

## **The Translation of Rhetorical Devices in English Advertisements into Arabic**

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### **Abstract:**

Translation plays a central role in international advertising. It should fulfill the function of the original advertisements and have a similar effect on the target audience. This paper concentrates on the field of rhetoric used in English advertisements and how rhetorical devices are rendered into Arabic. In order to conduct this study, varieties of English advertisements and their translations were analyzed and compared to one another to identify translation strategies used to translate the rhetorical devices in English advertisements into Arabic. The findings brought out that the main translation strategies used to translate rhetorical devices such as alliteration, rhyme, personification, etc. from English into Arabic are free translation and modulation.

**Key words:** Advertisement, Translation, Rhetorical Device, Culture, Effect.

### **1. Introduction**

Today, with the increase of communication in the world, advertisements have found their way into people's life. Contemporary advertising is so widely influential that it becomes part of modern life. Companies compete with each other to sell their products and to reach as many consumers as possible. To achieve this, advertisers use extensive advertising campaigns in different countries. Hence, they demand to translate their advertisements in the target market. English is one of the most important languages spoken worldwide.

Many products and services available in Arab countries are imported from countries that use English as the language of commerce. Once brought to a foreign country, the advertisement must be adequately translated and adjusted to the target culture (Guidère: 2005). In order to sell its products, the company must advertise their products in the language that a potential customer can understand. A translator, with a sound knowledge of both theory and practice of translating advertisements can bring in a translated

advertisement that sells the advertised product (Al-Agha 2006). A big challenge in the translation of advertisements is the maintenance of the effect as well as its attractiveness by using words – style in general. The success of an advertisement could be observed in the increased awareness and an increase in demand on the advertised product. The significance of translation in the world of advertising is that it “enables the company to stand out in a highly competitive market” (Guidéré: 2005).

## **2. Research problem and purpose**

Rhetoric is an essential part of advertising language. It aims to persuade the reader of the advertisement to buy the product being advertised. Rhetorical devices could be difficult to translate; in terms of linguistic correspondence and the effect the advertisement is trying to achieve on the consumer. Because English and Arabic are embedded in different cultures, translating rhetorical devices from English into Arabic requires careful consideration of available schemes. The difficulty lies in that English and Arabic cultures are different and both languages have different rhythms, i.e. rhyming, for example. It is oftentimes difficult for the translator to keep this rhetorical device in Arabic. Thus, he has to give this device into Arabic by way of some other twist which could create a result on the Arabic audience as the English advertisement did. Culture also is a crucial factor in translating advertisements in general and rhetorical devices in particular. This paper investigates the strategies employed to translate advertisements that contain rhetorical devices and its impact on the target audience.

## **3. Review of related literature Culture and translation**

Simply speaking, culture means the whole of a person’s lifestyle. It refers to the patterns of customs, traditions, social habits, values, beliefs and language of a society. Because they evolved together and have been dependent on each other through their history, language and culture cannot be separated. Therefore, “language is the primary means by which culture transmits its beliefs, values and norms” (Lyons 1981:302). Translation is not simply a matter of seeking with similar meanings, but rather the finding of appropriate ways of saying things in another language; but it also implies “a certain

degree of cultural reference in order to be successful in the target culture” (Leonardi & Koutyz 2009:2). According to Newmark (1988:222), “translating the SL (source language) into a suitable form in the TL (target language) is part of the translator’s role in trans-cultural communication.” Thus, when translating, it is significant to look at not just the lexical impact on the TL reader, but also the way in which cultural aspects may be perceived and make translating decisions accordingly (Al-agma 2006).

### **Culture and advertising:**

Culture plays a central role in international advertisements. Objects, ideas and concepts are created in a cultural context and conveyed by linguistic or non-linguistic signs. Gully (1996:7) reveals, “Advertisements are one of the most prominent ‘culture-specific’ forms of discourse”. To be effective, advertisements have to be directed towards people, in which the advertisement appears by using their language and culture. Otherwise, “they will ignore the message, and the advertisement is consequently ignored” (De Mooij 2004:181).

To market the product from one culture to another, companies use extensive advertising. By employing a persuasive advertisement, the company tries to persuade people to buy the new product. In order to achieve this aim, to attract the attention and have persuasive effects, copywriters use “attention-getting devices”, i.e. rhetorical devices. Devices, such as alliteration, puns, personification, etc. are used in advertisements to (1) inform consumers of the product, and (2) to stress its uniqueness.

### **Advertising and translation:**

Translators of advertisements always connect with culture to be effective, i.e. to have an effect on the target audience. However, translators should take into consideration the culture of the target audience when they are translating a western advertisement (here, English advertisements) into Arabic. “Once brought to a foreign country, an advertisement must be adequately translated and it must also be adjusted to the target culture” (Al-agma 2006:20).

