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Psychology of Translation in Cross-Cultural Interaction

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Abstract

The world today is characterized by an ever growing number of contacts resulting in communication between people with different linguistic and cultural backgrounds. This communication takes place because of contacts within the areas of business, military cooperation, science, education, mass media, entertainment, tourism but also because of immigration brought about by labor shortage or political conflicts.

From the earlier times commercial interaction was one of the foremost features of ancient civilizations. Commerce of different goods by the traders created new paths of cultural interactions among different lands. Nevertheless, in the 21st c. even the most famous business companies, e. g. General Motors, IKEA, Electrolux, etc. fail to introduce some of their products due to mistakes of inaccurate cross-cultural translation, i. e. advertising gaffes. Thus, translation is a tool for communication between diverse cultures and people of different backgrounds. This tool enables people to send and to receive information and to achieve successful communication. Besides the differences in languages there are also differences in cultures and people representing those differing cultures.

The paper first gives a short overview of the concept of culture-specific items and of the techniques that are applied when translating them. Different theorists argue that cultural behavior is one of the most important aspects in translation of commercials. People from different cultures do things in different ways. Thus, I argue that it is important to increase our awareness of and sensitivity to culturally different modes of behavior. We need to recognize different cultural patterns at work in the behavior of people. It is also useful to be aware of how our own cultural background influences our behavior.

Purpose of this study: to discuss and describe different translation techniques applied in the translations of different cross-cultural advertisements and to demonstrate that semiotics form the basis upon which the translation of persuasive advertisements should be built.

Method of this study: discursive semiotic approach.

Findings and results: For the purpose of translating persuasive advertisements, the various signs, their meaning and significance as well as their intertextual relationships (text and context) have to be examined in order to establish their significance and their role when translated into another language and culture. It is important to transmit the message adequately, or it may lead to loss of business. The conclusion is drawn that miscalculating the pertinence of cross-cultural communications can be counter-productive at best, or abysmal at worst. Cultural differences with regard to eye contact, appropriateness of a smile, and protocol for addressing foreign counterparts are all qualities that dramatically impact all angles of negotiation and interpersonal communication.

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1. Introduction

The world today is characterized by an ever growing number of contacts resulting in communication between people with different linguistic and cultural backgrounds. This communication takes place because of contacts within the areas of business, military cooperation, science, education, mass media, entertainment, tourism but also because of immigration brought about by labor shortage or political conflicts.

Undeniably, from earlier times commercial interaction was one of the foremost features of ancient civilizations. Commerce of different goods by the traders created new paths of cultural interactions among different lands. Nevertheless, in the 21st century even the most famous business companies, e. g. General Motors, IKEA, NIKE, Electrolux, etc. failed to introduce some of their products due to mistakes of inaccurate cross-cultural translation, i. e. advertising gaffes.

Thus, language has always been an integral part of the business situation. Yet, language and the management thereof (such as translation and interpretation) have never been given their rightful prominence and importance in business sectors.

Moreover, of all the symbolic systems, language is the most complex, most socially and culturally affected, and the richest (in part because of its reliance on convention). Through it, we learn almost all of the other systems. With it, we can achieve very special effects. Therefore, advertisements as discourse must first be recognized as paid, non-personal communication forms used by identified sources through various media with persuasive intent (cf by Rotzoll 1985: 94.) Moreover, the examples discussed in present surveys witness how important and delicate this problem is and how subtle and carefully structured advertisements and their translation should be. It is obvious that language plays the most important role in advertising.

In addition, methods of promotion and techniques of advertising are of supreme importance. The researches carried out in the framework of commerce and e-commerce verify that the advertiser can either address the emotions of the audience, the emotional appeal, or the intellect of the audience, the rational appeal. In the emotional appeal, the advertiser suggests rather than argues. Before choosing the kind of appeal to be made, and before being able to decide what to say, the advertiser has to know about the social and psychological entities he is dealing with. Therefore, the translator needs to recognize different cultural patterns at work in the behavior of people. It is also essential to be aware of how our own cultural background influences our behavior.

2. Cultural Translation, norms and behavior

Cultural translation is considered to be one of the most essential and complicated translations. If the translator does not have any cultural background of the source language then he will face difficulties conveying the whole meaning of the cultural patterns that are included in the original text. Nida and Taber (1982) viewed cultural translation as, “A translation in which the content of the message is changed to conform to the receptor culture in some way, and/or in which information is introduced which is not linguistically implicit in the original” (p. 199).

