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Multiple dimensions of international advertising

An analysis of the praxis in global marketing industry from a translation studies perspective

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1 Introduction

The world is becoming a global market for an ever-increasing and varied number of companies with a common aim: to sell their products to as many consumers as possible. However, the globalization of markets also means that companies today are addressing an incredibly varied target group, with many different languages and, more importantly, cultures. Brands now have to be able to earn the consumers' respect in each market in order to increase sales and fight competitors. In fact, "respect" has become the buzzword of the industry. As Ralph Lacher, president of the US advertising agency *La gente de RLR*, said in May 2005 at the American Marketing Association meeting in Los Angeles:

"Consumers respond best to marketers who invest in relationships-reaching out with respect—first to their hearts and then their wallets. To win, begin at the beginning: listen to your audience; market to their needs; and communicate on their terms."
(Lacher 2005)

Brands need to enter the communities and cultures in order to gain trust, be accepted and eventually be listened to. The only way brands can do this is by respecting the consumers' language and entering their cultural framework. In this paper some of the ways of achieving such local respect are analyzed.

2 Terminological and theoretical framework

It is important to define some key terms as well as the theoretical framework followed in this paper. Since terminology and theory are here related, I will introduce both at the same time in this section.

2.1 Advertising

Advertising is a mass-mediated communication. For communication to be classified as advertising it must be:

1. paid for
2. delivered to an audience via mass media, and
3. attempting to persuade.

In order to persuade, or be effective, the advertisement must communicate to the audience the message it wants to relay, that is, it needs to be understood. Therefore if international advertising aims at communicating across cultures, its messages need to be encoded in a way to be understood by the target culture. At this point, it is also important to add that advertising is a form of communication that employs not only verbal but also non-verbal signs in order to communicate messages about products or organizations. Within this paper, marketing will be used as a synonym for advertising.

2.2 Culture

Britannica.com (2007) defines Culture as:

“The integrated pattern of human knowledge, belief, and behavior that is both a result of and integral to the human capacity for learning and transmitting knowledge to succeeding generations. Culture thus consists of language, ideas, beliefs, customs, taboos, codes, institutions, tools, techniques, works of art, rituals, ceremonies, and symbols.”

Culture is the most important concept in anthropology. Anthropologists commonly use the term culture to refer to a society or group in which many or all people live and think in the same ways. Likewise, any group of people who share a common culture, and in particular, common rules of behaviour and a basic form of social organization, constitutes a society. Thus, the terms culture and society are to some extent interchangeable.

According to Encarta.msn.com (2007):

“Variation among cultures is attributable to such factors as differing physical habitats and resources; the range of possibilities inherent in areas such as language, ritual, and social organization; and historical phenomena such as the development of links with other cultures. An individual's attitudes, values, ideals, and beliefs are greatly influenced by the culture (or cultures) in which he or she lives. Culture change takes place as a result of ecological, socio-economic, political, religious, or other fundamental factors affecting a society.”

Therefore, in this paper, when I refer to cross-cultural advertising, I am talking about the reformulation of a message about a product or organization that has been created according to the language, ideas, beliefs, customs, taboos, codes, institutions, tools, techniques, works of art, rituals, ceremonies and symbols shared by a group, to the knowledge (language, ideas...) of another group of people.

2.3 Globalization

The term Globalization was – to my knowledge – born almost twenty years ago in a paper by Levitt called “The Globalization of Markets”. The Harvard professor claimed that thanks to technology, markets are being homogenized worldwide as are peoples’ needs and wishes, thus “the result is a new commercial reality – the explosive emergence of global markets for globally standardized products, gigantic world-scale markets of previously unimagined magnitudes.” (Levitt 1983: 20) Although today these words seem to be more true than ever, thanks to the unprecedented growth of the Internet and its commercial applications, the idea of “homogenized cultures” has been met by strong resistance. The term took on a political tone, personifying US “cultural imperialism” and was demonized by its polemicists. The definition of the term given by LISA (Localization Industry Standards Association) is the following:

“Globalization addresses all of the enterprise issues associated with making a company truly global. For the globalization of products and services this involves integrating all of the internal and external business functions with marketing, sales, and customer support in the world market.”
(Source: www.lisa.org/term/termdefinitions)

In these terms, Globalization is a function used in the process of globalizing a company, the key that opens the gates of foreign markets to its practitioners.