As long as culture is concerned, translation is “a recreation, not a production” (Nida 1964:134). He confers that the most important in translation is “the matter, not manner”, i.e. the effect is what the translator should focus on as in

the translation of advertisements. As a special type of texts, the translator of an advertisement should take into consideration the cultural factors and acceptability of the target audience and their reactions. Moreover, he should retain the charm of the advertisement to have a similar effect; persuasive and appealing.

Guidère (2005:4) believes that the translator is “the guarantor of the success or failure of an advertising campaign. He is therefore responsible for the entire communication process”. To make the translation effective, the translator should first analyze the advertisement.

Rhetoric is of course of great importance in advertising. Based on Tom & Eves' (1999) findings, advertisements that contain rhetorical devices were proved more attractive and appealing. The attraction should be adequately preserved in the translation of the advertisement. According to Mcquire & Mick (1996:424), a rhetorical device is “An artful deviation and occurs when an expression deviates from expectation, the expression is not rejected as non-sensical or faulty, the deviation occurs at the level of form and content, and the deviation conforms to a template that is invariant across a variety of content and contexts.”

Tiefenbacher-Hudson (2006:3) suggests, the translator “has to share the same objectives as the team who created the original advertisement; inform, persuade and motivate the target audience”. She goes on to say that the translation of an advertisement is “not just a translation” to be reasonably sure that the translated advertisement will achieve the same objectives as the original. Thus, the importance of the translation of advertisements lies in that communication becomes effective abroad only after the message has been translated.

#### **Difficulties in translating advertisements:**

A good advertisement should serve four functions to have an impact on its readers' attention, interest, desire and action. These functions should be maintained in the target text. In approaching an advertisement, the translator may encounter obstacles to produce an acceptable advertisement that sells to the target audience (Al-gha 2006). Because the language of advertising is different from normal language and has its own style, such obstacles occur at

the linguistic level in terms of style, grammar, new words, and rhetorical devices. In translating rhyme, for instance, the translator should produce a rhyming text in the target language depending on his knowledge and competence. He has to select words that rhyme with each other to retain the effectiveness of the original. In some instances, where he could not keep the same rhetorical device, he, then, may change it with another to preserve the attractiveness of the advertisement as much as possible.

Discussing the problems of translation, Nida (1964) confers equal importance to both linguistic and cultural differences between the source language and the target language. In Arabic culture, for example, it is unacceptable to show all or part of a woman’s body, except for the features of the face, and not to make any hint whatsoever in advertising to the relationship between man and woman. The role of translation, then, is inevitable, i.e. product advertisements need to be translated to reach as many potential customers as possible. Nevertheless, translating advertisements is not only finding lexical equivalents, but rather to be culturally acceptable. This leads to say that “culture, advertising and translation are interrelated and dependent on each other” (Al-agma 2006:16).

#### **4. Research design and methodology**

This was a descriptive research that looked at a sample of translated advertisements that use rhetorical devices. It was conducted to explore the strategies used to translate rhetorical devices in English advertisements into Arabic. The sample under investigation were selected from two primary sources: print media such as magazines and TV commercials. The selection of advertisements was not random. It was based upon matching of English advertisements that contain rhetorical devices and their Arabic translations. To conduct this study, textual analysis of the sample was carried out to identify the rhetorical device in each advertisement. Then, a comparison between the two versions of each advertisement (English and its translation in Arabic) was drawn in order to fulfil the aim of the study.

## 5. Results and discussion:

Rhetoric is used to make the advertisements lively and vivid. As mentioned earlier, a rhetorical device deviates from expectation in artistic way. The function of rhetorical devices in English advertisements is to draw people's attention and to make the advertisement attractive. Through this research, some English advertisements, which contain rhetorical devices, were found translated into Arabic. In analyzing the data, one of the advertisements uses *personification* to make the product lively and attract the audience. It reads, "Lipton tea can do that" (see Appendix). Personification was used to give the 'tea' a characteristic of human being by employing the verb 'can'. The context of this TV commercial is that a music writer, composing a piece of music. He did not manage to compose a good one until he sipped a cup of 'Lipton tea'. In English culture, drinking tea is sure to make one feels comfortable and relaxed. In Arabic culture too, tea – especially green – is considered to impart a nice feeling especially after heavy meals. The Arabic version of this advertisement was 'شاي ليبتون يقدر على كده'. Here, a kind of literal translation is used in the target text without losing the effect intended by keeping the same rhetorical device, i.e. personification. Moreover, the translator uses the colloquial word 'كده' /kida/ instead of 'ذلك' /ðæɪɪk/. By deviating from standard Arabic, the translator tries to make the advertisement more local and easier for the Arab audience to accept this product. Thus, the impact and charm are both maintained.