Larson (1984) believes that one translates culture and not language arguing that, “Language is a part of culture and, therefore, translation from one language to another cannot be done adequately without a knowledge of the two cultures as well as the two languages structure” (p. 431).

Moreover, Gideon Toury (1995), a leading academic innovator of translation theory, maintains that “Translation activities should rather be regarded as having cultural significance. Consequently, ‘translatorship’ amounts first and foremost to being able to play a social role, i.e., to fulfill a function allotted by a community - to the activity, its practitioners and/or their products - in a way which is deemed appropriate in its own terms of reference. The acquisition of a set of norms for determining the suitability of that kind of behaviour, and for maneuvering between all the factors which may constrain it, is therefore a prerequisite for becoming a translator within a cultural environment. In fact, cognition itself is influenced, probably even modified by socio-cultural factors. At any rate, translators performing under different conditions (e.g., translating texts of different kinds, and/or for different audiences) often adopt different strategies, and ultimately come up with markedly different products” (53-69).

In addition, translation of general values or ideas shared by a community - as to what is right and wrong, adequate and inadequate - into performance instructions appropriate for and applicable to particular situations, specifying what is pre-scribed and forbidden as well as what is tolerated and permitted in a certain behavioural dimension (the famous ‘square of normativity’, which has lately been elaborated on with regard to translation in De Geest (1992: 38-40) is of supreme importance and a key to successful cross-cultural communication (in Toury 1995: 53-69).

On the other hand, it is also necessary to speak about ‘Cultural Untranslatability’ as cultural differences are always one of the main causes of translation problems, particularly if both languages belong to a totally different background. Catford (1965) differentiates between what he calls “linguistic” and “cultural” untranslatability.

Furthermore, cultural behavior undoubtedly is one of the most important aspects in translation of commercials. People from different cultures do things in different ways. Therefore, the localizing translator must pay careful attention to behavioural specificities, the most important being the socio-cultural component which includes the local particularities stemming from religion, mores, social and commercial habits, rules of conduct and ethical norms, i. e. the principal component that is related to the main features of the hosting culture and society.

3. Psychology of Advertising

The concept of advertising is a complicated issue since it involves two interactive processes-communication and persuasion - which both have many different aspects. In order to have an idea about how complicated the world of advertisement is, the reader might start by asking questions which have to do with who is speaking to whom, by what means and what is the purpose behind the whole communication. The answers to such questions will prove that language plays an important role, but obviously not the only role, in the communication network; and that advertisement, although appearing to be straightforward and simple, is usually extremely subtle and carefully structured.

Advertisements are sometimes classified into what is called ‘reason’ and ‘tickle’ advertisement. The former suggests motives for purchase and ‘tickle’ advertisements, on the other hand, make appeals to emotion, humor as well as mood.

On the one hand, it is through standardization of communication strategy that a given company is able to achieve a company image that is recognized all over the world. The task of transferring marketing strategy from one country into another has been faced by opposing points of view. On the other hand, to some critics, standardization is not desirable at all, and more than one theme is essential to respond effectively to the cultural differences which take place among countries. The latter argue that the task seems to be extremely difficult, if not impossible, due to the differences in market characteristics, industry conditions as well as legal restrictions. Another group of critics claim that people who belong to different heritages are basically the same and that they do have similar perceptions of products. This means that an international advertising campaign with a universal appeal can definitely be effective in any market.

It is indeed very risky not to adapt communication to local markets, especially in countries where the cultural tradition is still very present. Moreover, the translator of the 21st century should be a professional of culture able to decode and encode the cultural signs within the advertising communication.

Ultimately, as researchers from CCJK company that is devoted to integrating worldwide resources and facilitating cross-cultural exchanges, insist, when speaking about “translation problems in global marketing, it is necessary to remember that translation is a more complex communication than that within a single language because it involves two languages. Given the importance of consumer’s psychology, the translator must be fully aware of the cultural understanding, aesthetic standards, and consumption modes of both starting language and target language readers, and should keep in mind the intention of the original so as to transfer its message maximally. Moreover, the translated advertisements should be delightful to the eye, pleasant to the ear, easy to remember, as well as be a perfect unity of sound, form, and meaning.