2.4 Internationalization

A key aspect within Globalization is that of Internationalization. The word that expresses the full meaning of this term better than any other is “enablement”. Internationalization involves the creation of a product that is as culturally neutral as possible by eliminating any culture-specific characteristics it may contain, thus enabling its easy and fast localization or tailoring.

2.5 Translation, localization, transcreation and adaptation

I just mentioned the word “localization”, a term that has become very fashionable in the last few years. Actually, for a lot of people there is a fine line between translation and localization, and for many there is no clear distinction between them (cf. Nauert (2008) in this volume). Interestingly, the advertising industry does not really use either of the two terms. Instead, “trans-creation” or “adaptation” are favored. Let us try to clarify the difference. Historically, Nida probably offered one of the most famous definitions of *Translation*: “Translation consists of producing in the target language the closest natural equivalent of the source language message, firstly with respect to meaning and secondly with respect to style.” (Nida 1959: 19)

Moving into the perspective I want to give to the term translation in this paper, I would like to cite Vermeer. According to Vermeer to translate means, “to produce a text in a target setting for a target purpose and target addressees in target circumstances” (Vermeer cited in

Nord 1997: 12). We can slightly modify Vermeer's definition of translation for the purposes of this paper and say that: "To translate *advertising* means to produce an *ad* in a target setting for a target purpose and target addressees in target circumstances". Note that Vermeer's definition makes no mention of the source text. In fact, "a text in *skopostheorist* approach is regarded as an "offer of information" ('Informationsangebot', Reiß/Vermeer 1984:35), something that suits very much those of us working in advertising. Explaining Vermeer's theory of the purpose or Skopostheorie, Nord (1997: 11) indicates that "Vermeer considers translation to be a type of transfer where communicative verbal and non-verbal signs are transferred from one language into another". Nord continues:

"This transfer contains an intention while being part of a situation. Since situations are embedded in cultures, any evaluation of a particular situation, of its verbalized and non-verbalized elements, depends on the status it has in a particular culture system."
(Nord 1997: 11)

I believe that Vermeer's approach is crucial to cross-cultural advertising because it agrees with and fulfils the needs of an adaptation approach. Furthermore, Vermeer's definition satisfies the needs of the advertising world, unlike Toury's definition of translation:

"Translation is communication in translated messages within a certain cultural-linguistic system, with all relevant consequences for the decomposition of the source language, the establishment of the invariant, its transfer across the cultural-linguistic border and the recomposition of the target message."
(Toury 1980: 17)

In cross-cultural advertising it is a problem to establish the invariant, since – although the creation of a super brand would indeed involve the establishment of core invariants – in many cases there is no such thing when translating marketing communications. The key message an advertiser wants to communicate to one culture or market is not necessarily the key message the advertiser wants to communicate to another culture or market. This opinion is supported by Arrojo's discussion on essentialist and anti-essentialist approaches. In Translation Studies, according to Arrojo:

"The anti-essentialist postmodernists share as a common ground a radical distrust of the possibility of any intrinsically stable meaning that could be fully present in texts or in any form of oral or written discourse and, thus, supposedly recoverable and repeated elsewhere without the interference of the subjects, as well as the cultural, historical, ideological or political circumstances involved."
(Arrojo 1998: 25)

That distrust against the stable meaning is very similar to the Skopostheorists' consideration of the source text as "an offer of information". Therefore Vermeer's more functional and flexible approach to translation as well as the anti-essentialist perspective in Translation Studies is what cross-cultural advertisers need and usually have to deal with. This understanding constitutes the foundation of the meaning of translation in this paper.

For the term *Localization*, there are several definitions depending on the emphasis of the author. Pym defines it as "the processes by which a generic ("international") product is adapted to the requirements of a "locale", a place with a specific union of cultural and linguistic features" (Pym 2004: 129). Notice Pym's emphasis on the nature of the product (generic, therefore international). This perspective would mean that the concept of localization is not entirely applicable to advertising because in an advertising campaign that needs to be adapted to another market, an advertising agency or a translator will not usually depart from a generic international product. The source product will be a successful campaign

developed for a specific market, and most of the time this will be an American, British or French campaign.

