

Translating advertisements – challenges and perspectives

Abstract:

Localisation in advertising is one of the main issues that specialised translators face nowadays. In most of the cases, it is a real challenge to adapt the message of an advertisement to the specificities of a culture, so that it would be both economically and linguistically effective. As any marketing and advertising strategy is directed towards a target audience, the translator's mission is to adapt the promotional texts to various social, cultural, legal and political elements of the potential customers. Besides the particularities related to the target audience's age, gender, religion, marital status, social practices and commercial habits, localization in advertising aims at adapting the texts to the ideology of the political system in the country where the product in question is going to be marketed, the economic parameters and the legal provisions in force. Together with these factors, localizing translators of advertisements have to take into consideration the correspondence between the image and the text or between the length of the lines in the source language and the number of words used in their translation. Therefore, they feel constrained to combine a lot of translation strategies and procedures, in order to render the message of the original text as efficiently as possible. From transference to free translation, they resort to all the available means for correctly and appealingly conveying the same meanings as in the source text. This article aims at providing an overview of all these translation techniques, as well as a contrastive analysis of a corpus of advertising texts in English and Romanian. This analysis will focus on the figures of speech, loan words, calques and other lexical and stylistic means of rendering the same content in both languages, preserving its conciseness and persuasive function. The influence of the English language on Romanian has manifested itself for almost three decades, and advertising is one of the fields in which it is quite obvious, due to the more and more globalized trade, in which English plays a dominant role. In such a context, the Romanian translators face the difficulty of distinguishing between the linguistic competences of the target audience (i.e. the commercials addressed to the youngsters contain more loans and calques from English than those addressed to the elderly) and adapting them to the needs and expectations of the potential customers, making the advertisements sound natural to the specific category it has been intended for. These difficulties add to the already existing ones, since, according to Smith and Klein-Braley, any advertisement is "a microcosm of all the prosodic, pragmatic, syntactic, textual, semiotic and even ludic difficulties to be encountered in translating" (Smith, & Klein-Braley 1997:175). Therefore, the complexity of this phenomenon is worth studying and may provide any researcher in the field of mass-media with rewarding results.

Keywords: Advertising; Translation strategies; Localisation; Contrastive analysis.