4. Linguistic and cultural semiotics

Throughout ages a variety of signs helped man not to get lost in the world. Hence, various scientific approaches have been evolved to help man decipher the message encoded in the sign. One of such scientific systems is semiotics, which relies on the study of language with reference to its structure and meaning. As a method, semiotics emphasises the structural integrity of the text, the smaller sections of which enable the act of cognition. Semiotic analysis is in search for the cultural patterns that underlie language and give meaning of the text.

The theory of cultural semiotics is based on the insights of the Russian scholar Yuri Lotman (1922-1993). Cultural semiotics of Yuri Lotman is oriented towards the interconnection of regular and irregular conditions in the semiotic processes. Cultural semiotics stresses the unity of culture and language because it is language that retains the collective memory of humanity, which is individualised by the reader with regard to signs.

As Linguistic and Cultural Semiotics is a branch of communication theory that investigates sign systems and the modes of representation that humans use to convey feelings, thoughts, ideas, and ideologies, semiotic analysis is rarely considered a field of study in its own right, but is used in a broad range of disciplines, including art, literature, anthropology, sociology, and the mass media. Umberto Eco in his *Theory of Semiotics* (1979) jokingly suggests that semiotics is a discipline for studying everything which “can be used in order to lie” (7). Whether used as a tool for representing phenomena or for interpreting it, the value of semiotic analysis becomes most pronounced in highly mediated, postmodern environments.

Thus, semiotic analysis provides the translator with means to deal with signs in a persuasive advertisement which reflect a cultural identity. By analysing the signs and semiosis in the source culture, the translator can identify their functions and transfer them into a target language (and culture) by finding equivalents in the target culture. Thus the translation of persuasive advertisements must be seen as a process and a product which should be handled within the framework of a general theory of signs and not merely by (means of) methods that are purely language-based.

Gideon Toury (1980: 12) explains that a specific culture (for instance Flemish) would represent one semiotic entity or system. This entity would incorporate linguistic and non-linguistic elements. Translating an advertisement from culture 1 to culture 2 would thus entail the transfer of signs between two systems. Toury (1980: 12) points out that the transfer situation involves certain relationships, namely:

- between each one of the two entities and the system within which it is situated (in other words, how acceptable is this entity to the norms of the system);
- between the two entities themselves (in other words, the level of equivalence or correspondence).

In a translation situation this means that (i) the signs in the target text must be acceptable to the users in that sign system, i.e. the culture, and (ii) the meaning (and thus the message) generated by the signs in the target text must have an equivalent effect on the receivers, i.e. the same effect as on the source text receivers (as cited in Bezuidenhout, 1998).

Traditionally translation has dealt mainly with the linguistic aspects in advertisements, but now the semiotic aspects of a discourse such as advertising should be incorporated in order to make cultural transfer possible. In other words, not merely the random substitution of one image or symbol with another in the target language, but the use of symbols in the target language which will create the same effect and have the same impact and meaning on the target receivers as they had on the source receivers.

On the other hand, when dealing with translation, one should admit that there will always be a certain degree of loss in meaning when a text is translated. Peter Newmark, one of the main figures in the founding of translation studies in the English-speaking world from the 1980s claims that “...if the text describes a situation which has elements peculiar to the natural environment, institutions and culture of its language area, there is an inevitable loss of meaning, since the transference to...the translator’s language can only be approximate” (1988: 7).

In the case of advertisement translation the translator would have to be very sensitive to the losses and gains of cultural elements. S/he should assess the ‘weight’ (connotations, denotations, familiarity) of cultural elements in the source text in order to translate them into the target text and bring about the same effect as in the source text.

5. Culture as a universal semiotic object and metalanguage

The main task of culture as expressed by Lotman deals with the organisation of the world that surrounds man. Culture itself can be viewed as a storehouse of information, and even everyday cultural activity consists in “translating a certain sector of reality into one of the languages of the culture, transforming it into a text” (Lotman quoted in Segre 1988: 128). The text for Lotman is information coded appropriately and presented to collective memory. Culture takes the language as its main instrument, and language itself protects collective memory, to which reality is exposed through signs. The term collective memory refers to recognition and safeguarding of texts as the heritage of community, and the modification of texts into the single consciousness. The text for the culture then could be viewed as “a global sign, endowed with distinctive traits” (ibid., 129).

