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THE EFFECT OF TRANSCREATION ON COHERENCE AND THE MARKETING PURPOSE IN ARABIC: A COMPARISON WITH A REFERENCE TEXT

ABSTRACT

Localisation into target languages and cultures has become a need of international corporations that wish to expand. Localisation involves several translation strategies, including transcreation. However, this strategy implies transformation and creativity, which raises questions about the coherence of transcreated messages. The paper applies the functionalist theory and reports on 15 international corporate websites that were localised into Arabic. The slogan is the main focus of the analysis; slogans have an appellative element that needs creativity to be applied if they are to be conveyed correctly. Having selected the transcreated slogans based on predetermined criteria, this study assesses the similarities and differences between the Arabic and English slogans in terms of the overall message and coherence with the description of the product. It narrows down the corpus to focus on that specific quality issue, since coherence can affect meaning negatively if it is done incorrectly, for example, when context is not taken into account. The results show the extent to which the transcreation is coherent, pinpoint the potential accuracy gaps resulting from transcreation and determine how this strategy meets advertising standards.

Keywords: *coherence, corporate websites, functionalist translation, transcreation, website localisation*

1. INTRODUCTION

The increasing adoption of localisation by international corporations has been remarkable in terms of increasing visibility and reach. Most of the localised content relating to the corporations is intended for commercial purposes and aims to provide “the look and feel of having been created specifically for a target market”.¹ In fact, digital spaces absorb between 20 and 30 percent of advertising expenses and this estimation is expected to increase (Stenger & Bourliataux-Lajoinie 2014, 132). Such localised content

¹ <https://www.gala-global.org/industry/intro-language-industry/what-localization>



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falls under the advertising genre of translation, which implies certain conventions based on the target locale that represents a market (Yunker 2003, 16; Jiménez-Crespo 2019, 28), or a “union of language variety and cultural norms” (Pym 2005). Compliance with cultural and linguistic norms was criticised in an earlier paper (Kassawat 2019). This paper focuses on the creative aspect of the translation in relation to its function, because complying with the target-language conventions means following approaches based on a target language. Advertising texts and their translation require creativity and adaptation of the target language by nature – see Pedersen (2014) – which corresponds with a concept of localisation that is

[I]n line with the functionalist notion of adequacy, emphasizes users’ expectations and achieving the communicative purpose for which the localization was commissioned, rather than equivalence relationships to source texts (Jiménez-Crespo 2013, 18).

The industry uses the term transcreation to “commodify” its services (Kassawat, 2020, 75), and translation studies scholars encourage translators to transcreate to distinguish themselves from cheap/voluntary translators (Katan 2016, 377–378). Moreover, transcreation is seen to be “moderately expensive” compared to translation, as the former is an “extra service” (Munday & Gambier 2014, 20; Carreira 2023, 129).² From another angle, when advertising texts are integrated in localised websites, translation issues are not limited to only the way the source language is conveyed and whether the message is reflected. The complex process of localisation and the multiple agents working on each string can lead to contextual and functional errors. Adding the transcreation approach to achieve the desired outcome, there is a need to examine the resulting quality of translation. More specifically, accuracy aspects, such as coherence in the transcreated texts, should be analysed. This paper is a continuation of a previous study (Kassawat 2022) that focused on the level of linguistic and cultural adaptation of websites localised into Arabic, and which investigated what transcreation consists of – see Kassawat (2020) – besides aspects relating to readability and comprehensibility.

This paper goes beyond the issues mentioned above and tackles the following question: How coherent and meaningful are transcreated messages in relation to the marketing purpose (the function)? Before we attempt to answer this question, a theoretical discussion will take place regarding the terminology used and which methodological model to follow. Then, the methodology will be detailed in terms of the corpus (advertising blurbs) compilation and analysis. The results will be illustrated later with examples to show the issues related to coherent cases. Finally, a conclusion will be provided to highlight the strengths, limitations and applications of the research.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Localisation and transcreation