Yunker, on the other hand, is more focused on the final result and says that “localization is the process of modifying a product for a specific locale. This includes making technical, visual and textual modifications to the product” (Junker 2003: 17). This definition is broader than Pym’s in its scope and accommodates new media but at the same time clearly states that the distinguishing feature of the localization process is the adaptation of a product so that it satisfies the needs of a specific target group and that this process involves more than just textual modifications.

Finally, LISA proposes that: “Localization involves taking a product and making it linguistically and culturally appropriate to the target locale (country/region and language) where it will be used and sold.” (Source: www.lisa.org/term/termdefinitions). What then is the difference between localization and translation? Even if both terms are used fairly frequently with the same assumed meaning (cf. however Nauert (2008) in this volume), I think there are three key differences:

1. The term translation does not necessarily include “non-verbal signs”
2. Localization, in general, has a wider meaning than translation.
3. Localization has a commercial focus (although the commercial aim is also important in the terms I will discuss below).

The term *Adaptation* (meaning “foreign adaptation of advertising copy”) is widely spread in the advertising industry. The company Mothertongue defines it in their website as:

“Working from an existing source text and visual material, as well as a full creative brief, a copywriter/adaptor who has sound knowledge of the source language whilst being a mother tongue speaker of the target language will adapt copy whilst retaining the original idea and staying on brief.”

(Source: mothertongue.co.uk)

The idea is that the copywriter (they don’t mention the word translator) will always aim to produce copy in their own language, which reflects the tone and nuance of the original - at the same time creating a refreshing copy, which is culturally relevant.

Transcreation is a word which is made from the two words: “translation” and “creation” and has the same meaning as adaptation. The company The Word Gym says that:

“Transcreation refers to the demanding process of adapting sales copy from the language it was written in (the source language) into another (the target language). Contrary to what you might think, you can’t just translate copy – a lively, witty headline in English may be a complete turnoff in French. In many ways, transcreation is akin to literary translation – the same search for equivalent idioms and concepts, the same striving to find equivalent registers and resonances – with one significant difference: the result must be capable of selling a brand, product, service or idea powerfully and effectively to the target audience in the target market (culture).”

(Source: <http://www.wordgym.com/html/transcreation.htm>)

In defence of the translation industry, I believe a good translator also transcreates, localizes and adapts. That is just part of the job. But savvy executives see an opportunity to offer translation-like services at a better rate using different terms. Why? In my opinion because since the introduction of websites such as Proz.com, as well as Globalization Management Systems such as Idiom or Trados GXT, translation increasingly sounds like a commodity; however, transcreation, adaptation and even localization sound like a service.

Independently of the above definitions, there is no doubt that localization has become the new cult in the area of language studies. In fact, it has become the notion that redefines the

nature of translation practice. A practice that for the purpose of this paper I frame in accordance with Vermeer's theory of the purpose (for a discussion of Vermeer's skopos theory cf. Sunwoo (2008) in this volume) and even in line with the anti-essentialist postmodernists thoughts.

3 Global Advertising Strategies: theory and practice

The purpose of examining global advertising strategies is to determine those practices that are employed by the widest range of international advertisers, as well as to analyze which ones are more convenient to marketers today.

3.1 Standardization vs. adaptation of the original strategy

The communication boom that started in the 1970s with the invention of commercial satellite communication and market globalization led advertisers to invent "international" marketing strategies under the influence of the standardization approach: promoting the same product with the same brand name and the same strategy everywhere in the world.

The strategy of standardization has been successful in a multitude of cases and is approved by marketing managers due to its cost-effectiveness. Papavassiliou and Stathakopoulos in their 1997 paper "Standardization versus Adaptation of International advertising Strategies" list the reasons that make the standardization approach appealing to multinationals:

- a) It allows the multinational corporation to maintain a consistent image and identity throughout the world.
- b) It minimizes confusion among buyers who travel frequently.
- c) It allows the multinational company to develop a single, coordinated advertising campaign across different markets.
- d) This approach results in considerable savings in media costs and advertising illustrative material.

