

On the Translation of Advertisements: A Comparative Study of English-Persian Verbal Metaphors

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Abstract—Every act of translation deals with some problems and challenges. Translation of advertisements may be more challenging than other types of translations due to the importance of both form and content in cross-cultural translation and audience response. In translating advertisements, the most important issue to be addressed by the translator is the cultural representation of the original texts. However, little attention is accorded into culture-bound parts of advertisements and their translations. The present study aimed to investigate the translation of verbal metaphors from English to Persian. To achieve this aim, a number of home appliance English and Persian TV commercials were recorded from national and international channels. The verbal metaphors from English were compared with their translations into Persian. Moreover, Black's (1962) interaction theory of metaphor was taken to analyze the data. This theory examines whether or not the source and target texts are equivalent from the metaphor perspective. Also, the study investigated the localization, domestication, adaptation, addition, and reduction in the translation process. The verbal metaphors in English advertisements were compared to the Persian translations in line with the interaction theory of metaphor to achieve the above goals of transferring idea from the source language into the target language. The results indicated relatively lack of awareness of cultural approach to the translation of advertisements and revealed the similarity and divergence between the two languages.

Index Terms—advertisements, verbal metaphor, translation, culture, domestication, localization, adaptation

I. INTRODUCTION

More recently, there has been a growing interest in metaphor in a number of researches (e.g., Amouzadeh, 2002; Aristotle, 1952; Barcelona, 2003; Black, 1962; Coëgnarts & Kravanja, 2012; Forceville, 1996; Goodman, 1968; Hashemian & Forouzandeh, 2012; Kaplan, 1990; Kittay, 1987). A metaphor is the result of the interaction between two different domains, that is, one considers one domain in terms of another domain. The past few decades have witnessed a great deal of research on metaphor. In fact, metaphor has influenced communication of knowledge for centuries. It is obvious that people have applied metaphor to all walks of life such as politics, economy, and the entertainment industry. As stated by Gibbs (2008), metaphor is not simply an ornamental aspect of language, but a fundamental scheme by which people conceptualize the world and their own activities. It sets two unlike things side by side and makes one see the resemblance between them. Different scholars subscribe to this phenomenon of languages, namely metaphor, to different degrees and in different ways. Nevertheless, it seems useful to attempt to relate each approach to metaphor which is an essentially feature of the creativity of language.

In line with above discussion, it is notable to say that this study aimed at investigating intercultural relations involved in the translation process of advertisement verbal metaphors. Translation as intermediary role between two cultures plays a great role in creating meaning. It is also proper here to refer to the problematic parts of translating advertisements due to certain constrains of money. Translating as an art demands highly creative and rewarding exercise; however, there are constrains such as length and existing material. But if translators have all the above, they should acquire the source and target cultures and languages when translating. Translators are supposed to handle translating metaphors in advertisement in a way to present a product that is perceived as an original and not as a second-rate translation. According to Forceville (1996), pictorial metaphors play an important role in guiding the translator to find signs and culture codes which can achieve this objective. Moreover, Ghaneh and Rezae (2013) assert that pictorial metaphors affect the verbal metaphor interpretation and translation; moreover, they believe that colors have considerable effects and roles in advertisements. So, it is inferred that a translator should be able to achieve all the information needed for translation to transfer and recreate the meaning for the target language. It is believed that where the ubiquity of metaphor is made apparent, its reflection in most of our everyday language and rather than being left behind on the outskirts of linguistic analysis is proved. Therefore, advertising language and non-linguistics content of

advertising message have over the years received the attention of many scholars, namely Williamson (1978) and Dyer (1982).

In addition, translators should employ linguistic means to manipulate visual materials. For example, the translator has to change the statement into a question or reduce word's idea that could lead the target receiver to make his or her deduction. Translators are supposed to apply methods used to target new consumer market. Translators have to find different angles and methods to address the needs and to attract the attention of consumers in the new millennium. In the current study, we have applied Black's (1962) interaction theory of metaphor to examine whether or not the source and target texts are equivalent from the metaphor perspective. In addition, this study investigated the localization, domestication, adaptation, addition, and reduction in translation process. The verbal metaphors in English advertisements were compared to their Persian translations in line with Black' (1962) interaction theory of metaphor to achieve the above goals of transferring idea from the source language into the target language. To achieve this aim, a number of *Home Appliance* English and Persian TV commercials were recorded from national and international channels. As this research is a descriptive study, the researchers chose the utmost TV commercials among them and then extended the results for the other. So, the verbal metaphors from English were compared with their translations into Persian. In fact, translation is undoubtedly an act of intercultural communication, and the results indicated relatively lack of awareness of the cultural approach to the translation of advertisements and revealed the similarity and divergence between the two languages. In sum, this study investigated the translatability of verbal metaphors in advertisements and analyzed the factors that influence the verbal metaphors' translation procedures.

II. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

As indicated in the Introduction section, the emergence of metaphor as an omnipresent principle of language creates not only a remarkable transformation in business, but also in all walks of life. Particularly, advertisements, as a technical and practicable means of communication in order to transfer their verbal and pictorial messages successfully throughout the world, are not exempt from the conceptual metaphor. Furthermore, companies in general and advertisers in particular demand a key commercial tool for transferring their products and verbo-pictorial messages. Here, the advent of translation paves the way for communication between/among companies and advertisers.

It is obvious that many people have commented over the years on ads and billboards in seminars, lectures, papers, and during conferences (Amouzadeh & Tavangar, 2004; Enschoot, Hoeken, & Mulken, 2005; Forceville, 2002; Ghaneh & Rezaei, 2013; Hashemian & Fadaee, 2013). Among those researchers, Forceville (1996) started to study the role of metaphor in advertisements, mostly on pictorial forms. He grounds his account of pictorial metaphor on Black's (1962) interaction theory of metaphor. Forceville claims that despite minor shortcomings of this theory, the interaction theory raised by Black is the most satisfactory theory of metaphor. He also uses of two distinct subjects of metaphor primary subject and secondary subject.

Shehab (2011) explored the issue of translated advertising brochures in terms of translation strategies and linguistic inaccuracies by examining a corpus of 35 English-Arabic brochures promoting personal care products. Specifically, the study identified the translation strategies adopted in translating advertising headlines, body copies, and images. It also focused on a few remarks of linguistic inaccuracies, and the researcher attempted to clarify the possible causes in order to help translators produce more adequate translations. Shehab applied the descriptive and analytic approach to put the collected data under investigation. For more concrete analysis, the researcher interviewed 18 personal care market staffs to enhance the quality of the study. The analysis demonstrated that translating advertising brochures does not always involve giving the direct equivalent meaning in the target language, but translators sometimes have to manipulate the source texts to produce readable and acceptable target texts. Overall, the findings showed that the strategies ranged from complete transference of the source language to complete substitution or adaptation.

DeMooij (2004) states that "translating advertising copy is like painting the tip of an iceberg. What you see are the words, but there is a lot behind the words that must be understood to transfer advertising from one culture to another" (p. 179). He adds that people understand the world differently because they live in different societies with different languages and cultures. So, consumer behavior and the way consumers communicate are heavily dependent on cultural values. He believes that one important influence of culture is on the consumer's needs, motives, and emotion. He claims that translation from one culture cannot necessarily be appropriate for another culture. In this paper, the researcher introduced the consumers as products of their cultures. DeMooij (2004) asserts that advertising has two kinds of contexts, namely low-context communication and high-context communication. Finally, he states that "advertising consists of concepts, ideas, copy, and visuals. Therefore, a concept or an idea that is relevant for one culture is not necessarily relevant for others" (p. 196). Also, According to Lakoff and Johnson (1980):

The most fundamental values in a culture will be coherent with the metaphorical structure of the most fundamental concepts in the culture. They explain that different cultures classify things of reality differently, so it is often very difficult to translate from one language into another. (p. 22)

Consequently, Baker (2001) states that culture will be transferred via translation; therefore, it seems that English advertisements are full of examples of metaphors which are culture-bound, and this fact makes the mission of translators problematic. According to Newmark (1988), "whilst the central problem of translation is the overall choice of a translation method for a text, the most particular problem is the translation of metaphor" (p. 120). In fact, different

types of metaphors can be encountered among verbo-pictorial advertisement metaphors. So, the recognition of the most common metaphor in advertisements and the application of appropriate method for translating create a great dilemma for translators. Overall, based on Black's interaction theory (1962) of advertisements, the researcher will review the advertisements translations in order to see whether it is possible to transfer the message and metaphorical concepts from English into Persian.

The present study specifically aims at defining the cultural aspects of metaphor in advertisements in the two cultures of SL and TL to demonstrate whether the message of the SL metaphor has been transferred sufficiently by appropriate choice of verbal metaphor or possibly appropriate choice of pictorial metaphor as a means of compensation in TL, and whether they posit the same sense and meaning to the target audience as these are inferred from SL.

