

COPYWRITERS' PERCEPTIONS OF ADS ADAPTATION

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Abstract: The aim of the paper is to stress the importance of professionalism in print ads translation. The pairs or groups of ads selected by the author will reflect how the American/ the Australian/ the British or the Romanian ad translators convey the same message. For instance, the British versions of some ads show that, compared to the American or the Romanian advertisers, the British copywriters always respect the 'face' of the potential buyer by using politeness markers, and that they successfully succeed in connecting the texts and the images of the ads. The language or punctuation mistakes made by some copywriters also prove that a translator should have both academic and commercial skills.

Keywords: the Romanian/ the American/ the Australian/ the British copywriters, ambiguity, spelling mistakes, politeness markers, coherence, antonymy, audience appropriateness, explicitness.

1. Introduction

The adaptation of advertising material depends first on how much attention the copywriter/ the translator pays to the process of target text (TT) production. Referring to the aspects which determine successful TT production, Samuelsson-Brown (1995), Adab (2000), and Ho (2004) – researchers in the field of advertising translation – believe that both professional translation training and the translator's product and cultural awareness influence the quality of an ad/ commercial translation. They suggest that there should be used evaluators who proofread and assess translation quality according to some criteria for evaluation. Adab (2000) points out that an evaluator should pay attention to macro-textual features (e.g. information, cohesion, coherence), micro-textual features (i.e. pragmatic, intercultural), invariability of overall message (i.e. constant, loss, gain), overall potential impact (i.e. constant, enhanced, diminished) and adequacy for purpose.

In her article, *Revision from Translators' Point of View* (2006), Claire Yi-yi Shih classifies – according to their problem-orientation – the 'revision parameters' that should be used after an initial draft translation has been produced. The first group focuses on checking for source text meaning transfer problems and it includes *emphasis, accuracy, omission, numbers or dates*. The second group is called 'target text linguistic features' and it comprises *spelling/ typing mistakes, grammatical errors, syntactical structuring, register/ tone of voice/ language style, cohesion, coherence and conciseness*. The third group focuses on other target text issues and it contains, among others, *target readers' needs/ audience appropriateness, layout/ format, punctuation, logic/ making sense, terminology control and consistency, creativity and explicitness*.

2. 'Revising' the production/ the adaptation of some Romanian, American, Australian and British print ads

I shall use some of the Taiwanese scholar's revision parameters to analyse the pairs or groups of Romanian – foreign ads in my corpus: *omission, spelling mistakes,*

logic/ making sense, register/ tone of voice, coherence, cohesion, target readers' needs/ audience appropriateness and explicitness. The advertised products are either non-durable goods (cosmetics) or durable goods (printers, watches, cars). A pair/group of ads promote the same commodity and it may contain advertisements that have more variants. For example, the British version of the ad for *Raymond Weil* has four variants (v. 1 – v. 4) because different endorsers were used and because small parts of the ad text were modified.

2.1. Omission, spelling mistakes and logic/ making sense

It is interesting to note that the acronym “*PFA” is repeated only in the British copy of the ad for *Chanel, Sublimage* (1) and in the first variant of the Romanian ad that appeared in *Psychologies* in April 2008. The role of the second occurrence of the word is to signal that the meaning of the acronym will be explained. “*PFA” is mentioned only once in the second variant of the Romanian ad that was published in *Elle* in October 2008. In this case, the Romanian advertiser flouts the maxim of Manner (see Grice 1975, 46), because his/ her message is ambiguous. One cannot understand what the asterisk stands for.

We can also see that in this ad, like in the Romanian version of the ad for *Chanel, Exceptionnel* (2), the diacritical marks do not appear above or below the letters I have underlined and written in bold. Though, the absence of ‘ă’ (‘ă’) in ‘sta’, ‘adevarat’, ‘seducatoare’ and ‘impecabila’, the absence of ‘î’ (‘î’) in ‘reînoirii’ and of ‘ț’, (‘ț’) in ‘rezistenta’ and ‘chintesenta’ is not, in my opinion, a “high-risk mistake” (Pym 2005) because the communication act does not fail.