The research question necessitates distinguishing between certain terms that are often used interchangeably, such as adaptation, localisation and transcreation. A detailed theoretical discussion was undertaken in previous works (Kassawat 2020, 2022) and here we will explain briefly why the term transcreation is used to describe the concerned part of corpus. Localisation is viewed as a translation modality (Jiménez-Crespo 2013) with several “translation types”; it relates to many “digital genres”, in addition to being a concept in translation itself (O’Hagan & Mangiron 2013, 107). Therefore, it is a comprehensive notion, process and industry too. In turn, adaptation is generally viewed as a translation procedure (Delisle, Lee-Jahnke & Cormier

2 See Martín (2020) on the employability of students after they had undergone transcreation training.

1999; Vinay & Darbelnet 2000), so it is a part of a strategy or a holistic approach, such as domestication and foreignisation (Lawrence 2001). As for transcreation, it is defined as

[A] dynamic and functional translation genre-specific strategy, or sub-strategy, that can be applied on a text segment or a whole text, and implies creativity through combining and making use of different strategies and procedures to achieve an aesthetic, entertaining and/or persuasive effect in the audience (Kassawat 2020, 76; also see Gaballo 2012).

Having established the terms we use, and why, we discuss the model selected in relation to the field and text genre in question. Given the commercial and advertising nature of the content and the nature of localisation, the appellative function (Nord 2005) is the main element in this study. Contrary to other content types, such as legal, literary and technical, advertising-related content relies more on its effect on the target language than on loyalty to the source language, considering, in particular, that the notion of the author is absent from commercial websites (Vandal-Sirois 2015, 4). Therefore, from a functionalist point of view, accuracy at the word level and the sentence level is less important. The end user and how they will receive the text and react to it are our main concerns. However, judging the target text implies receiving a coherent message, besides having a logical argument about the product being presented. In order to examine this aspect of accuracy, there is a need for a model that allows us to (1) prioritise the target text, and (2) study specific aspects required for research purposes only, rather than using comprehensive models that attempt to cover all the translation aspects.

2.2 An approach to localisation criticism

The literature presents many studies on translation quality, which shows how important this subject is. These studies apply or propose different approaches to assessing translation, and include terms such as assessment, evaluation, revision and criticism. We summarise the main points such models take into account, to learn from them and apply what is suitable for this study.

In general, experience-based approaches (Drugan 2013) concentrate on the tools used and the workflow type, while text-based approaches are more relevant to this research question. The latter are either semi-holistic, microtextual, or holistic. Williams (2009) explains them by referring to the importance of looking into several levels of translation assessment, to include accuracy, target language quality and situationality. Williams (2001) criticises existing microtextual analysis for hindering the assessment at the macrostructure level. However, microtextual models provide a detailed map of the potential errors that can be found in a translated text. Mossop (2020) classifies errors into groups, including meaning transfer (accuracy and completeness), content (logic and facts), language and style, visual presentation, and client instructions. Other researchers have focused on accuracy in comparison to the source text, and in relation to the target text, in addition to functional, systematic and random errors, and errors in the product and the process (Martínez Melis & Hurtado Albir 2001). In addition to error classification, severity of errors is also measured, as influenced by the industry proposition, such as in the LISA error-based model, which specifies minor, major and critical severities (Pym 2020). Another equivalence-based model is that of al-Qinai (2000). It includes textual typology, the text layout, coherence of the thematic structure and cohesion, pragmatic equivalence, lexical properties and grammatical equivalence. This model has been criticised because it cannot be applied to all text types and translation settings, because it does not take into account the translation process and the frequent updates of the content required by localisation (Drugan 2013). Similarly, source-based models, such as that of House (1997),

were found to be unsuitable for certain situations, for instance, if the brief is not available, the work conditions and tools are unknown, and if the model mainly focuses on mismatches between the source and the target texts (Drugan 2013). Another issue is the subjectivity of the evaluator, even if a corpus is used in the evaluation (Hassani 2011).

In localisation research, most of the factors at the microtextual level are inaccessible to an off-site researcher who does not know which language or text was used as a source, for comparison purposes, what process was followed and what tools were used, and what instructions the client provided. Information on the severity of the errors can be helpful for the analysis if the impact on the client is specified. For instance, if the text is not very visible, a major error might not have much of an impact. Therefore, holistic models can help in finding solutions for certain aspects discussed above, while also having their own gaps.

