that time, Coca-Cola was running their campaign using images created by Norman Rockwell. While Coca-Cola was after nostalgia and the happy days of old, Pepsi wanted to deliver the message that you are young, you're in and ready for a better future if you're a Pepsi drinker. What Pepsi Cola did not anticipate was how their American slogan would translate into Chinese. When it ported their U.S. advertising campaign to China, their tagline was translated into *Pepsi brings your ancestors back from the grave*. It caused their sales to drop significantly. It was not just the monetary loss. The company incurred brand reputation and time-to-market costs.

The translation of advertisements and marketing slogans illustrates the necessity of cultural adaptation and pragmatic transformation in contemporary translation practice. Formal equivalence alone cannot guarantee communicative success in persuasive discourse. Instead, effective advertising translation prioritizes cultural resonance, pragmatic impact, and functional adequacy.

The emergence of adaptation strategies and transcreation reflects a broader shift in translation studies toward culture-oriented and purpose-driven models. In this framework, the translator assumes the role of an intercultural strategist who mediates between linguistic systems, cultural values, and commercial objectives. Ultimately, the success of advertising translation depends on the translator's ability to integrate linguistic expertise with cultural sensitivity and pragmatic awareness.

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