

Advertising Translation for Algerian Children: Domestication or Foreignization?

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[In memory of Pr. Mohammed YAHIA TENE,
may Allah have him in his vast heaven]

Abstract:

Since Algeria has adopted globalization, children's exposure to advertising becomes very extensive and is ever increasing. Moreover, advertising directed at them is everywhere: on television, on radio, on billboards, in newspapers, in magazines, increasingly on the Internet, and even in schools. Considering that globalization really imposed a new way of living to the Algerian society as a whole, it's only natural that children as much as adults would take interest in foreign products which are often presented to them through translation.

Advertising translation for children is obviously a specific process given the very nature of this social category and its cognitive structure. Children are commonly described as naive, gullible, suggestible, impressionable, and overly trusting, and like all the children in the world, Algerian ones begin life as novices in every domain and can thrive only through voracious consumption of the expertise that is available in their culture and language. On the other hand, they develop a high degree of curiosity which makes them be easily attracted to foreign products as these are, to their perception, new, exotic, strange, different, etc.

So how can a translator manage with this particular behavior in order to make sure that the Algerian child understands the message of the advertisement made elsewhere? How making he get so impressed by the product that he'll damn his parents until they buy it to him ?! Which translation strategy would be more appropriate for this purpose: domestication by using local aspects while translating an advertisement to keep in the familiar atmosphere of the child or arousing his curiosity by foreignization with new ideas and concepts?

The extent to which Algerian children are indeed vulnerable to advertising translation is an empirical question that is best answered through empirical research. Our focus centers on television advertising because this is the most frequent medium through which Algerian children are exposed to advertising.

The aim of this paper is to describe ways that basic research on our children's cognitive development, special behavior and way of life might lead to find efficient strategies, techniques and methods of advertising translation for them.

Key words: Advertising translation; Algerian child; Behavior; Cognition; TV advertisements; Advertising process; Translation strategy. Domestication Vs Foreignization.

Résumé:

Les enfants se voient de plus en plus exposés au phénomène de la publicité depuis que l'Algérie est entrée dans la mondialisation. La publicité ciblant l'audience infantile est partout : à la télévision, à la radio, en affichage, dans les journaux et les magazines, plus encore sur internet et même à l'école. Considérant que la mondialisation a réellement imposé un nouveau mode de vie à la société algérienne en général, il

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est bien naturel que les enfants, autant que les adultes, s'intéressent aux produits étrangers qui leur sont présentés par voie de traduction.

La traduction publicitaire pour enfants requiert évidemment un processus spécifique étant donné la nature même de cette catégorie sociale ainsi que sa structure cognitive. Les enfants sont communément qualifiés de naïfs, crédules, suggestibles, impressionnables et trop confiants. Et comme tous les enfants dans le monde, l'Algérien fait ses premiers pas dans la vie en tant que novice en toute chose. Ce novice ne peut se développer qu'en s'imprégnant des valeurs de sa langue-culture. Par ailleurs, nos enfants font preuve de beaucoup de curiosité à l'égard des produits étrangers qui représentent à leurs yeux : la nouveauté, l'exotisme, l'insolite, la différence, etc.

Comment ferait donc le traducteur pour gérer, dans l'opération traduisante, ce comportement particulier afin de s'assurer que l'enfant algérien comprenne le message publicitaire "venu d'ailleurs" ? Comment parvenir à impressionner l'enfant au point où il va damner ses parents à lui acheter le produit ? ! Quelle stratégie de traduction serait la plus appropriée : Une traduction "domestiquée", c.-à-d., à tendance cibliste faisant usage des aspects locaux dans le message publicitaire afin de laisser l'enfant dans son environnement familier, ou bien, le traducteur optera-t-il pour la "défamiliarisation" ; une traduction sourcière piquant la curiosité de l'enfant avec des idées nouvelles et des concepts novateurs.

Le degré de vulnérabilité des enfants algériens face aux publicités traduites est une question empirique à laquelle on ne peut bien répondre que par une recherche empirique. Dans la présente intervention, nous allons nous concentrer sur la publicité télévisée car la télévision est le médium le plus

présent dans la vie de nos enfants et donc, à travers lequel, ils se trouvent le plus exposés aux spots publicitaires.

L'objectif de cette communication est également de démontrer qu'une simple recherche sur le développement cognitif de nos enfants, leur comportement particulier ainsi que leur mode de vie peut conduire à trouver des stratégies, des techniques et des méthodes de traduction publicitaire à leur intention.

Mots-clés: Traduction publicitaire ; Enfant algérien ; Comportement ; Cognition ; Publicités télévisées ; Procédé publicitaire ; Stratégie de traduction ; Familiarisation Vs Défamiliarisation.

Introduction

Most children have their first encounter with advertising messages while they are watching television. It is common for children to begin television viewing by the time that they are two years of age, long before they have developed the reading ability that is required to make advertising in print media accessible.