For Larose (1998), any assessment should rely on four poles: (1) the object: what is being assessed, that is, the transfer of meaning, clarity, readability and/or other elements; (2) the assessor, including their needs and values; (3) the parameters, that is, what guided the translator's choices; and (4) the method of the assessment, for example, using a holistic or analytical method and the way the elements are measured. Nord (2005, 182) proposes a target-based method of criticism, using the target text as the starting point, to analyse its coherence with the situation in which it is 'functioning'. The model is not limited to intratextual components, but includes extratextual or pragmatic factors. Once the target text has been analysed, the analysis of the source can start by contrasting it with the translation, depending on the information available, such as the desired effect and the function (Nord 2005, 183–184). This proposal corresponds with that of Larose, who underlines the importance of evaluating the adequacy of the results in relation to the required goals, based on the principle that there is no ideal translation that lacks a purpose:

To judge a translation is, above all, to evaluate the adequacy of the results obtained with the intended objectives, based on the principle that there is no ideal translation outside a relationship of purpose (own translation of Larose 1998, 2).³

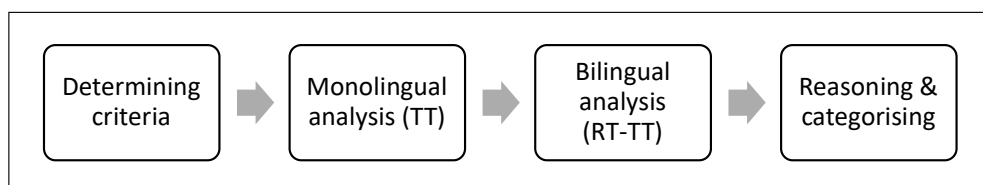
Having discussed different approaches to translation quality assessment, this paper will use the term criticism instead of assessment, quality control or evaluation. The term criticism is used, specifically, to analyse the final outcome, which is presented to and seen by the end user of a localised website. Criticism also gives more flexibility in research in terms of the focus of the analysis, particularly if certain information is not available, such as the source language and process. It helps to avoid the scoring system involved in analysis, which can lead to merely quantitative observations, while criticism should also give credit to the translator's work, and highlight the issues more objectively (Reiss 2000). The study will be based on the target text and its function, following Nord's proposal (2005), with a focus on the logic and coherence of the message. The next section, therefore, details the methodology used to compile and analyse the corpus in the original and comprehensive research, and the additional analysis presented in this paper to measure the effect of transcreation on accuracy of websites localised into Arabic.

3 Juger d'une traduction, c'est d'abord et avant tout évaluer l'adéquation des résultats obtenus aux objectifs visés en s'appuyant sur le principe selon lequel il n'existe pas d'idéal de traduction hors d'un rapport de finalité (Larose 1998, 2).

3. METHODOLOGY

3.1 Corpus compilation and analysis

To answer the research question, a corpus of 15 international corporate websites was compiled using Nord's model of criticism (2005). The corpus consists of 2 524 Arabic product blurbs (approximately 107 095 Arabic words) taken equally from three industries: two high-tech product websites, one furniture product website, and 12 cosmetic product websites. The number of websites and blurbs was controlled by the availability of online content localised into Arabic. While each blurb consists of a slogan and a description of the product, the slogan was the main focus of the analysis; furthermore, its coherence with the overall message of the description was considered. The slogan is the element that carries the appellative function and works as a guideline for text comprehension (Reiss & Vermeer 2014, 168). Images were not included in the analysis, because of their irrelevance to the translation, that is, they do not show ideas related to the text itself, only to the product. Before the analysis of the target texts started, the selection criteria of the transcreated texts were defined, because of ambiguity regarding fulfilling the *skopos* (House 2015, 11). The second phase was an analysis of the target texts to find cases that fulfil the desired criteria, as explained below. The third phase was about checking the similarities and differences between the Arabic target text and the English text, as a reference only. The final phase was mainly about explaining these similarities and differences between the two texts and interpreting them (see Figure 1).