Further on, inner (or subconscious) mechanism allows the cognition of central and peripheral cultural spheres as texts, thus, it refers to the impact of cultural information on the process of text interpretation. What is more, cultural myth-forming mechanism acquires features of a verbal text formed under the principles of a sentence and yet differences between central and peripheral cultural systems cannot be avoided. As Lotman puts it, “the central sphere of culture is constructed on the principle of an integrated structural whole, a sentence” (1990: 215), which then functions as the structural model of the world and is perceived as a concentric system, while “the peripheral sphere is organized as a cumulative chain, simply by the accretion of structurally independent entities” and relates to excesses (ibid, 215). Nonetheless, culture never encloses everything but creates a marked-off sphere. A change of culture is traditionally followed by an intense development of semantic behaviour, e.g. the change of names, which, on the other hand, pertain to a specific change in culture. At the same time the multiplicity of lifestyles expands the possible range of choice and encourages the experience of communal differences.

It is important to note that language and culture form a whole complex in Lotmanian perception. As the critic argues, “no language can exist unless it is steeped in the context of culture; and no culture can exist which does not have, at its centre, the structure of natural language” (1978: 212). Firstly, culture could be perceived as the nonhereditary memory of the community, which means each individual being a representative of the community or fulfilling various cultural functions. On the other hand, culture could be perceived as memory for it is only perceived after some time and at the same time culture as memory introduces the issue of a program, recognised as semiotic rules by which human experience is transferred into culture, or text. As the reader of the text should always consider memorisable facts under semiotic norms that view the text being not reality, but the material applied in its reconstruction, semiotic analysis of the text should always precede historical. However, any reality introduced in the area of the text starts playing the role of a sign and “generates multilingual phenomena” (ibid., 229). The world made double in the word and man in space form an initial semiotic dualism. At the same time texts are enciphered by the means of a variety of codes, which also alludes to the fact that different cultural memory might be detected in various parts of a synchronic text. From a dynamic point of view, the rise of other types of texts is based on the innovation of codes.

Nonetheless, textual techniques, e.g. delineation of semantic fields, individualisation of motives and themes, start working due to the impact of metalanguage that helps to “overcome the heterogeneity and the incommunicability of the text” (Segre 129). Then the sequence of discrete textual elements is exceeded as “one sets out from the results of comprehension, whose nature is continuous, and from distinctive traits” (ibid, 129-130). In addition, the definition of the principle of alternation as introduced by Lotman presents actual oppositions being simply interpretations filled with information. The term of semiosphere as one of the key concepts of Lotmanian semiotic system is also of importance to explain the processes of language functioning.

Thus, the question can be asked: What is the value of a discursive-semiotic approach to translating advertisements? This can be answered by looking at the application of semiotics in the advertising industry. Peirces’s doctrine of signs should not be ignored as all verbal language is mainly symbolic though the symbol only becomes meaningful in a practical way because the sign user (or better the community of sign users) makes logical decisions about its scope and usage. Without sign representation there is no possibility of sign interpretation. Interpretation, translation or any other type of semiosis, means, in effect, tracing out the ground as it is operative in actual sign use. Meaning arises from exploratory interpretation of signs in their natural habitat: the world of context

in which humans use verbal (and nonverbal) signs in order to meaningfully (for themselves) organize the reality surrounding them, thereby mastering them (in Gorlee 69-77)

It is obvious that within the framework of semiotic symbol systems, the conventionality of a true symbol rests on the shared understanding by the communicating participants that the symbol is a token representing some referential class, and that the particular token represents a particular aspect of shared situational context, and, ultimately, a shared universe of discourse. Conventional symbol systems are therefore grounded in an intersubjective meaning field in which speakers represent, through symbolic action, some segment or aspect of reality for hearers. This representational function is unique to symbolization, and is precisely what distinguishes a symbol from a signal. A signal can be regarded as an (possibly coded) instruction to behave in a certain way. A symbol, on the other hand directs and guides, not the behaviour of the organism(s) receiving the signal, but their understanding (construal) or (minimally) their attention, with respect to a shared referential situation.

Ultimately, even though there is usually no full equivalence between code-units in the case of interlingual translation, the message may serve as adequate interpretations of alien code-units or messages. What happens is that during the translation process the message in the source language is substituted for an entire message in the target language, and not only code-units. The translator acts as the go-between between the two languages and has to create an equivalent effect in the target language (cf Bezuidenhout 1998).