We all know that Algerian children are television addicts especially that Algerian channels and Arab ones in general have undergone a real transformation over the last 20 years. It is a fact, once our children have settled themselves down in front of the TV, there's no talking to them! Thus, just like the family, the school or the friends, TV plays a socializing role in the life of the child, and because children lack the cognitive skills and abilities of adults, they do not understand commercial messages in the same way as do more mature audiences. Hence, they are more susceptible to the influence of advertising.

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So, as long as children are far too easily influenced, there should be parameters to take into account when translating advertisements into their mother tongue.

What are these parameters? And must they be based on the concept of domestication or on the one of foreignization?

Children and TV advertisements

Advertising designers are getting more and more interested in children. We must admit that a child is more attentive and does better memorize commercial messages as he likes watching them, is impregnated with them and even learns by heart a few passages from them. Commercial messages on TV are a way of integration of children. They can share their feelings and emotions with the members of their family or the friends who are watching TV with them. Children also try to identify themselves to the other children who are shown on the advertisement.

So we remark that children adopt a special behavior where TV advertisements become a sort of ritual: They know at what time and during which programs their favorite advertisements are shown, so they wait for them, and are happy each time they are repeated. Repetition makes the child feel controlling the real. Little by little, he gets through the advertisement and repetition becomes a pleasure.

- The pleasure of waiting for the favorite commercial messages of the child brings to him satisfaction and security regarding the repeated habits.

- The pleasure of participating by singing the music of the advertisement, repeating the words he hears and movements he sees. The child always feels the same amusement to watch again what he has already learnt by heart and the pleasure is more intense when he is with his brothers, sisters or friends. There is a collective emotion.

Hence, we can say that advertisements bring to the child a reassuring vision of the world: all the problems have a solution and the world which is described is the world of happiness that they wish for.

Advertising processes used to attract children

Advertising designers use processes targeting children's sensitivity and emotion. These processes are sometimes based on the principle of reproducing the child's daily universe and sometimes on the principle of making the child feel like in a wonderful world. In both cases, the most common theme or appeal that is employed is persuasive and consists of associating the product with fun and happiness, rather than providing any factual product-related information.

Children's diet and eating behaviors represent a substantial amount of the advertisements designed for them, reflecting the focus of public policy both overseas and in Algeria. Children's exposure to food and beverage TV advertising influences on their knowledge, preferences, attitudes and behaviors. We see for example how breakfast habits of Algerian children have completely changed. Nowadays, a lot of them have a cereal bowl instead of a shop of milk with biscuits or a slice of bread and butter or jam like before. This is

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certainly due to their wish to resemble to their pairs of the West, and actually, cereals are more beneficial for their growth.

The concept of the family is also very exploited by advertising designers to attract the child and to make him identify himself to the actors of the advertisement. The family is sacred in Arab Muslim societies like our and we easily notice this strategy on the Algerian channel's advertisements for *the dessert cream "Bnina"*, *the custard "Nouara"*, *the juice "amila"*, and so on.

Other processes of attraction are also used in children's TV advertising like to include the appearance of characters, i.e., the child's favorite animals or heroes to help him identify the product. Who does not remember FLASH the big hero of a generation of Algerian children? This hero was associated to a beverage in a plastic tube with different flavours.

Translating TV advertisements for children: principles and constraints

The act of translation is understood here not in the traditional normative sense, but rather as a semiotic concept. Thus, translation is understood as part of a transfer mechanism - that is, the strategy by which textual and iconographical models of one system are transferred to another.

In this strategy, certain products are produced within the target system, which relate in various and complex ways to products of the source system. Hence, the final product of the act of translation is *the result of the relationship* between a source system and a target

system, a relationship that is itself determined by a certain hierarchy of semiotic constraints. (see Jakobson 1959, Toury 1980a, Even-Zohar 1981)

The translator of children's advertisements can permit himself great liberties regarding the text and the icons. That is, the translator is permitted to manipulate both of them in various ways by changing, enlarging, or abridging them or by deleting or adding to them.

Nevertheless, all these translational procedures are permitted only if conditioned by the translator's adherence to the following two principles on which translation for children is based:

1- An adjustment of the advertisement to make it appropriate and useful to the child, in accordance with what society regards (at a certain point in time) as educationally "good for the child"; and

2- An adjustment of icon, characterization, and language to prevailing society's perceptions of the child's ability to watch and comprehend.

These usually complementary principles determine each stage of the translation process. They dictate decisions concerned with the advertisements' selection procedure (which one will be chosen for translation), as well as with permissible manipulation. They also serve as the basis for the systemic affiliation of the commercial messages. But most important of all, in order to be accepted as a translated advertisement for children, to be affiliated with the children's system, the final translated product must adhere to these two principles, or at least not violate them.