TT = target text; RT = reference text

Figure 1: Methodological map (Kassawat 2022, 152)

In the first phase of the corpus compilation, the criteria were based on previous studies on the genre of advertising. It is clear that such texts often include vernacular language, metaphors and rhetorical devices (Gully 1996), in addition to wordplay, assonance and alliteration (Pedersen 2014). Therefore, such elements were targeted and identified during the analysis. Similarly, texts with exclamation marks and question marks were selected, as these marks also refer to an appellative aspect in the Arabic language. The analysis was done regardless of the process or translation method and tools used, because “the boundary between HT [human translation] and MT [machine translation] has become increasingly blurred in recent years” (Castilho et al. 2018, 27). Having examined the Arabic (target language) full blurbs, 69 blurbs (2.7% of the whole corpus) were selected, because they contain the required elements explained above. Only 55 slogans (2% of the corpus) were selected, because the rest indicated potentially literal rather than creative approaches, because either a creative element in the description or a criterion in the slogan was very similar to the English text. After the transcreated slogans had been selected, they were analysed for coherence with the description of the Arabic blurb, and in contrast to the reference text to understand the

overall message. In this study, coherence indicates the use of relevant words, terms, ideas and messages in the slogan in relation to the description, and vice versa. In other words, the intended message in the slogan should be parallel with the description, and be free of out-of-context elements.

3.2 Why a reference text?

As discussed earlier, the target text takes priority in advertising and in the field of localisation in general. However, that does not mean there is no source text or that the source text is not important. Despite the target-focused nature of transcreation, the source text plays a pivotal role for the translator and the researcher in determining the purpose of the message, how the translation was crafted, what might have influenced the translation decision, and what could have caused problems. A methodological issue was a lack of access to the “internal knowledge” (Pym 2004, 28), for instance, a researcher working off-site or who is not informed of the translation process and who did the translation cannot tell which text or language is the source. Therefore, the source language and text/version cannot be determined and direct comparison of one text with another is not possible. The website URL or the other metadata do not help the researcher or the user to determine which version was used as a source. Moreover, given the “one-to-many geometry” versus the source–target-based model of “language-into-language situations” (Pym 2006), in localisation, the relationship between source and target texts has become vague (Lee 2009). Furthermore, “the concept of the ‘original’ attached to the ST [source text] becomes even less apparent” (O’Hagan & Mangiron 2013, 105) because the different versions are released simultaneously. In addition, regularly updating a website and its content makes it difficult to assess accuracy using the existing models. Therefore, and given the importance of having another text that gives a hint of what might have happened, considering a text as a reference

enables researchers to avoid direct comparisons of the version in question with another one, which might be updated without the change being reflected in all versions. It allows them to instead analyze the localized versions based on their monolingual functionality in the target language, as seen by the end user (Kassawat 2020, 77).

The reference text was used as a safety net in the analysis, to provide a reference point while still respecting the freedom given for the translation. The next section presents the results obtained from the second phase of analysis, with a few examples to show how the last phase was conducted to interpret the strategies followed in the conventional slogans, and to explain accuracy issues, where applicable.

4. RESULTS

Analysis of the corpus identified a small number of transcreated slogans, which represents the reality of the translations offered to the end user. These slogans were found to be prominent in the high-tech and cosmetics industries, while such creativity is virtually non-existent in the furniture industry. At the same time, examining the Arabic text and contrasting it with the reference text showed that accuracy issues in the cosmetics industry outnumbered such issues in the high-tech industry.

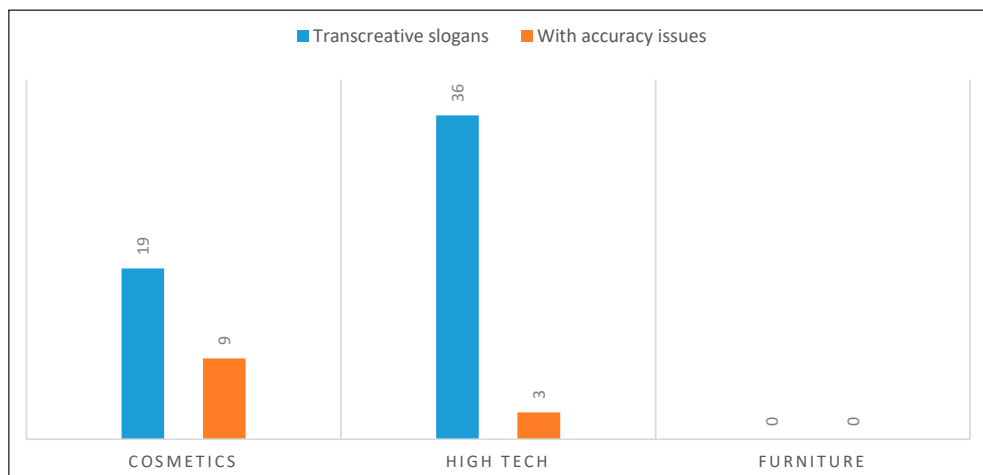


Figure 2: Comparison at the industry level of transcreated slogans, with and without issues

