Chapter 9

Figures of Speech in the Translation of Audiovisual Advertisements

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ABSTRACT

Effective translation of figures of speech in persuasive texts is crucial but complicated. Different cultural worldviews may sometimes cause misunderstandings due to vagueness in language, which otherwise may be comprehended through context or contextual associations. This study will address the following research questions: which figures of speech are the most common in advertising discourse; which translation techniques and procedures are used to render the various figures of speech in small and large sized target countries; is there a relation between country size, as measured by population, and the adaptation level of international marketing campaigns to the intended audience. The authors of the study hypothesise that international advertising campaigns are adapted through translation to a lesser degree in small sized target countries and vice versa, in large sized countries. The findings of the current study show that most probably there are other factors affecting the choice of translation techniques in audiovisual advertisements.

INTRODUCTION

The multimodality (audiovisual content) may influence the consumer’s attitude towards a particular product. However, it has been argued that the language has the biggest impact. Different advertising campaigns generally employ target culture/language-oriented and source culture/language-oriented translation techniques. In the age of global economy, the success of international marketing campaigns partially depends on efficiently produced and adapted advertisements. The figures of speech employed in advertisements are primarily selected for their persuasive effects. In texts for commercial uses, it is
Figures of Speech in the Translation of Audiovisual Advertisements

efficient to render the information through the perspective of globalisation. However, the authors of the present study maintain the view that localised advertisements are more persuasive and acceptable in target cultures.

This research focuses on various figures of speech, such as ellipsis, euphemism, hyperbole, metaphor, personification, etc. The effective translation of figures of speech in persuasive texts is crucial but complicated. Although various translation techniques and procedures may be applied, there is no unified taxonomy of translation techniques for rendering figures of speech in any kind of discourse. The translation of metaphors and similes has received the attention of many researchers who have proposed different translation techniques and procedures (Newmark, 1988; Larson, 1998; Toury, 1995). Other figures of speech have been analysed to a lesser extent due to their relatively uncomplicated translation. Some studies have been conducted on the translation of persuasive elements, the figures of speech being one of them (Leppihalme, 1997; Smith, 2002, 2009; Vaicenioniene, 2006; Liubiniene, Andriunaite, 2006; Rumsiene, 2012; Poskiene, 2013; Ulvydiene, 2014). However, to the best of the knowledge of the authors of this study, there has been no research to comprehensively overview and focus on the translation of figures of speech in advertising comparing large- and small-sized countries.

The theoretical framework is based on Skopos theory (Vermeer, 1996, 2001), theory of context (Givon, 1989) and functionalist approach (Reiss, 2000; Nord, 2001). The empirical analysis is grounded on the mixed method approach combining the qualitative and quantitative methods. The frequency analysis is employed to determine the numbers of figures of speech in audiovisual advertisements. The qualitative method in this research is employed to disclose the peculiarities of meaning rendered through figures of speech in advertising discourse in target cultures.

This study, therefore, addresses the following research questions: which figures of speech are the most common in advertising discourse; which translation techniques and procedures are used to render the various figures of speech in small- and large-sized target countries; is there a relation between the country size, as measured by population, and the adaptation level of international marketing campaigns to the intended audience.

The authors of the study hypothesise that international advertising campaigns are adapted through translation to a lesser degree in small-sized target countries and vice versa in large-sized countries. The paper intends to provide evidence that localisation of advertisements is more common in large-sized countries like Poland and Russia, while advertisements remain source culture-oriented in small-sized countries like Lithuania and Latvia.

The design of the research is comparative including small-sized and large-sized countries and involves the analysis of the translation of figures of speech in international advertising campaigns of world famous products. Due to the current prevalence of advertisements in the audiovisual mode, the analysis is restricted to this particular mode. The discussion is independent of the language pairs, but Lithuanian, Latvian, Polish and Russian instances of translations of figures of speech will be used to illustrate specific points. The outcomes of the study may provide helpful implications on the most appropriate and successful translation techniques and procedures in rendering elements of figurative language in advertising.

BACKGROUND

The theoretical framework is primarily based on Skopos theory (Vermeer, 1996, 2001), theory of context (Givon, 1989) and functionalist approach (Reiss, 2000; Nord, 2001). Vermeer’s Skopos theory adopts a