- (1) At the heart of SUBLIMAGE lies the quintessence of a unique active ingredient: Planifolia **PFA***, a true catalyst of cell renewal. [...]
 - ***PFA**: PolyFractioning of Active ingredients. A specific process developed by CHANEL that allows for the creation of Planifolia PFA, an ultra-pure cosmetic active ingredient. Patent pending. (in the Br. c.)
 - La baza fiecărei îngrijiri SUBLIMAGE, se află chintesența unui ingredient activ unic: Planifolia **PFA***, un veritabil catalizator al regenerării celulare. [...]
 - ***PFA**: PoliFracționarea ingredientelor Active. Procedeu special dezvoltat de CHANEL care permite crearea de Planifolia PFA, un ingredient activ cosmetic ultrapur. Brevet depus. (in v. 1)
 - La baza gamei SUBLIMAGE sta chintesenta unui ingredient activ unic: Planifolia **PFA***, un adevarat catalizator al reînoirii celulare. (in v. 2) (in the Ro. c.) in *Chanel, Sublimage*
- (2) Voluptuous curves. Sensational wear. Mascara Exceptionnel de Chanel (in the Br. c.)
 - Audacious curves. The ultimate seduction. The new mascara: Exceptionnel (in the Am. c.)
 - Privire seducatoare. Rezistenta impecabila. Mascara Exceptionnel de Chanel. (in the Ro. c.) in *Chanel, Exceptionnel*

Spelling mistakes are sometimes encountered in the foreign versions of the ads, too. For instance, in the British ads for *L'Oréal* (3) and *Nivea* (4) the adverbial of frequency is misspelt. The British copywriters mix up the adjective ‘everyday’ with the adverbial of frequency ‘every day’.

- (3) Give your dry hair the royal treatment **everyday**. (in v. 3) (in the Br. c.)
 - Now Give Your Hair The Royal Treatment: [...] (in the Am. c.)
 - <<Lăptisorul de matcă? Pentru părul uscat, este o premieră*!>> (in v. 1) (in the Ro. c.) in *L'Oréal, Elvive & Elsève Re-Nutrition & Vive Pro Hydra Gloss*
- (4) Use it **everyday** and you won't be the only one who falls in love with your irresistibly touchable skin. (both in v. 1 and in v. 2) (in the Br. c.)

To leave your skin smooth and instantly ready to touch and be touched. (in v. 1 and v. 2) (in the Am. c.)

[...] untul de Shea, extractele de ginkgo și vitamina E îți hidratează pielea pentru a-ți oferi o catifelare unică și pentru a o lăsa irezistibil de moale la atingere. (in the Ro. c.) in *Nivea, Smooth Sensation & Loțiune Cremă Delicată*

“Radiant pastels” in the ad for *Shiseido* (5) is a marked collocation (‘radiant’ means ‘very bright’ – see *Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English* 2008, 1349) that is translated into Romanian by a highly marked collocation. The adjective or the collocate in the American headline becomes the noun or the node word in the Romanian headline for *Shiseido*, and the node word in the source text becomes a collocate in the target text. The message conveyed by the Romanian copywriter is ambiguous, not only due to the fact that s/he forgot to place the diacritical mark below the letter ‘t’ in the word ‘radiantă’, but also because the syntagm ‘radianță pastelată’ is not employed in Romanian. ‘Radianță’ (‘radiance’) is a mistranslation in the target text. The second sense of ‘radianță’ is ‘soft gentle light’, but in Romanian, the noun ‘radianță’ is not synonymous with ‘lumină’ (‘light’) – it is used only in the field of physics (see *Dex online* 2014). A more appropriate translation of “radiant pastels” would be “pasteluri luminoase” (“light pastels”) or “culori pastelate luminoase” (“light pastel colours”).

- (5) **Radiant Pastels** from *Shiseido*...In a flash, color blossoms with unexpected radiance. (in v. 1 and in v. 2) (in the Am. c.)