Since a criticism model was used, both coherent and incoherent slogans⁴ (in relation to the description) will be provided. It should be noted that other transcreation examples can be found in a previous publication that is dedicated to transcreation elements (Kassawat 2020). Therefore, only two examples on coherent transcreated slogans will be provided here, to enable discussion of incoherent cases. The transcreative slogans were found on high-tech product websites, and they comply with local conventions of advertising texts while still keeping coherence with the description.

⁴ Examples (1) and (5) were retrieved from www.samsung.com, Example (2) was retrieved from www.apple.com and Examples (3), (4), (6) and (7) were retrieved from www.benefitcosmetics.com, all on 3 April 2019.

4.1 Creative and coherent examples

Below are two transcreated examples of coherency between the slogan and the description in the same blurb.

Example (1)

Reference text:

Add music. Make GIFs. Get likes.

Super Slow-mo lets you see the things you could have missed in the blink of an eye. Set the video to music or turn it into a looping GIF, and share it with a tap. Then sit back and watch the reactions roll in.

Arabic text:

الموسيقى مع صور GIF... إعجاب لا يجف.

تتيح لك ميزة الحركة البطيئة جداً متابعة كل ما فاتك في غمضة عين، فيمكنك إغناء فيلم الفيديو بمعزوفات موسيقية أو تحويله إلى صورة GIF، ثم شاركه بمجرد ضغطة واحدة. استرخ الآن وراقب تفاعل الجماهير في كل مكان.

Back translation:

Music with GIF images... an admiration that doesn't dry up.

The super slow motion feature allows you to follow up everything that you missed in the blink of an eye, as you can enrich the video film with musical pieces or transform it into a GIF image, then share it with one tap. Relax now and watch the audience's reaction everywhere.

The Arabic text successfully achieves the appellative function, thanks to the rhyme of the words 'GIF' and *yajif* [dry up]. Moreover, the structure of the translation is different from that of the English text, as the former contains two rhyming parts and the latter has three simple parts. The Arabic text also introduces a metaphor: admiration is like a liquid that does not dry. The translation, in this case, contains different words and a different style from the English text, while remaining consistent regarding the description of the product. It reflects the functions of the product and the desired message.

Example (2)

Reference text:

USB-C. Singularly versatile.

The USB-C port puts everything you need in a port all in one place. It provides charging, speedy USB data transfer (up to 5Gb/s), and video output in a reversible design that's one-third the size of a USB 3 port, giving you the flexibility to easily connect your favorite devices.

Arabic text:

USB-C. تعددت المهام والمنفذ واحد.

يمنحك USB-C استخدامات المنافذ كلها في مكان واحد، إذ يوفر إمكانية الشحن والنقل السريع للبيانات عبر USB (لغاية 5Gb/ثانية)، وإخراج الفيديو في تصميم يعمل على الجهتين بثلاث حجم منفذ USB 3، ما يعطيك مرونة توصيل أجهزتك المفضلة بسهولة.

Back translation:

USB-C. The tasks may vary but the port is the same.

USB-C gives you all port usages in one place, as it provides charging, speedy USB data transfer (up to 5Gb/second), and video output in a design that works on both sides with one-third the size of a USB 3 port, giving you the flexibility to easily connect your favourite devices.

Example (2) also shows how consistent the slogan is with the description, while using a cultural reference that should ring a bell for users. The slogan represents a tweak of the Arab proverb “death is death regardless of the causes”. The word ‘causes’ became ‘tasks’ and the word ‘death’ became ‘port’ in the translation. The multiple functions of the product were clearly expressed in the slogan and were in coherence with the description.