*Exaggeration* is one of the rhetorical devices used frequently in English advertisements. It is an exaggeration of statements by using adjectives. In a TV commercial for 'Samsonite', the copywriter uses superlatives '*The strongest and lightest Samsonite ever*'. The TT in Arabic is not very much different from the ST. It is translated literally by keeping both, the structure of the sentence and the exaggeration 'حقيبة سامسونايت.. الأقوى والأخف على الإطلاق'. Literal rendering of this advertisement does not twist the meaning and still has an effect on Arabic audience.

The findings bring out that literal translation is not a good choice in rendering advertisements with cultural barriers. '*Add life to life*' (see Appendix) is an advertisement for a telecom company in UAE – du. The pun is used in

English advertisements to leave a deep impression by its readability, wit and humor. Moreover, the pun is also used to produce a ‘particularly rhetorical and pragmatic effect’ on the target audience by using the language creatively. It is the most difficult rhetorical device to render into Arabic, particularly in advertisements. Translators should seek a strategy that can keep the same intended effect without losing smoothness and liveliness of the advertised product. However, the Arabic version of the above advertisement was ‘وتحيا بها الحياة’. Here, the translator managed to render the implied meaning related to joy and happiness in life by looking at the text from another point of view, modulation. The play on words, puns, cannot be translated literally in Arabic ‘يضيف حياة’ that would sound awkward, unnatural and difficult to comprehend the overall idea behind the advertisement. Similarly, comparing the effect of literal translation to that of other strategies, it is quite ridiculous and unnatural.

It is sometimes extremely difficult to find the same rhetorical device in the target language to fully reflect its features such as *rhyme*. If two words have the same sound at the end, they will produce rhyming phrase. This device makes the advertisement sounds pleasant to the ears and therefore is memorable. ‘Love the skin you’re in’, is an advertisement for OLAY. The vowel sound /i/, which occurs at the end of the word (skin) and in the preposition (in), makes a perfect rhyming sound. However, this beauty and creativity disappeared in the Arabic translation ‘اعشقي بشرتك’. The difficulty in keeping the rhyme is that English and Arabic are different, in word forming, style, and grammar and absolutely in pronunciation. Only being freely translated, the effect on the Arabic audience is achieved and hence the message is retained, regardless of the rhetorical device – rhyme.

*Repetition* is a rhetorical device used extensively in English advertisements. Knowingly, the ultimate aim of advertising is to arouse consumers’ desire and make them remember the product. By repeating the word, phrase or sentence, the audience will easily accept a product, service or idea being advertised. To illustrate, ‘TWIX: Pause more. See more’ (see Appendix). It indicates that the consumer would be happier and more joyful while eating TWIX chocolate bars. In the Arabic version of this advertisement, the

translator replaces 'more' by different wording 'وقف لحظة... وعيش الفرحة'. This free translation results in a completely new sentence, but it has the same meaning and effect of the original. Although it deviates from standard Arabic (=وقف - عيش) instead of (قف - عش), the advertisement looks more local to Arabic culture in order to achieve the equivalent effect in translation and, accordingly, the impact and charm to the Arab audience.

## 6. Conclusion:

This study is mainly about translation of rhetorical devices in English advertisements into Arabic. In translating this special type of texts, it is necessary to keep the translated advertisement attractive and appealing to the Arab audience in order to have a similar impact as the English did. Adoption of translation strategies depends on the actual situation, including the whole content, the cultural factor and the rhetorical device employed in a certain advertisement. This paper has shown some of the strategies that can be used according to the rhetorical device employed in the original advertisement. Free translation and modulation proved to be common strategies in translating advertisements. However, literal translation is sometimes used with a great deal of concern and attention to the effect and charm of the original advertisement. These three strategies were shown to retain the meaning, appeal and impact of the original (English advertisement) on the target audience (Arabic viewers). Other translation strategies of advertisement require further investigation. The translator of English advertisements into Arabic, then, is not merely a translator but also a copywriter.

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## Appendix Sample of advertisements

### English advertisement: LIPTON TEA CAN DO THAT



### Arabic advertisement: شاي ليبتون يقدر على كده



English advertisement: ADD LIFE TO LIFE	Arabic advertisement: وتحيا بها الحياة
	

**English advertisement: PAUSE MORE. SEE MORE**



**Arabic advertisement : وقّف لحظة وعيش الفرحة**