Radianță Pastelată de la *Shiseido* ...Imediat după aplicare, culorile prind viață și conferă o radiantă neașteptată. (in the Ro. c.) in *Shiseido, Hydro-Powder*

2.2. Register / tone of voice

In the ads for *Nivea* (6), (7), (8) and *Raymond Weil, Shine* (9), the British and the Australian copywriters respect the ‘face’ of the potential buyer by employing the “courtesy adverb” or the “politeness marker” (Leech 1995, 121) ‘please’. The “possibility marker” ‘if’ (Brown and Levinson 1996, 153) also influences the illocutionary force of the British versions of the ads (6), (7), (8). The effect of the imperative is toned down in (6), (7), (8) because the conditional clause precedes the main clause it belongs to (thus, the imperative has the force of a promise), and in (9) because of the insertion of a clause of purpose introduced by ‘for’. Unlike the British and the Australian advertisers, the American copywriter urges the reader to visit the brands websites.

- (6) If you have any questions, comments or suggestions **please contact** us on 08456 448 556 or via our website www.nivea.co.uk (in the Br. c.) in *Nivea, Happy Time; Nivea, Invisible Protection; Nivea, My Silhouette!*; *Nivea, Smooth Sensation*
“Visit www.NIVEAusa.com/smooth (in the Am. c.) in *Nivea, Smooth Sensation*
www.NIVEA.ro in *Nivea, Happy Time; www.NIVEA.ro/protectieinvizibila* in *Nivea, Invisible Protection; www.NIVEA.ro/mysilhouette* in *Nivea, My Silhouette!*;
www.NIVEA.ro in *Nivea, Loțiune Cremă Delicată* – all these websites are written in the Ro. c.
- (7) If you have any questions, comments or suggestions **please contact** us on 0845 6448556 or via our website www.nivea.co.uk (in the Br. c.)
Find more temptingly touchable skin care ideas at www.NIVEAusa.com/sunkissed. (in the Am. c.)
www.NIVEA.ro/summerbeauty (in the Ro. c.) in *Nivea, Sunkissed Skin & Sun-Kissed Firming Moisturizer & Summer Beauty*
- (8) If you have any questions, comments or suggestions **please contact** us on 08456 448 556 (in the Br. c.)

- (in the Ro. c.) in *Nivea, Anti-Wrinkle*; www.NIVEA.ro (in the Ro. c.) in *Nivea, Caregloss & Shine*
- (9) For your nearest RAYMOND WEIL stockist **please telephone** 01428 656822 or **e-mail** raymond-weil@swico.co.uk (in v. 1, v. 2, v. 3 and v. 4) (in the Br. c.)
For your official stockist **please telephone** (61 2) 9363 1088 or **e-mail**: sales@raymondweil.com.au (in the Aus. c.)
GALT orologerie elvețiană Calea Dorobanților 153 • J.W. Marriott Grand Avenue Tel. 021.231.45.66 • info@ceasuri.ro • www.ceasuri.ro” (in v.1) / “GALT orologerie elvețiană Calea Dorobanților 153 • Tel. 021.231.45.66 George Enescu 5 • Tel. 021.318.91.70 J.W. Marriott Grand Avenue • Tel. 021.403.35.29 info@ceasuri.ro • www.ceasuri.ro (in v.2) (in the Ro. c.) in *Raymond Weil, Shine*

In the ads for *Estée Lauder* (10), the American advertisers even opt for imperatives accompanied by the adverb ‘now’. They use these flat unembellished imperatives, because they are of the opinion that the addressee’s reaction is more important than loss of face. The Romanian translators of the adverts (6) – (10) are less direct than the foreign copywriters. They use indirect or mitigated directives.