4.2 Creative examples with coherence issues

Having presented examples of the criteria we were looking for in this research and which should be present in the studied genre, incoherent cases will be discussed. The example below is taken from a cosmetics website. It shows an exclamation mark in the Arabic text and provides a hint about the way the lips will smell after the product is used.

Example (3)

Reference text:

chachabalm

hydrating tinted lip balm

A juicy pout!

chachabalm conditions & hydrates with mango butter and sodium hyaluronate. This kiss of sheer color gives you the juiciest lips.

Arabic text:

مستحضر chachabalm

بلسم شفاه ملون ومرطب

شفاه بنفحة الفواكه!

يحتوي مستحضر chachabalm على زبدة المانجو وهyalورونات الصوديوم التي تحمي وترطب الشفاه. يمنحك هذا البلسم شفاه أسرة.

Back translation:

The chachabalm product

hydrating and colouring lip balm

Lips with a whiff of fruits!

The chachabalm product contains mango butter and sodium hyaluronate, which protect and hydrate lips. This balm gives you captivating lips.

Upon reading the description, we find that the product is a lip balm and that the smell is not specifically mentioned in the description. The English description includes mango butter as a component, which does not necessarily mean that the product smells of fruit – at least not of all fruits. The focus of the message moved from the texture (juicy pout) to the smell (whiff of fruits). Moreover, upon examining the similarities and differences with the English version, the incoherence can be interpreted by a misunderstanding of the message (confusing 'juicy' and 'juice') and/or avoiding the sexual connotation of 'juicy pout'.

Example (4)

Reference text:

hervana ultra plush

berry pink lip gloss

Pure lip bliss!

Our plush glosses glide on extra smooth and feel ahhh-mazing. The six irresistible shades, from sultry nudes to punchy pinks, come in soft-squeeze tubes with a custom tip designed for perfectly even application.

Arabic text:

مستحضر hervana ultra plush

ملمع شفاه وردي توتي

شفاه في غاية النعومة!

تنساب مستحضرانا لتلميع الشفاه بكل نعومة وتجعلك تبدين رائعة. يتوفر هذا المستحضر في ست درجات ساحرة، من درجات النود الجذابة إلى الدرجات الوردية المثيرة، ويأتي في أنابيب من السهل الضغط عليها مع طرف صمّم خصيصاً لتطبيق متناغم مثالي.

Back translation:

The hervana ultra plush product

berry pink lip gloss

Very soft lips!

Our lip gloss products glide smoothly and make you look great! This product comes in six charming shades, from attractive nude shades to alluring pink shades, and it comes in soft-squeeze tubes with a tip designed especially for perfectly even application.

The appellative function achieved by Example (4) is weak, because the exclamation mark does not add much value to the translation. Not only is a creative element absent, the notions 'bliss' and 'purity' are absent in the reference text; the reasons relate to avoiding religious connotations that may not suit Arabic culture. More importantly, the slogan is not coherent with the description. The product is a gloss and the slogan focuses on the smoothness effect, which is mentioned in the body text but should not be treated as the main characteristic of a gloss product.

Example (5) relates to a high-tech product – a mobile phone with a special camera that has a wide view that makes it possible to include more people in a photo. The reference text prioritises this characteristic in the slogan, which is coherent with the body paragraph.

Example (5)

Reference text:

Get everyone in the shot

Selfies with friends have never looked better. The GALAXY Grand Prime has a 5MP front camera with an ultra-wide view angle of 85 degrees. The wider angle of view means you can get more of your friends and more of the background in every shot—and leave the selfie stick at home. The high resolution ensures you'll get crisper, more awesome photos that you can't wait to post.

Arabic text:

صورة تجمع بين الجميع

استمتع بصور ذاتية مع الأصدقاء لم يسبق لها مثيل. حيث يتمتع هاتف GALAXY Grand Prime بكاميرا أمامية بدقة 5 ميجابكسل بزواوية عرض فائقة الاتساع تبلغ 85 درجة. وتتيح لك هذه الزاوية العريضة التقاط صور تجمع المزيد من الأصدقاء وخلفية أكبر في كل لقطة - واستمتع بالصورة الذاتية التي تملأ جنبات المنزل. وتضمن الدقة العالية الحصول على صور أوضح وأكثر نقاءً ستشعر بالرغبة في نشرها على الفور.