In sum, the translator should consider not only translation process, but also take into account the cultural values and directory goals of advertising.

The followings are the research questions for the present study:

1. Are advertisement verbal metaphors translatable?
2. Are there any factors that influence verbal metaphors' translation procedures?

Consequently, the subsequent null hypotheses are formulated:

- H₀₁: Advertisement verbal metaphors are not translatable.
- H₀₂: There are not any factors that influence verbal metaphors' translation procedures.

III. DATA ANALYSIS

All over the world, people prefer to have a complete breakfast. This LG set gives all the things needed for preparing a complete breakfast. Here, we first analyze the English TV commercial. *LG breakfast set is wife!*

Firstly, there is a soundtrack with the theme of love. Secondly, it shows a very beautiful wife in the kitchen making breakfast. Moreover, there is a gentle air coming inside through windows. Thirdly, a man says this motto *breakfast set is wife*. Finally, the husband comes happily and kisses his wife and looks at the breakfast satisfactorily. It is inferred by this TV commercial that all things are collected together to achieve a desirable result. The video shows a satisfied housewife and husband, love and happiness, perfect housewife and kitchen. Then, it is notable that a wife in the English culture has these objectives such as luxury, exquisite, temptress, love, relaxation, life, kindness for a husband. So, this breakfast set is similar to a wife as a metaphorical statement. According to Black's (1962) interaction theory of metaphor, this commercial gives the audience all the nuances of the message that A IS B. A metaphorical statement has two distinct subjects: the primary subject and secondary subject. For example, MAN IS WOLF, MAN is the primary subject and WOLF is the secondary subject. Here, Black (1962) believes that metaphor obtains at the level of discourse. Therefore, *LG breakfast set is wife* demonstrates the primary subject as *LG breakfast set* and the secondary subject as *wife*. Here, we should thank the pictorial metaphor for interpreting this verbal metaphor. In fact, the characteristic of nonverbal metaphor in this TV commercial is a great help in the distribution of primary and secondary subjects. It is obvious that Forceville (1996) is right about this statement that verbal metaphor is merely possible without pictorial metaphor. Because most elements of this verbal metaphor are mostly inferred via pictures, colors, and music. The color that is used here for all the parts of this video is red, black, and white, green. Wife wears a very nice clothes involving little skirt, tops, and high heels shoes all in white. Her makeup is very fresh and mostly in red as lip line. She has a very happy smile on her lips. The view outside the windows is the nature mostly in green and red flowers. The husband wears a suit, ready to go to work, very happy, looking out to the window, his face absorbing the freshness of nature, he looks with affection at his wife, sends her a kiss to show the transference of freshness and love. Wife here is considered as the nature that gives life and energy to humans. The receiver of this TV commercial understands that *LG breakfast set* will give you all these elements which the wife gives to the home and the most important part, to the husband. In this English advertisement, the women play a significant role in attracting consumers by all her features, namely beauty, kindness, liveliness, love-affairs, and so on. So, as a perfect wife brings a comfortable life and time, then a perfect and complete LG breakfast set will bring us perfect life and time as much as a wife. As far as this advertisement is worldwide, particularly Iranian consumers express their demands towards these products; translation paves the way for consumers to view the products the same as the original.

This part will focus on the process of translation. Persian translation here is considered Iranian with the Persian language and culture. As for the above discussion, the equivalent for *LG breakfast set is wife* is *ست صبحانه ی تکمیل، کدبانوی کامل*, "set sobhaneye takmil, kadbanooye kamel." Here, not only the verbal metaphor is not transferred via translation perfectly, but also the pictorial metaphor is not adapted to the Persian language and culture. Because the Iranians are Islamic religious, the receiver in this TV commercial has not been acquired by a proper scene for the set of breakfast. Both kinds of metaphor (i.e., verbal and pictorial) are culture-bound; therefore, in the process of translation, all the categories of culture can influence the translation process. The first and most interesting factor here is color. The Iranian advertiser should follow the standards of advertising which are mostly based on their Islamic religion. As a result, blue, green, and white are preferred to the use of red, black, and white to show love affairs and power. In the Persian culture advertising, men have been used rather than women. Thus, their advertising campaigns have gender limitation. It is not also allowed for the Iranian culture to show love affairs between women and men in TV commercials. So, they mostly use children and teenagers for love and affection in the case of friendships, not romance.

