

TRANSLATING SPECIFIC CULTURAL ITEMS

Ludmila RĂCIULA, University Lecturer,
Alec Russo Balti State University

The translator often finds elements in a text which seem untranslatable. There are however, certain ways to measure and estimate the translatability of a text. These suggestions do not solve translation problems but provide the translator with means to approach a problematic text.

Translatability can be influenced by the expression possibilities of the target language. No two languages are similar. During the translation process some cultural colouring nuances will be lost, but could also be gained due to the vocabulary and lexical diversity of the target text. There will always be a certain degree of loss in meaning when a text is translated, 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.

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" that is connotation, denotation, register, 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.

One of the most difficult problems regarding advertisement translation is specific cultural items, which could include objects, historical references, customs and habits. The current trend in advertising is to use emotive situations which transcend cultural barriers in international advertising companies such as Nike. (Characters are portrayed in situations where they are encouraged by the slogan and the sentiment "Just do it". Universal themes such as winning and losing are used).

This is not possible for all product advertising. Many products need to have a specific cultural angle, for instance death cover insurance company. In different cultures, different signs, symbols and customs will be used. Thus, we can conclude that translating cultural texts often involve rewriting rather than translating a text, the cultural context and references are newly created.

Among the "technical" knowledge of cultural nature to be mastered, the following can be named:

- The adaption of dates and hours, weights and measures, currencies and addresses that often vary according to countries and languages.
- The meaning of colours and and the symbolism of geometrical and architectural forms that could be contradictory sometimes from one region to another.
- The cultural stereotype and social clichés in use in the hosting societies of the advertising message (ethnic preferences, religious convictions, national spirit, the representations of oneself and others).