Back translation:

A collage image among everyone

Selfies with friends have never looked better. The GALAXY Grand Prime has a 5MP front camera with an ultra-wide view angle of 85 degrees. The wider angle of view means you can get more of your friends and more of the background in every shot—and leave the selfie stick at home. The high resolution ensures you'll get crisper, more awesome photos that you can't wait to post.

The Arabic slogan changes the message of the English version and the Arabic description itself. The transcreated slogan refers to a photo made up of several images rather than one single image. Even though there is a creative attempt in the Arabic version, through the employment of a rhetorical device (a play on words *tajmee* and *jamee*), the message is confusing and can lead to an incorrect understanding of the function of the product. Transcreation, here, overrode the meaning.

Example (6)

Reference text:

gogotint cheek & lip stain

bright cherry tinted lip & cheek stain

You gogo, girl!

Gogotint is the wildest flush you can get from a bottle! Our see-through bright cherry red lip & cheek stain is vibrant, juicy and pops till you drop. Release your inner rebel with colour that lasts!

Arabic text:

مستحضر gogotint للخدود و الشفاه

صبغة كرزية مشرقة للشفاه و الخدود

كوني على استعداد، حبيبتنا!

إن مستحضر Gogotint هو أكثر التوردرات جراءة قد تحصلين عليها من زجاجة! إن صبغتنا الكرزية المشرقة واللامعة للشفاه و الخدود نابضة وذات نفحة فاكهية تمنحك طلة أسرة. أطلق العنان لروحك الجريئة والمثيرة مع لون طويل الثبات!

Back translation:

The gogotint product for the cheeks & the lips

bright cherry tint for the lips & the cheeks

Be ready, our darling!

The Gogotint product is the wildest flush you can get from a bottle! Our glossy and bright cherry lip and cheek stain is vibrant and has a fruity smell that gives you a captivating look. Release your inner daring and exciting spirit with a long lasting colour!

Example (6) is a cosmetic product blurb. While the Arabic slogan carries a local expression, "our darling", the meaning is not coherent with the description and can affect the marketing message. The slogan focuses on readiness, while the body text is about releasing inner daring and an exciting spirit. It should be mentioned that the rest of the translation also seems to avoid sexual connotations such as 'juicy' and 'pops till you drop'.

Example (7)

Reference text:

CORALista ultra plush

sheer coral lip gloss

A kiss of paradise!

Our plush glosses glide on extra smooth and feel ahhh-mazing. The six irresistible shades, from sultry nudes to punchy pinks, come in soft-squeeze tubes with a custom tip designed for perfectly even application.

Arabic text:

مستحضر coralista ultra plush

ملمع شفاه مرجاني شفاف

لون جذاب

تنساب مستحضر اتنا لتلميع الشفاه بكل نعومة لثمنحك شعورا رائعا! تأتي الدرجات الست الساحرة، من درجات النود الجذابة إلى الدرجات الوردية الأسرة، في أنابيب لينة مزودة بحافة صممت خصيصا لاستخدام مثالي.

Back translation:

The CORALista ultra plush product

sheer coral lip gloss

An attractive colour

Our glosses glide to gloss the lips so smoothly to give you a wonderful feeling! The six magical shades, from attractive nudes to captivating pinks, come in soft tubes with a custom tip designed for a perfect application.

The slogan in Example (6) lacks a dynamic touch: The translation is not appealing and does not comply with local conventions of adding a cultural or rhetorical reference. It was selected, in the first place, because of a criterion found in the description, which is not the main concern of this study. However, this example reveals interesting tendencies that are similar to the incoherencies discussed above. According to the description, the product is a transparent gloss; however, the slogan focuses on its colour. The translation introduces a confusion and incoherence in the Arabic version. When it is compared with the reference text, we find that it employs sexual and religious notions; these notions are absent, or avoided, in the Arabic version.

The next paragraphs will discuss the results and examples provided above in relation to the literature. The discussion will address general trends in the industry and translation-specific issues in the field of localisation and, particularly, in transcreated texts.