- (10) esteelauder.co.uk (in the Br. c.) in *Estée Lauder, Beyond Paradise*; www.esteelauder.co.uk (in v. 1 and v. 2) (in the Br. c.) in *Estée Lauder, Time Zone Shop now* at esteelauder.com (in the Am. c.) in *Estée Lauder, Beyond Paradise*; *Estée Lauder, Perfectionist [CP+] 2*; *Estée Lauder, Youth Dew*; **Shop now** at esteelauder.com/timezone (in the Am. c.) in *Estée Lauder, Time Zone* www.esteelauder.com / beyondparadise (in v. 1) / esteelauder.com (in v. 2) (in the Ro. c.) in *Estée Lauder, Beyond Paradise*; esteelauder.com (in the Ro. c.) in *Estée Lauder, Perfectionist [CP+] 2*; in *Estée Lauder, Youth Dew*; in *Estée Lauder, Time Zone*

2.3. Coherence

The British copywriters ensure coherence by better connecting the texts and the images of the ads for *Dove* (11) and *Epson* (12). In the British ad for *Dove* (11), the personal pronoun “it” refers to the image and, at the same time, it contributes directly to cohesion as Halliday and Hasan (1993) defined it. ‘It’ is both exophoric and endophoric, i.e. cataphoric. It refers to the hair of the women in the picture and it presupposes ‘hair’. The British copywriter realises a relation of ‘co-referentiality’, whereas the Romanian one a relation of ‘co-extension’: s/he repeats the word ‘hair’ twice. S/he also tries to establish a relationship between the visual and the verbal component, but this relationship is vaguer than the relationship established between text and image by the British copywriter. The Romanian advertiser does not describe what happened to the hair of the women in the ad; s/he lets the reader guess what the choices that damaged their hair were.

- (11) [the picture of the product] brush **it**, blow-dry **it**, let the weather at **it**, if there’s light damage, make sure the solution isn’t too heavy-handed. (in *Dove, Essential Care*) / [the picture of the product] straighten **it**, colour **it**, curl **it**, if there’s serious dryness or damage, Dove has a serious solution. (in *Dove, Intense Care*) We all enjoy expressing ourselves through our hair. (in the Br. c.) (in *Dove, Essential Care* and *Dove, Intense Care*)
[the picture of the product] unele alegeri ne pot degrada părul mai mult ...sau mai puțin. (in v. 1 and v. 2)
Micile gesturi de zi cu zi (uscatul, periatul, expunerea la soare etc) slăbesc rezistența părului. (in v. 1, *Dove, Essential Care & Intense Care*) / De multe ori ne chinuim părul în fel și chip, pentru a exprima ceea ce vrem. [...] Dar și micile gesturi de zi cu zi (uscatul, periatul, expunerea la soare etc) slăbesc rezistența părului. (in v. 2, *Dove, Intense Care & Essential Care*) (in the Ro. c.) in *Dove, Essential Care & Intense Care*

The British advertiser of the ad for *Epson* (12) favours substitution (“one” substitutes for “all-in-one Wi-Fi printer”) over repetition in order to direct the consumer’s attention to the picture of the printer. The Romanian translator of this ad ties two sentences together by reiterating the word “multifunctional”, but s/he does not focus the reader’s attention on the printer in the ad image.

- (12) [*the picture of the printer*] Your home deserves **one** Our new stylish **all-in-one Wi-Fi printers** are built to fit seamlessly into your modern lifestyle. (in the Br. c.)
 [*the picture of the printer*] Casa dumneavoastră merită cel mai bun **multifuncțional** Noile noastre **imprimante multifuncționale** cu tehnologie Wi-Fi sunt concepute pentru a se potrivi stilului dumneavoastră modern de viață. (in v. 1 and v. 2) (in the Ro. c.) in *Epson, Wi-Fi*

2.4. Cohesion, audience appropriateness and explicitness

‘Cohesion’ is another revision parameter that can be taken into consideration when producing the final draft of the print ad. I have noticed that if the advertised brand is French, the Romanian copywriter does not always use the opposite words of some lexical items in the headline to create cohesive ties.