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However constraints of the children's system during the process of translation can be manifested in the following aspects:

- The affiliation of the advertisement to existing models because of the general tendency to accept only the conventional and the well known;
- The integrality of the advertisement's primary and secondary models,
- The degree of complexity and sophistication of the advertisement;
- The adjustment of the advertisement to ideological and didactic purposes; and to the child's way of living.

Domestication vs. Foreignization: looking for a method

Translation of TV advertisements does not only involve giving the equivalent meaning in the Target Language (TL), rather it involves *considering the values* of the TL and the Source Language (SL) whether they are linguistic values or cultural ones. Some translators prefer changing the SL values and making them readable for the TL audience. This is termed *Domestication*. Others, on the other hand, prefer keeping the values of the SL and exposing audience to them. This is termed *Foreignization*.

In the case of advertising translation for Algerian children, there are certainly a lot of values to which the translator should pay attention. Values extracted from their *religion*, Islam, others extracted from their

civilization, Arab and Berber one, and values they have inherited from their ancestors, the *traditions* and *customs*.

The debate on whether to use *Domestication* or *Foreignization* has attracted the attention of translation theorists for long time in the domain of literature before advertising. Venuti discussed those two techniques in his book '*The Translator Invisibility*', 1995. He carried out research on translation in the Anglo-American culture and found out that most publishers advocate *Domestication* as it makes the translation-reader friendly. The trend is to choose texts from other cultures that appeal to the Anglo-American values. For Venuti, this method is making the translator "*invisible*", on the one hand, and implies "*an ethnocentric reduction of the foreign text to target-language cultural values*" (Venuti, 1995: 20), on the other hand. By *Domestication*, the Anglo-American culture imposes its own '*hegemonic*' power upon other minor cultures.

To avoid such cultural problems, Venuti recommends applying *Foreignization* as a solution for cultural clashes in terms of translation. *Foreignization* was introduced by Schleiermacher. He defined it as "*the translator...moves the reader towards the writer*" (as cited in Hatim, 2001:46). If *Foreignization* is applied to a translation, the TL readers will feel that the translator is "*visible*" and they will tell "*they are reading a translation*" (Munday, 2001:147). This solution would recover the reputation of translators and highlight their importance according to Venuti.

We believe that these theoretical strategies are absolutely applicable on TV advertising for Algerian

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children. If we had for example to translate an advertisement on British biscuits into Arabic to be shown on the Algerian TV channels and that the original advertisement features a happy family having the famous British five o'clock tea, the translator may hesitate concerning the scene and the scenario he's going to use in the target language. In fact, the Algerian child would have biscuits on the afternoon snack with milk rather than with tea or any other beverage. So, if the translator keeps on the scene and scenario of the tea, he's going to translate on the basis of *Foreignization*, but if he chooses to adapt the advertisement to the Algerian eating habits, he is in the model of *Domestication*.

Actually, the translator does not stand in between two cultures, but he or she is rooted in one culture, and by having access to the other, s/he has cognitively a part in both. The two culture systems make contact within his or her mind, in other words: the translator's cognition as an expert reaches out into two different cultures, and into various fields of scientific and general knowledge.

Concerning the scenario of the TV advertisement, the translator's approach may be based on hermeneutics. Hermeneutics as a language philosophy discusses the possibility of understanding foreignness, for instance strange or unconventional aspects in texts. However, this also includes the receiver himself. What perhaps is difficult to understand for an Algerian child might be totally clear for another one, who had traveled the world and already seen certain things, or knows the habits of a given population because he had the opportunity to mix with it, and by the fact, has access to the respective way

of living. What the child understands depends on what he already knows. The main problem in this method, therefore, is the child's level of knowledge and ideology, as an immature person, that will be activated by the advertisement input.

Conclusion

Children must acquire two key information-processing skills in order to achieve "mature" comprehension of advertising messages. They must be able to attribute persuasive intent to advertising and to apply a degree of skepticism that is consistent with that knowledge to their interpretation of advertising messages. Each of these capabilities develops over time as a function of cognitive growth in conceptual and analytical ability. Children are a vulnerable audience, with limited information-processing capabilities that constrain their early understanding of the nature and purpose of television advertising. Because of these limitations, young children are more easily persuadable than are older children or adults. They are more trusting of advertising claims and appeals, and they are more susceptible to commercial persuasion.

The translator of TV advertisements can determine which scenario passages would be included or excluded, which elements would be added or omitted, and which would remain, albeit with changed functions. By leaving out some elements and changing the functions of others, the translator has managed to adjust the advertisement to prevalent models of the target system: this is *Domestication* very recommended to protect the culture of our children.

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We may conclude that translators of advertisements should be aware of and reflect on the problems inherent in their work. Advertising translation is not only a question of language transfer, of extraordinary icons and of modern wording. Even ideology reflects in the formulations. Translation for Algerian children is a question of understanding the commercial message and the cultural background, and of deciding about the concrete language structures and icons to be used. This implies decisions on coherence, style, culture, habits, religion, preferences, etc. all according to the child's cognition.

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