Camelia Andreea CHIRILĂ
Universitatea *Constantin Brâncoveanu* - Piteşti

PECULIARITIES IN TRANSLATING ADVERTISING

Abstract *: Starting with the early '90s Romania has become a large outlet for many international companies bringing their new products into our society. Any new product manufactured by a widely known company needs a solid informational support which, as a rule, is provided by advertising. Once brought to a foreign country an advertisement must be adequately translated and it must also be adjusted to the target culture.*

In translating advertising, translators are expected to take responsibility for the final form of an advertisement. Globalization of the translation business sometimes means providing full marketing services in addition to translation and interpreting. Therefore, in the marketing of goods and services across the cultural boundaries, an understanding of culture and semiotics that goes well beyond both language and design is involved.

I decided to conduct this research in the field of advertisement translation, as I strongly believe that advertisements represent challenging sentences for the consumer-oriented text translator. The purpose in writing this paper was to study the language of advertisements and to single out the translation difficulties of advertisements. The advertisements presented were selected from fields such as audio/video devices, computers, cars, food, postal services, alcoholic drinks, communications and so on.

Key-words*: translation, advertisement, target culture, market*

Part I - History of Advertising

Starting with the early '90s, Romania has become a large outlet for many international companies bringing their new products into our society. Any new product manufactured by a widely known company needs a solid informational support which, as a rule, is provided by advertising. Once brought to a foreign country an advertisement must be adequately translated and it must also be adjusted to the target culture.

In order to sell its products a company must advertise them in the language that a potential customer can understand, otherwise the company might fail. The failure of a business in today's market is very painful for the world economy. Such problems could be solved by a translator with a good knowledge of both theory and practice of translating advertisements.

In a sense, advertising began around 3200 BC when the Egyptian stenciled inscriptions of the names of kings on temples being built. Later they wrote runaway-slave announcements on papyrus. Signboards were placed outside doors in Greece and Egypt around 1500 BC. Most historians believe that outdoor signs above shop doors were the first forms of advertising.

In ancient Egypt, merchants hired criers to walk through the streets and announce the arrivals of ships and their cargo. Later on, town criers, which called out the news, were

BDD-A5380 © 2005 Universitatea din Piteşti
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.34 (2026-11-13 23:55:59 UTC)

very common in the European countries. They also were hired by merchants to direct customers to their shops.

In 1477, in London, the first printed advertisement in English announced a prayerbook sale. The first newspaper advertisement appeared on the back page of a London newspaper in 1625.

Nowadays advertising reaches people through various forms of mass communication. The chief advertising media are newspapers, television, direct mail, radio, magazines, and outdoor signs. Advertisers buy space in newspapers and magazines to publish their ads. They buy time on television and radio to broadcast their commercials. National advertisers, such as airlines and food companies, use media to reach consumers throughout large parts of the country or all of it. Local advertisers, such as department stores, supermarkets, and restaurants, use the media to reach consumers within a district or town.

Part II - Advertising Techniques

Advertising is any paid form of non-personal presentation and promotion of products, services, or ideas by an identifiable individual or organization.

According to The New Encyclopedia Britannica, advertising is designed to inform, influence, or persuade people. To be effective, an advertisement must first attract attention and gain a person's interest. It must then provide reasons for buying a product and for believing the advertiser's claims.

Advertisers rely on many kinds of appeals to persuade people to buy. In general, advertisers may present their message either in a factual way or in an emotional way. Advertisements that use a factual approach describe the demonstrable characteristics of a product. Such ads tell what the product is, how it works or how it is made. Advertisements that use an emotive appeal stress the ways in which a product will give personal satisfaction. Such an ad might appeal to a person's need for love, security, or prestige and suggest that the product will satisfy the need.

Advertisers use a variety of techniques to create effective advertisements. They start with a basic appeal, which is the main selling point, or theme, of an advertisement. Then they use certain specific techniques. The most commonly used techniques include **attention-getting headlines**, **slogans**, **testimonials, product characters**, **comparison of products**, and **repetition**.