For example, in the ad for *L’Oréal* (13), only the British copywriter uses antonymic pairs to show how good the shampoo is. If the consumer’s hair is “weak”, the advertised product helps it stay “strong”, if it is “limp”, the shampoo makes it feel “weightless”, if the hair is “lifeless”, the product makes it look “replenished”, if it is “dull” and “straw-like”, the hair becomes “shiny” and “silky” due to the use of the product. In the Romanian version of the ad, there is no antonymic pair which indicates that *Elsève, Total Repair* improves the consumer’s appearance because the problems women may have with their hair are not mentioned in the headline of the ad. The Romanian translator only enumerates the qualities of the product (“anti-fragility”, “anti-dullness”, “anti-dryness”, “anti-thinness”, “anti-split ends”) and the results obtained after its use – the hair is strong, shiny, silky, replenished, and its fiber is reconstructed. In my opinion, the British version of this ad is more persuasive than the Romanian ad, due to its problem-solution format.

- (13) 1 **Weak** 2 **Limp** 3 **Lifeless** 4 **Dull** 5 **Straw-like** 5 problems, 1 solution. Full Restore 5 your hair. NEW Elvive Pro-Keratin + Ceramide (only in v. 2 and v. 3). (in v. 1, v. 2 and v. 3)
 Hair feels **stronger**, **weightless**, with a healthy-looking **shine**. (only in v. 1)
 The results: Feels **stronger** Feels **weightless** Looks **replenished** Has a healthy-looking **shine** (in v. 2) / Has a healthy **shine** (in v. 3) Feels **silky** (only in v. 2 and v. 3) (in the Br. c.)
 1 **Anti-Fragilitate** 2 **Anti-Tern** 3 **Anti-Uscare** 4 **Anti-Subțiere** 5 **Anti-Vârfuri despicate** (in v. 1) / Despicate (in v. 2) 5 probleme, 1 Soluție. Prima reparare totală* NOU Elsève Pro-Keratină + Ceramide Reconstituanți (only in v. 1)
 5 Acțiuni reparatoare: **Fibra reconstituită** **Rezistență** **Atingere de mătase** **Strălucire de sănătate** **Vitalitate** (only in v. 1) (in the Ro. c.) in *L’Oréal, Elvive, Full Restore & Elsève, Total Repair*



The ads for *Clinique* (14), *Oasis* (15), *Rimmel* (16) - (17) and *Burberry* (18) prove that some advertisements are very well tailored to consumers and that the copywriters pay special attention to the revision parameter called ‘audience appropriateness’. The yes-no question “Do meetings age your skin?” is formulated only by the American copywriter of the ad for *Clinique* (14). His/ her aim was to tie the ad copy to the American culture. The American copywriter addresses an individualistic and career-oriented woman. This question is not asked by the British and the Romanian



advertisers because the workplace policies may vary from culture to culture (even if the companies are multinational).

- (14) [...] Stress can damage skin with effects much like sun and pollution.* [...] Do meetings age your skin? Find out more at clinique.com (in the Am. c.)
 [...] Stress can damage skin with visible effects much like sun and pollution.* [...] www.clinique.co.uk (in the Br. c.)
 [...] Stresul poate dăuna tenului în aceeași măsură ca soarele sau poluarea. [...] clinique.com (in the Ro. c.) in *Clinique, Superdefense*

The ads for *Oasis* (15), *Rimmel* (16) - (17) and *Burberry* (18) illustrate that the British producer emphasises the product nationality in the ads for British brands adapted to other markets. S/he suggests to the Romanian and the American copywriters to inform the consumer that the advertised product is made in the United Kingdom, therefore it is trustworthy. This piece of information is conveyed either verbally or visually. In the Romanian and the American ads (15) and (18) the name of the product is associated with the capital of the United Kingdom. The Romanian advertiser of the ad for *Oasis* points out that “oasis [is based in] London” and the American and the Romanian readers of the ad for *Burberry, London* are announced that the perfume is sent from London: “[We send you the product with] love from London”. *Rimmel*, the British brand, is linked both to London and to the flag of the United Kingdom in the Romanian and in the American adverts for *Rimmel* (16) and (17).