5. DISCUSSION

The general trend observed by this study is the high quality of transcreation for the high-tech product websites, and the relatively poor quality of transcreation for the cosmetics and furniture websites. This finding reveals that what appears to be a creative approach does not necessarily mean that the quality “fits the purpose” (Bowker 2020); instead, it questions the expensive rates required by translation agencies when they offer such service, which is considered as a “value-added” (Carreira 2023, 129) and that creative approaches are also encouraged in academia (Munday & Gambier 2014, 20; Katan 2016, 377–378). Therefore, creativity does not always have a positive impact on quality. The paper presented cases where the purpose and function were achieved in transcreation, with few or without noticeable issues. Moreover, the localisation process should be taken into account, and the agents should not be held accountable for all the issues found. For example, it is known that multiple updates of websites mean chunks of texts could be translated (Pym 2005, 21) without context, and multiple agents may work on the same text. This paper focused on the text that is presented to the end user and the marketing message. Therefore, the issues that were found hindered the achievement of the intended purpose, because misleading and inconsistent information was given in the slogan, and that affected its relation to the description. Attempts to adapt content to the target culture, such as avoiding sexual or religious references, are expected; however, adaptation was found to be applied blindly without ensuring that the final result still achieves the function. In other words, undesired notions were removed, but were not replaced by alternatives suitable for the context.

From another point of view, discrepancies in transcreation quality are linked to type of industry. Discrepancies may result from the budget of the client, the content visibility or the company size (Kassawat 2022, 255). Jiménez-Crespo reports that there is a relationship between web localisation processes and client size (2013, 29). It can be argued that corporations selling high-tech products are bigger in size and have a wide reach, which is a motivating factor for them to polish their content and protect their image. Regarding the product type or industry type, high-tech products have a relatively shorter life than that of cosmetics and furniture, which might motivate creativity (Kassawat 2022, 256) to attract and quickly persuade customers within the offering window. In fact, Drugan (2013) highlights that the quality assurance level is tailored to how sensible the content is, the size of the company, and to client budget. This makes sense, to a certain extent, because creating more attractive texts can be an “over-investment” (Pym 2000, 189) if expectations are low or requirements are few. However, current tendencies raise ethical questions about the quality offered to users – even if only a small number of people will see the content. These tendencies also contradict the concept of localisation and the purpose of using an expensive strategy such as transcreation. The localisation industry and the transcreation strategy are mainly based on function and presenting the target market with quality content; however, the results are that best practices are not always being followed and expectations are not always met.

6. CONCLUSION

This paper responded to a critical question about existing knowledge and expectations in the localisation industry and translation studies in relation to transcreation for localised websites and translation quality standards, such as coherence. The accuracy that is problematic in functionalism can be a complex matter, depending on the analysis approach. This study focused on the coherence aspect of accuracy and looked into how logical the arguments and the relationships are in the translation of marketing slogans and product descriptions. A qualitative and target-based approach was adopted. This approach was found to be more convenient than quantitative methods for studying a corpus related to advertising, and more suitable than the source-based or comparison-based methods that do not fit the nature and goals of localisation. The notion of the reference text helped us to avoid a direct and literal comparison with a source, even if it was known. Determining the criteria beforehand also helped to pave the way for an objective analysis, instead of providing general interpretations.

The results show that the transcreation quality exhibited discrepancies regarding coherence and the marketing purpose at the level of the type of industry (Figure 2). The criticism model that we adopted led us to discover the predetermined criteria in the target language, and to reveal their effectiveness and potential impact on the end user. The results clarify the effect of transcreation as a strategy used to persuade on the coherence and logic of the argument in the text. While this can be partly the result of the segmentation of texts during the localisation process, the full context, at the very least, should be provided to the agents, to ensure coherence of the message. Moreover, in the case where automatic translation is done, the coherence issue becomes more significant, because of the lack of association between one sentence and another. This finding, in turn, highlights the importance of human translation for creative genres.

The study was limited to a comparison with a reference text, which could not provide an accurate perspective. This was an obligatory path, given the challenges imposed by the nature of websites. The examples could help future research on localisation and transcreation with an emphasis on quality issues, as well as professional translators, translation students and trainers who opt for a creative approach and wish to practice transcreation professionally. The methodology and the findings should be useful for researchers who conduct research on transcreation, since such research often revolves around creativity and ignores basic textual aspects. We hope this study provides greater awareness of the potential issues involved in translation choices and the best way professionals can reflect marketing messages.

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