6. The semiotics of advertising: translation as sign interpretation

Over the years, not only some of the largest and most marketing-savvy companies have made big translation blunders.

The famous American baby food brand, Gerber which can mean “to vomit” in French was misunderstood because of failures in advertisement translation. Additionally, when Gerber started selling baby food in Africa, they used the same packaging as in the US, with the smiling baby on the label. Later they learned that in Africa, companies routinely put pictures on the labels of what was inside since many people could not read!

Puffs brand tissues (Procter&Gamble) are quite popular in the U.S.A., however, their quest for global marketing ran into a few snags due to their name. In Germany, “Puff” is a colloquial term for a whorehouse. In England, a similar word, “Pouf,” is an offensive term for homosexual.

Japanese car maker Toyota had to send apologies to Chinese consumers for running advertisements that many Chinese complained were aimed at humiliating them and their domestic industry. The advertisements, for two new types of cars - Prado GX and Land Cruiser - had drawn widespread indignation and criticism from China’s citizens, who saw them as a deliberate act by the Japanese car firm to insult the Chinese. One advertisement depicted a traditional Chinese-style stone-carved lion saluting a moving Prado GX, whose Chinese translation means “despotic manner”. “You have to pay respect to it,” read the slogan. The other showed a Land Cruiser pulling a cumbersome Chinese-made truck on a bumpy road on a plateau.

The advertisements, published in Friends of Cars magazine drew strong reaction from readers as many of them connected the stone-carved lion with those carved on the Marco Polo Bridge, where Japanese imperial troops launched a full-scale invasion of China in 1937. The bridge is one of the symbols of humiliation China has suffered in modern history.

DHL, the leading express and logistics company, took delivery of a new fleet of 200 vans from Ford and Toyota to serve its customers in Saudi Arabia in 2003. As the campaign suggested, DHL offices, air express centers and signage were being re-branded to match. It was accompanied by the new slogan “We move the world” which was supposed to sum up the strength of DHL as the global brand for all Deutsche Post World Net Group express and logistics business. In Saudi Arabia, though, the slogan was immediately banned as violating and insulting religious beliefs of the Muslims as only Allah can move the world.

Pakistan Telecommunications Authority issued a directive to mobile operators after receiving complaints about late-night call advertisements sent to customers, which went against the country's social norms and values. According to the government agency, the directive was issued because the operators were promoting “vulgarity” and such service packages were against “social norms” and the country's “values.” Several mobile phone companies in

Pakistan offered “late-night packages” which allowed users to make calls at a lower rate compared to calls made during the day. A lot of complaints were received from the Supreme Court of Pakistan, the Parliament’s Standing Committee, and subscribers regarding the “promotion of vulgarity” through advertisements.

One more localization mistake comes to us from Iran, where a detergent and cleaning brand “Barf” is named after the Farsi word for “snow.” However, it would be difficult to imagine many English speakers cleaning their home or dishes with Barf.

Moreover, in post-communist countries, like Lithuania, Latvia or Estonia, advertising of consumer products and services and advertisement translation has emerged as a new text type as a result of the swift transition from a planned economy, which rendered advertising futile, to market economy, which is advertisement dependent. (cf. by Jettmarova, Piotrowska, Zauberga 1997: 185) For obvious reasons, with a state monopolized non-competitive market, a domestic genre of advertising did not exist in those countries (including Check Republic and Poland). Therefore, the socio economic changes that started with the “Singing Revolution in Lithuania” and collapse of the Soviet Union brought changes to the business sector and advertising. With new products being imported from across the seas, major problems in advertising were caused not by the unawareness of languages but primarily by the unawareness of cultures. Brand names (though they are the property of the company) were not adapted to specific culture(s) and cases of translation gaffes that led to failures in selling were quite frequent. For example, commercials for Schick razors or Camay Chic soap sounded like a vulgar Lithuanian verb imperative to void (if back translated to shit) and for obvious reasons did not sell well.

Apparently, product (brand) launching is quite similar to product arrangement and culturalisation. Our Latvian neighbours Latvians when promoting “Country Holidays in Latvia” offered sunbathing, bathing, boating, cycling, horse-riding, steam-bathing, angling, mushrooming, berry picking in the woods, sports, games and dancing. They also offered nourishing country food. There was not a word given about sunbathing in its English translation as in the given climate this would hardly be a plausible attraction for foreigners. Instead the English text offered “bird watching” and “making new friends” (Zauberga 1997: 189) On the other hand, searching for clichéd texts our neighbours made obvious translation mistakes in their slogan “Easy to go, hard to live” when it was supposed to say “Easy to go, hard to leave.”