Attention-getting headlines are an important feature of printed advertisements. A successful headline leads a person into reading the rest of the ad.

Slogans are short phrases that a company uses over and over in its ads. Good slogans are easy to remember and tend to stick in people's minds. The majority of slogans are designed to help create a favorable image of a company and its products.

Testimonials are advertisements in which a person endorses a product. The person may be someone who looks like an average user of the product. Advertisers also pay film and TV stars, popular athletes, and other celebrities to endorse products. A celebrity helps attract attention to an advertisement. In addition, endorsement by a celebrity can be persuasive if the person's public image suits the product. People may then trust the celebrity's word and be influenced to buy the product.

Product characters are fictional people and animals or characters that are used in advertisements over a long period. Many advertisers use product characters to deliver sales messages for a whole line of products. The characters become highly familiar to people and so provide lasting identification with a company's products.

BDD-A5380 © 2005 Universitatea din Pitești
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.34 (2026-11-13 23:55:59 UTC)

Comparison of products is used most frequently to sell products that compete heavily with other brands. Advertisers compare their product with similar brands and point out the advantages of using their brand.

Repetition is one of the most basic techniques advertisers use to get their message across. Advertisers may broadcast their commercials several times a day for weeks on TV or radio. Or they may publish their ads frequently in printed media. Repetition can help build or reinforce a company's reputation.

Part III – Advertising Translation

Globalization, which is the current buzzword in all discussions about economy, has also affected the world of translation. With the media revolution and its string of intangible exchanges, the translator suddenly found himself involved in every aspect of intercultural communication. Advertising, be it written or audiovisual, is now one of the areas of activity that most often makes use of the services of specialized translators.

Informative translation is used in such cases when we render nonliterary texts into the target language. Informative translation includes translation of scientific and technical texts, newspaper material, official documents and there are some other types of informative translation, such as public speeches, political materials, **advertisements** which require both reasoning and emotional appeal.

Advertising translation is part of a body of elements, which must be clarified to better grasp the characteristics of the whole. The advertising message is not conveyed in the creative loneliness of the translator. It belongs in the confined world of advertising and the larger world of communication. Parameters external to the advertising message thus largely determine the translating practice and decisively modulate the message. Moreover, the combination of these different parameters makes advertising translation specific, and understanding them allows one to better grasp the nature and the stakes of this type of translation.

From this point of view, the ***economic dimension*** of advertising determines a first group of influencing factors. Translation not only is part of a specific channel of exchanges which has to be known, but it is also an economic concept in itself.

The ***cultural dimension*** offers a second group of parameters determining the environment in which the translator of advertising operates. Culture is to be understood here in the broad sense of virtual or effective context in which the translated advertising message is received. The parameters related to this aspect of advertising translation can be prescriptive and explicit (for instance, the legislature of the target country) or implicit and left to the judgment of the translator (like uses and customs). The cultural parameter is very important. The neglect or non-observance of certain indications during the translation process can wreck the best of advertising campaigns. These indications correspond to a focusing of attention on the elements that culture itself has indicated as meaningful and crucial.

Lastly, there is an ***ideological dimension*** to advertising transfer which is not to be neglected. It includes a specific approach to linguistic and cultural phenomena, an approach which characterizes the economic roles involved in the translation process. Ideological considerations, whatever their terms, are always present in advertising practice and underlie the translating activity.

Part IV - Advertising Texts Analyses

BDD-A5380 © 2005 Universitatea din Pitești
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.34 (2026-11-13 23:55:59 UTC)

The next part of the paper will examine some models of translation analyses of different advertisements that have been selected from a variety of fields such as audio/video devices, computers, cars, food, alcoholic drinks, communications, etc. The purpose in analyzing these advertisements was to single out some peculiarities in translating them.

We will observe that advertisements present a great number of translation curiosities. The principle of the ad translator must be: "Think cultural. You need to adapt the text and graphics to the culture of the intended readership."