But these pictorial metaphors have not been adapted to Persian culture. Therefore, the motto as "ست صبحانه ی تکمیل،" could not transfer the equal message of the English advertisement. According to Newmark's (1988) two types of translation (i.e., semantic and communicative), this translation is not only literal translation, but also communicative translation. The translator totally changes the style and linguistic rules of the metaphor during the translation process. It seems that metaphor is merely translated as metaphor from the source to the target. In fact, advertisers expect the Persian receivers to analyze the data and information the same as the English receivers.

In sum, the word *کدبانوی کامل* / *kadbanoooye* nearly brings this idea to the mind of the receivers with the Persian culture that mother is perfect in all walks of life for her children, and this understanding demands as many Persian TV commercials a unique family involving of mother and father and their children to gather and to show the mother as perfect part in the family. She is the one who shoulders all responsibilities to present an easy and happy life for her family. It is suggested here to replace the *کدبانوی کامل، ست صبحانه ی تکمیل،* / "set sobhaneye takmil, kadbanoooye kamel" with *ست صبحانه ی ال جی* *کدبانوی شماس*. Here, it is more translated metaphorically than before. It also can handle the soul of the metaphor and the message. Moreover, it is translated linguistically. There are two sides here, according to Black's (1962) interaction theory: A IS B is equal to *ست صبحانه ی ال جی* = A and *کدبانوی شماس* = B. Overall, in this way of translation, with proper pictorial metaphors, the message is transferred metaphorically and equally to the original.

In sum, our findings show that these things are collected because their sets give us a complete breakfast. Secondly, each of these things does a special work and is not complete alone. So, they are summed with each other; therefore, their set gives us a complete breakfast. Thirdly, this set performs as perfect as a wife or *کدبانوی شماس*.

IV. CONCLUSION

This analysis from the linguistic view shows that translation and recreation of meaning from English to Persian may, on the one hand, result in new understanding of some sorts, either in the form or in the meaning. On the other hand, as regards the relationship between text and image, it is clear that the image, namely pictorial metaphors, often play an important role in transferring the message of verbal metaphors. In this respect, the text-image relation is similar to that in Forceville's (1996) verbo-pictorial metaphors. In this study, it is argued that some elements may occur in texts, some in visuals, and some in both, leading to a much more complex interrelation between the two.

Despite the interest in metaphors and their translation, particularly the linguistic aspect of metaphor, translating metaphors in advertisements still causes problems. The present study shows that knowledge in and application of the metaphor theory can facilitate the translation of metaphorical advertisements texts from English to Persian. The verbal metaphor sample and its translation process clearly confirm the part of hypothesis put forward in this work that verbal metaphor in advertisement is translated under the influence of many fundamental factors. These influential factors include culture, image, and music.

Culture has a number of categories as ecology, material, social, organization, and gesture and habit. These factors are very different from one language and culture to another language and culture. Furthermore, in translation of verbal metaphors in advertisement, adaptation and domestication should take into account to provide natural products. It is demonstrated that in the translation of verbal metaphors, the translator somehow loses the soul of the metaphor and mainly focuses on the message. This act of translating may be the result of the target language rules and convention, on the other hand, lack of enough knowledge and information about the source language and the target language leads to a weak translation. The ideal verbal metaphor translation, especially for advertisements, is the one in which a metaphor from English to Persian is an equivalent sentence or word—not necessary metaphorical. In sum, it should be short, easy to read and understand, and meaningful.

Metaphorical language goes beyond the surface meanings of texts or images in order to establish texts and images from one language and culture to another language and culture to present ideas and messages transparently. The language of advertisements rests under the blanket of metaphorical language. All over the world, people conceptualize ideas and messages in advertisement by means of metaphorical concepts because they experience one thing in terms of another thing to grab the gist of advertisement's designers (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980). Therefore, the re-creation between text and image plays a significant role in transferring messages from one language and culture in to another one. In connection to this, an example of metaphorical statement which elaborates the role of metaphors and consumer's perception.

Transferring message from one language and culture into another demands adaptation to the second language and culture. But analyzed data showed that in most of the cases pictorial metaphors which are culture-bound was not adopted to target culture. So, target consumer would infer the message totally different.

Another important fact which brings the problem for transferring the message from one language and culture into another is language rules and convention. Here, the individual rules and conventions limit the language of translation to create the source language and culture for the target language and culture. For instance, where a word brings smile on the face of consumer in source language, it may not affect the consumer in target language in the same way.

Overall, the results showed that it is merely possible to have the same effects and messages for target consumers, although the analyzed data for both pictures and texts show that they mostly transfer the message not the spirit of the advertisement.

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