Furthermore, although in 1991-2004 American impact on the advertising industry was obvious in the Post-Soviet countries, with Lithuania entering EU space (2004), European ideas became more attractive. Nevertheless, even though elements of national history are quite often employed to promote one or different products, i. e. the commercial is localized and domesticated, often they are developed by foreign companies, and therefore an obvious lack of cultural background is still acute. On the other hand, direct transfers in advertisement translation are still in favor and frequently result in the loss of the persuasive force and the change of the source text function. The examples demonstrate that once the rules of the game were created for a different culture, i. e. remote recipient, they do not necessarily work on the recipient coming from a different cultural context. A good example of this is the commercial with Vikings shopping in Lithuanian malls and placing their goods into barrels did not bring commercial success to the most rapidly developing retail chain in Lithuania Norfos mažmena whose target was the practical buyer with a medium income. Taking into consideration the fact that about 72 percent of Norfa’s buyers are middle aged women the method for promoting Lithuanian products was rather doubtful because Norwegian historical figures wearing helmets were perceived as alien. If interpreted within the framework of semiotics, the received views of the Vikings as violent brutes or intrepid adventurers owe much to the modern Viking myth which had taken shape by the early 20th century. Current popular representations are typically highly clichéd, presenting the Vikings as familiar caricatures. Thus, in Lithuanian culture they are associated with violence and look like travesty on Lithuanian screens.

One more case of inadequacy adjusting the source text to the target culture was associated with Estonia and Lithuania – the two Baltic sister countries. In November 2012 an Estonian company attempted to implement easy access post boxes/kiosks for sending letters in the fastest way. They created the commercial on TV with the phrase “Estonians are very slow at writing” which caused an opposite effect. The company who developed the commercial most probably did not take into consideration the negative psychological aspect of all jokes about Estonians that are very popular in Lithuania. Bearing in mind that Estonians are quite often laughed at for their slow manner of

completing the tasks the customers read the message “Use easy access kiosks to send letters and your recipient will receive them in half a year at its best”. Even if the idea was to create “tickle” advertisement the commercial became anti-advertisement and was quickly removed from the screens though the uncertainty about the quality of service became deeply rooted in the minds of those who saw it.

Moreover, though the cheapest mobile telephone connection operator in Lithuania, Tele2 admits to spending too much on advertising in Lithuanian media, having the biggest number of customers, Tele2 may be said to have achieved success with its commercial. However the case when the customers see a short history of one family with two brothers one of whom is imprudent, though easily recognized by the receivers who know the fairy tales about the “Silly Hans” or “Jack the Dullard” (H. K. Andersen) or Lithuanian folk tales about the third brother being silly, caused ambiguous feelings. Therefore, not surprisingly, the company most obviously chose teenagers and also elderly population as its target audience. On the other hand, with business sectors as Target audience and service promotion, inadequacy was observed when historical warriors intrude into the office to request for the bill. The bills for mobile services are periodically sent to the customers and they are not requested as the commercial to promote Tele2 service in Lithuania suggests. The only reasonable explanation here would be that Tele2 AB is a major European telecommunications operator, with about 34 million customers in 11 countries and Chief Commercial Officer and Executive Vice President of Tele2 Anders Olsson most obviously evaluated, to employ Toury’s (1995) formulation, norms that “serve as criteria according to which actual instances of behaviour are evaluated, <...> though normative formulations tend to be slanted, then, and should always be taken with a grain of salt” (56). Therefore, the latter commercial was soon updated and gained success.