"Now blue is green. Introducing the new System/390 Parallel Enterprise Server. Everyone wants computer systems that do more with less. Less energy. Less floor space. Less environmental impact. The new System/90 Parallel Enterprise Server fills that bill. It has the muscle of a mainframe, but is no bigger than a refrigerator, and uses less electricity than a hair dryer. For more information call your IBM representative."

If we translate "Now blue is green" verbatim we may have the following variant: " Acum albastru este verde". Not much sense, is it? But if we read the whole text we may understand that these colours imply the environmentalist's and economist's points of view. Then the optimal translation can be: "Am fost prieteni cu oamenii de afaceri, acum şi cu ocrotitorii ambianței."

Next goes "Introducing the new System/390 Parallel Enterprise Server." For the sake of the language style and not translating the present participle as "reprezentând" or "prezentând" it may be translated as "vă prezentăm". The word "server" does not have an equivalent in the Romanian language since this computer hardware was invented by English-speaking people, and therefore the word itself is going to be present in the Romanian translation. The word "parallel" represents a very interesting case. An English-Romanian Dictionary offers the following Romanian equivalents: "paralel, corespunzător, identic", but a more careful look at the text shows that this word implies size: "Less floor space", therefore it may be translated as "compatibil". The word "enterprise" has the following equivalents: "curaj; spirit întreprinzător, aventură, antrepriză", but none of these can be used. And again from the text it is clear that a business is represented through this word, so we have "de birou" or " de oficiu". So, the translation of the sentence can be: "Vă prezentăm noul sistem-serverul compatibil de birou 390".

Let's move on and examine the next sentence: "Everyone wants computer systems that do more with less". An interesting part to examine is the last part of the sentence: "that do more more with less". If we follow the result of the action described by that phrase, we may find out that it can be translated by a single word: "economicos".

Therefore, the phrase is: "Fiecare îşi doreşte un sistem de computer economicos." The next three sentences with no verbal predicate may be translated according to the previous sentences and adding some more words to render the message properly: "Less energy." – "Care ar folosi mai puțină energie"; "Less floor space." – "Care ar ocupa mai puțin spațiu.", "Less environmental impact." – "Care ar dăuna mai puțin ambianței."

The next sentence says: "The new System/90 Parallel Enterprise Server fills that bill." The phrase "fills that bill" represents an interesting subject. Of course, it is a set expression and may be translated as "îndeplinește toate condițiile" or "corespunde tuturor cerințelor". Both are correct but the last phrase renders better the message given by the previous sentences. So, the translation is: "Noul sistem/serverul compatibil de birou corespunde tuturor cerințelor".

Next goes the following sentence: "It has the muscle of a mainframe, but is no bigger than a refrigerator, and uses less electricity than a hair dryer." The word "muscle"

BDD-A5380 © 2005 Universitatea din Pitești
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.34 (2026-11-13 23:55:59 UTC)

has the following equivalents in Romanian: "muşchi, forţă", but none of them can be used because if we use them the translation will not have any sense. Therefore, we should look at the next word it is related to – "mainframe", which is "centru de calcul" and the phrase "the muscle of a mainframe" can be translated as "capacitatea unui centru de calcul" and the Romanian variant may be: "Are capacitatea unui centru de calcul, mărimea unui frigider şi consumă mai puţin curent decât un aparat de uscat părul."

From a morphological point of view, we can observe that the three most used speech categories are the noun, the adjective and the verb. The noun is used to describe the things that the new System/390 Parallel Enterprise Server can do, it shows the qualities of the system and it reiterates names of different electric appliances rendering the text a technical style, but one easy to comprehend. Besides, a proper noun, representing the name of the company (IBM) was used. It was done for the consumers to know which corporation they were dealing with. The adjective gives a more vivid picture to the qualities of the system and it also describes the overall view of the product. Degrees of comparison were also used in order to show that the product was better than ever and better than some "non-natural" branches of the same product. The verb, usually denoting an action, shows what the product can perform and the way it can do it.

"You're in good hands with Allstate." - ALLSTATE INSURANCE CO.
"Cu Allstate eşti pe mâini bune!"

