Beyond Words: A Multimodal Approach to Translation Applied to Global Standardized Advertising Campaigns in International Women's Magazines

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ABSTRACT

This thesis draws on approaches to globalization, translation and advertising to analyze current translation practices using multimodal advertising texts. The purpose of this study is to prove the need to approach advertising translation from an interdisciplinary and intersemiotic perspective and to incorporate such an approach into translation training and practice. The project is framed within the broader context of globalization and its impacts on socio-economic changes and cultural interaction worldwide. Technological advances and the intensification of global communication enhance the steady flow of knowledge and information, whilst standardized strategies used in global advertising campaigns highlight a simultaneous tendency to accentuate commonalities between cultures.

However, one key obstacle to the diffusion of standardized messages is language diversity, which has caused translation to gain an active role in global advertising, since it facilitates dialogue between global companies and international consumers. Translation has thus become a commercial tool, as well as an activity that overcomes linguistic and cultural barriers. This thesis focuses on the translation of advertisements as an intentional communication act that involves a team process into which translation may be integrated. Translation encompasses concepts that extend beyond linguistic matters, such as contextual issues and extralinguistic communication sign systems. The translation of advertisements is a growing area of study, yet current research is mainly limited to the study of linguistic matters. Consequently, in order to improve the accuracy and effectiveness of multimodal translations (text and images, in this study) in a professional context, this research incorporates concepts and knowledge from visual analysis and advertising.

This thesis suggests a multimodal method of analysis consisting of different phases integrating visual analysis as a part of the translation process. The proposed methodology is illustrated through a corpus of Spanish-English pairs of standardized print advertisements from the beauty and cosmetics sector. The relevance of international advertising translation allows for the analysis of the state and evolution of gender portrayal in international cultures, reflected in the use of both verbal and non-verbal content. This dissertation highlights how advertising has contributed to the creation and consolidation of feminine stereotypes, but further research could be carried out to analyze the genderized use of text and images in the standardized advertisements selected for this project.

The conclusion drawn from this study is that it is vital to consider the extralinguistic aspects surrounding a multimodal text from both a descriptive and critical perspective in order to gather connotative information from words, images and the text-image unit. International brands should be aware of the risks derived from approaching different international

consumer bases with campaigns that maintain the same image across cultures. Advertising translation would thus benefit from further collaborative work between translators and marketers to better understand and consolidate the role of translation in this area.

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