On the other hand, these normative formulations and the importance of cultural awareness can be illustrated by the example of Samsonas - one of the largest meat processing companies in Lithuania. This was one of the best success stories of product advertising in Russia and Belarus. In 1998 a new line of “Tarybiniai” (which means “Soviet”) meat products was launched and at once attracted exclusive customers’ attention. It soon became a recognised and popular meat product. Samsonas employed a deeply rooted image of Lithuania as the country representing the highest quality merchandise in former times. The advertisement “Meat products “Tarybiniai” (“Soviet”) did not imply banal nostalgia for Soviet times, but was intended as a resolute search for quality and return to the natural attracting the attention of the target customers’ in Belarus and Russia. Samsonas engaged the concept of Lithuania known among other Soviet Republics of the former U.S.S.R. as “The Little America.” In addition, with the scandalous evidence delivered via TV and the results of the TV investigation being spread via all channels, that few sausages in Lithuanian market contained meat, Samsonas gained success learning the “Where’s the Beef?” lesson. Their commercial asked and suggested at the same time “Who told you that there is no meat in sausages? Searching for meat? You should try “Tarybines” (Soviet) sausages”.

Nevertheless, in Lithuania products “Tarybiniai” did not bring benefit to MAXIMA - a retail chain operating in Lithuania, Latvia, Estonia, and Bulgaria. Customers will not forget the ambiguous feelings caused by the promotion of “Tarybiniai” in January 2013. With the image of a Soviet woman in the background the advertisement announced: “Special offer for ham sausage “Tarybine” exceptionally on January 13! Buy one, get one free!”

Twenty years ago January 13, 1991 the world witnessed Lithuania’s darkest hour as it struggled to regain its freedom and sovereignty from the Soviet Union. The January 13 events are deeply ingrained in the Lithuanian’s hearts. “I would place this date to one of the most important events in the Lithuanian history. I would call it Lithuania’s ‘Winter War’, which came some 50 years later. Same like the Fins in 1939 decided to fight with the much larger enemy despite the fears that the Soviets swiftly will crush the resistance”, says Ruslanas Iržikevičius who is monitoring political and economical developments in Lithuania. The Lithuanian Winter War in January 1991 was a crucial for the survival of our nation as the Žalgiris battle in 1410, as the Lithuanians fights against the Bolsheviks in 1920, as the Partisan War after World War two (ibid.)

Thus, a retail chain operating in Lithuania, Latvia, Estonia, and Bulgaria MAXIMA made an unpardonable blunder trying to promote sausages “Tarybines” (Soviet). Opting out of promotional inquiries Samsonas on its turn decreed that the company does not support either the way of advertising or the promotion itself on the day of commemoration of “January 13 victims”.

Overall, the cases demonstrate that the countries that used to share single economic space know the rules of the game, i. e., know symbols and signs encoded in those cultures and it may lead to successful advertising communication. In addition, if semioticians drag the unconscious messages being transmitted into consciousness by isolating and identifying the signs to constitute the message, the translator has a double role: as semiotician and as transference agent or translator. The translator must create a similar effect on the receivers in the target language.

Conclusions

Before choosing the kind of appeal to be made, and before being able to decide what to say, the advertiser has to know about the social and psychological entities he is dealing with. Therefore, the translator needs to recognize different cultural patterns at work in the behavior of people. He has to know about their desires, attitudes as well as habits. It is also essential to be aware of how our own cultural background influences our behavior.

In the case of advertisement translation the translator has to be very sensitive to the losses and gains of cultural elements. S/he should assess the “weight” (connotations, denotations, familiarity) of cultural elements in the source text in order to translate them into the target text and bring about the same effect as in the source text. In producing a target text, the translator will enable transcultural communication.

Knowledge of semiotics gives the translator a better understanding of the intrinsic appeal of an advertisement, in other words how the different elements and parts work together as a discourse to perform a certain function, and thus a message and effect. Furthermore, the translator gets additional insight into the receivers who might respond to the advertisement and buy the product, and make an estimate of the bond the consumer will form with the product.

Commercial translation requires special proficiency in the specific commercial field. The commercial translator must have thorough knowledge regarding the commercial domain he or she is going to translate along with deft skills in the language of commerce. A perfect combination of all these skills will enhance the presentation of the commercial data from the source to the target language.

Taking into consideration the researches in the field of advertisement translation it is possible to conclude that the weakness a shortcoming of a discursive-semiotic approach is that advertisements, as a discourse, are dynamic. It might not always be obvious that a specific discourse is an advertisement. Thus, the translator might not treat that particular discourse as such. Another problem is that the translator might not be fully adapted to deal with cultural nuances in the target language, and may consequently use signs that have an adverse effect on the target receivers by not generating an equivalent message (of the source message).

Acknowledgements

These and the Reference headings are in bold but have no numbers. Text below continues as normal.

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