- (15) oasis WWW.OASIS-STORES.COM (in v. 1 and v. 2) (in the Br. c.)
 oasis LONDON (in v. 1, v. 2 and v. 3) (in the Ro. c.) in *Oasis*
 (16) www.rimmellondon.com (in the Br. c.)

www.rimmellondon.com  / www.rimmellondon.com  (in the Ro. c.) in *Rimmel, Extreme Definition*; in *Rimmel, Full Volume 2004*; in *Rimmel, Full Volume 2005*; in *Rimmel, Lasting Finish*; in *Rimmel, Xtreme Volume*

- (17) R I M M E L  LONDON (in the Br. c.)
 R I M M E L  LONDON (in the Am. c.) in *Rimmel, Sexy Curves*
 (18) — (in the Br. c.)
 Love from London (in the Am. c. and in the Ro. c.) in *Burberry, London*

Explicit language is a characteristic of the British advertising style (the British culture is a low-context communication culture) and that is why the British copywriters use facts and ‘reason-why’ arguments accompanied by information on product characteristics and by logical, scientific data (de Mooij 1998: 273-4). In the print ads for cars – e.g. in the ads for *Chevrolet* (19) and *Toyota* (20) – the British consumer is given more details about the features of the car. The British consumer would buy *Chevrolet* for its alloy wheels, for its audio system equipped with a *CD* and an *MP3* player, for its air conditioning system, for its electrically adjustable door mirrors, for its front fog lamps or for its front and side airbags. Only a few features of the car are enumerated by the Romanian copywriter who belongs to a high-context culture (the number of doors, the capacity and the power of the engine, the type of the air conditioning system and of the audio system). The ad for *Toyota*, also proves that in the ads for cars, the act of describing is realised both by the foreign copywriter and by the Romanian one, but the foreign consumer is given more details about the technical specifications of the vehicle. In (20), the Romanian translator focuses only on the fact that the car is safe due to its Integrated Active Drive System and due to its nine airbags.

- (19) Standard on all Aveo models: Front and side airbags, Remote central locking, Electric front windows, Radio/CD player with MP3 jack and ABS. Additional features available within the range include Air conditioning, Electric rear windows, Electrically adjustable door mirrors, 15" Alloy wheels, Rear spoiler and Front fog lamps. (in the Br. c.)
Acum poți alege între modelele Aveo cu 3 uși sau 5 uși, disponibile cu două noi motoare economice de 1,2 litri (84 CP) sau 1,4 litri (100 CP). În plus, te poți bucura de climatizare automată și de un sistem audio MP-3 jack. (in the Ro. c.) in *Chevrolet, Aveo*
- (20) The beautiful new special edition RAV4 XT-R With intelligent four-wheel drive system, privacy glass, 17" alloys, Bluetooth connectivity, rear parking sensors, cruise control, 6 CD autochanger and dual-zone climate control for only £19,995. (in the Br. c.)
IADS (Integrated Active Drive System) pentru o maximă siguranță a șofatului în condiții extreme și maximum de plăcere în condiții normale de drum; dar și 9 airbag-uri pentru o siguranță la superlativ. (in the Ro. c.) in *Toyota, RAV4 XT-R & City*

3. Conclusion

Successful adaptation of advertisements depends on how much effort the copywriters or the advertising translators invest in the translation phases.

As we have seen in the previous analysis, they use the right words if they take into consideration the contextual information – such as the information about the readership profile – that is available to them at the pre-translation phase. If the copywriter/ translator is not aware that s/he should check the draft translation by him/herself, or, to put it differently, if s/he does not integrate the 'self-revision' phase into the translation production, the translation could fail. Some ads in my corpus show that sometimes the copywriter/ translator does not revise the text that s/he has translated. S/he does not explain the meaning of acronyms and s/he does not detect and correct logical errors or spelling mistakes. Any translation problem, even small superficial details can involve risks since the audience may judge negatively both the copywriters and their clients – i.e. the producers.

Whether s/he is a novice translator or a more experienced one, the advertising translator should produce a smooth-flowing text and should attempt to make the picture and the text cohere, like in the British ads for *Dove* and *Epson* (see 2.3).

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Corpus

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