Equivalence is viewed as the mere rendering of a SL text into a TL text to ensure that the surface of the meaning of the two will be approximately similar. Thus, the phrase "to be in good hands" has a perfect Romanian equivalent: "a fi pe mâini bune", both in point of form (in the sense that the Romanian variant of the English phrase is practically a word-for-word translation) and in point of semantics (since both the English and the Romanian phrases have the meaning of "to feel sure, to feel safe").

"No bottles to break - just hearts." - ARPEGE PERFUME
"Nu-ţi taie avântul, ci îţi frânge doar inima."

The translation problem encountered here is based on a play-upon-words; in neither of the two: "to break a heart" or "to break a bottle" the verb "to break" has its basic meaning, that is "to cut something into pieces", but a figurative meaning expressing the idea of "breaking somebody's heart and courage".

At the same time, the noun choice here is extremely important since it offers a large interpretation: the noun "bottle" translated by "sticlă" tends to express the idea of solidity, of power, of persistence, while the noun "heart" translated by "inimă" implies the idea of sensation, feeling, perfume. At the same time, informally, the noun "bottle" has the meaning of "confidence or courage one needs to do something frightening".

"Don't spread the cold.... Spread the word." - COLDENE COLD TABLETS
"Nu răspândiţi răceala… Răspândiţi vestea."

Comparing the SL variant to the TL one, one may notice that, they are both based, on the one hand, on the verb "to spread" and its Romanian equivalent "a răspândi" and, on the other hand, on its association with the noun "cold" and with the noun "word". The only observation here is that the first phrase "Don't spread the cold" is clearly expressed, while the second one is somewhat dependent on the first in the sense that it is elliptical in point of meaning failing to render explicitly what word to spread.

BDD-A5380 © 2005 Universitatea din Piteşti
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.34 (2026-11-13 23:55:59 UTC)

We can also observe the usage of the imperative mood which underlines a certain way of speaking that is confident and determined, showing that the reader is expected to follow the respective suggestion. It is sometimes a very useful method of persuasion which is put into practice by the semantical association of the meaning of the respective verbs and by the syntactical association of the two imperative mood forms which are meant to give a suggestion, and, at the same time, an indirect order.

"Watch the world. " – TISSOT WATCHES
"Ține lumea sub observație."

The pun is to be mentioned as a rhetorical device used in advertising texts. Thus, it may be explained that the pun is a linguistic device which consists in the use (often humorous) of a word in such a way as to suggest different meanings or applications, or the use of words having the same or nearly the same sound, but different meanings.

In this case, the pun is based on the double meaning of the word 'watch'. The answer should be: the pun used in the text rests on the double meaning of the word 'watch': 1) watch (verb) – a se uita la, a ține sub observație; 2) watch (noun) – a small portable device indicating the time, usually worn on the wrist or carried in the pocket.

"We are driving excitement." – PONTIAC
"Noi îți oferim plăcerea de a conduce."

The use of the first person addresser "we" is the most direct way to tell the receiver what the sponsor of an ad slogan stands for, his idea, his view, and his credit. It's a little bit like a self-introduction to the potential customers to let them know you, recognize you, believe you and trust you. A translation difficulty encountered here was while translating the phrase "to drive excitement". This cannot also be translated closely because the verb "to drive" is used with a double meaning: on one hand it can be translated by "a conduce (un vehicul)" and on the other hand it is part of the phrase "to drive excitement" = "a oferi/face plăcere". So, the translation of the above-mentioned phrase can be "a oferi plăcerea de a conduce". The usage of the present tense continuous of the verb emphasizes the everlastingness of the sensation of excitement, of pleasure, of joy.

"That frosty mug sensation." - A & W ROOT BEER
"Ia-ți o halbă rece ca gheața".

As some ads are very short texts, one may find it difficult to render the SL text into the TL text perfectly. Thus, one may resort to the usage of paraphrasing. Actually, we may say that any kind of translating implies paraphrasing of some sort. Here, for instance, the English adjective "frosty" is translated into Romanian by a simile: "rece ca gheața" which has approximately the same sound impact as it makes one think of freshness and good mood. The simile is used in this case as a paraphrase intended to intensify the "sensation" offered by the respective beer. We can also notice here a typical trend of ads that is the omission of the verbal predicate.

Conclusions

Advertisements may represent, from a structural point of view, a solid text of a considerable length or they may consist of a few sentences, phrases or even words. Advertisements must be understood properly in order to be translated properly; they might be formal or abound in jargon and slang words; they are always showing various emotions which are traps for the translator and they may be precise or vague.

BDD-A5380 © 2005 Universitatea din Pitești
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.34 (2026-11-13 23:55:59 UTC)

From a morphological point of view, statistics shows that advertisements make usage of adverbs (4.3%), conjunctions (5.3%), pronouns (6.9%), prepositions (8.5%), articles (8.5%), verbs (17%) and adjectives (20.68%). And the most used part of speech is the noun (36.5%). Thus, the translator of the advertising texts must consider this and use the same parts of speech when possible.

Very often advertisements translations can be made only through loan transfer. Others require a thorough logical thinking and a good knowledge of the company that produces them. Omission is also needed while translating ads and the same goes for generalization and particularization techniques. Very often an equivalent is the best way to render the source text into the target text.

While translating advertisements from different fields of commercial activity (cars, computers, etc.) certain terms have been encountered which do not exist in the Romanian culture so far. Such Romanian equivalents may be forwarded by the translator himself only after consulting special reference books.

Certain terms were not difficult but curious for translation requiring a thorough logical thinking. As it is seen from the above-mentioned issues the most important thing in translating advertisements is the context. The context explains the meaning of the title, helps to understand words and phrases. It eliminates any difficulty or curiosity that may appear.

The translator must study both the claim and the text thoroughly and find the hidden meaning of it. Very often the equivalent may be completely different from its original but it has the same purpose. In conclusion, we may say that translating advertisements constitutes an interesting and challenging process.

Bibliography :

BAKER M., *In Other Words*, London & New York, Routledge, 1996.
BANTAŞ A., *Didactica traducerii*, Bucureşti, Teora, 1998.
BASSNETT-McGUIRE S., *Translation Studies*, London, Methuen & Co. Ltd., 1980.
BLONSKY M., *The Translation of Advertising: Pitfalls and Problems*, Baltimore, John Hopkins University Press,1995.
COOK G., *The Discourse of Advertising*, London & New York, Routledge, 1992.
Dictionary of English Language and Culture, Edinburgh, Addison Wesley Longman, 2000.
Dicţionar Englez- Român, Bucureşti, editura Academiei, 1974.
HURBIN P., *Peut-on traduire la langue de la publicité*?, Paris, Editions Liaisons, 1992.
LEVIŢCHI L., *Manualul traducătorului*, Bucureşti, editura Teora, 1994.
LEVIŢCHI L., *Dicţionar Român-Englez*, Bucureşti, editura 100+1 Gramar, 2002.
Macmillan English Dictionary, London, Bloomsbury Publishing Plc., 2002.
MONACO J., *How to Interpret Advertisements*, New York, Oxford University Press, 1981.
NEWMARK P., *Approaches to Translation*, Oxford, Pergamon Press, 1981.
SCHRANK J., *The Language of Advertising Claims*, New York, John Wiley and Sons, Inc., 1995.
The Encyclopedia Americana, Volume 3, Connecticut, International Edition Grolier, Inc., 1993.
The New Encyclopedia Britannica, Volume 23, Chicago, Macropaedia, 1991.
TURTON N.D., Heaton J.B., *Dictionary of Common Errors*, New Edition, Edinburgh, Addison Wesley Longman, 2000.
VESTERGAARD T., *The Language of Advertising*, Oxford, Basil Blackwell Ltd., 1985

BDD-A5380 © 2005 Universitatea din Piteşti
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.34 (2026-11-13 23:55:59 UTC)