The standardization approach has also been at the forefront of the market globalization process. Dave Chaffey, in his book *E-Business and E-Commerce Management*, notes that:

Globalization refers to the move towards international trading in a single global marketplace and also blurring between social and cultural differences between countries. Some perceive it as *Westernisation* or even *Americanisation*.
(Chaffey 2002: 143)

However, a very important lesson that companies have had to learn in the age of globalization is that the blurring of cultural differences does not mean disrespecting the local culture. In every market, respect is measured in accordance to the effort that each brand shows in understanding the local culture.

In order to overcome the cultural boundaries and to transmit a message across cultures effectively and respectfully, an emerging approach that seems to achieve better results than the standardization approach consists in the adaptation or localization of the original advertising strategy. Papavassiliou and Stathakopoulos (1997) also provide a list of the arguments introduced by the proponents of the adaptation approach:

- a) Separate messages should be used to reach buyers in different markets by fitting the message to each particular country.
- b) There are insurmountable differences (e.g. cultural, economic, legal, media and product dissimilarities) between countries and even between regions of the same country.
- c) These differences necessitate the adaptation or development of new/different advertising strategies.
- d) Assuming similar buying motives for consumers across foreign markets may be simplistic, or even dangerous.

Therefore an immediate consequence for organizations that wish to compete in the global marketplace, as noted by Quelch and Klein, is that they need an “in-depth understanding of foreign marketing environments to assess the advantages of its own products and services” (Quelch and Klein cited in Chaffey 2002: 143). Chaffey then acknowledges that:

“Language and cultural understanding may also present a problem [...] On the other hand Quelch and Klein note that the growth of the use of the Internet for business will accelerate the trend of English becoming the lingua franca of commerce.”
 (ibid.).

The theoretical framework for the supporters of the standardization approach in the online arena is that a single website can operate efficiently as a company’s link to the whole world by overcoming both physical and cultural boundaries, which seems to include the assumption that most Internet users can speak English. Thus English can operate as a lingua franca bringing this new digital world and its inhabitants closer together.

Relevant data show that this might no longer be the case. The notion that English is the dominant language on the Net is now considered outdated. The data offered by Nielsen/NetRatings and published by Internet World Stats (Figure 1) shows that more than 70% of the websites available in 2007 are written in a language other than English.

Top Ten Languages Used in the Web (Number of Internet Users by Language)					
TOP TEN LANGUAGES IN THE INTERNET	% of all Internet Users	Internet Users by Language	Internet Penetration by Language	Internet Growth for Language (2000 - 2007)	2007 Estimate World Population for the Language
English	29.5 %	328,666,386	28.7 %	139.6 %	1,143,218,916
Chinese	14.3 %	159,001,513	11.8 %	392.2 %	1,351,737,925
Spanish	8.0 %	88,920,232	20.2 %	260.3 %	439,284,783
Japanese	7.7 %	86,300,000	67.1 %	83.3 %	128,646,345
German	5.3 %	58,711,687	61.1 %	113.2 %	96,025,053
French	5.0 %	55,521,294	14.3 %	355.2 %	387,820,873
Portuguese	3.6 %	40,216,760	17.2 %	430.8 %	234,099,347
Korean	3.1 %	34,120,000	45.6 %	79.2 %	74,811,368
Italian	2.8 %	30,763,940	51.7 %	133.1 %	59,546,696
Arabic	2.6 %	28,540,700	8.4 %	931.8 %	340,548,157
TOP TEN LANGUAGES	81.7 %	910,762,512	21.4 %	181.4 %	4,255,739,462
Rest of World Languages	18.3 %	203,511,914	8.8 %	444.5 %	2,318,926,955
WORLD TOTAL	100.0 %	1,114,274,426	16.9 %	208.7 %	6,574,666,417

(*) NOTES: (1) Internet Top Ten Languages Usage Stats were updated on Mar. 10, 2007. (2) Internet Penetration is the ratio between the sum of Internet users speaking a language and the total population estimate that speaks that specific language. (3) The most recent Internet usage information comes from data published by Nielsen/NetRatings, International Telecommunications Union, Computer Industry Almanac, and other reliable sources. (4) World population information comes from the world gazetteer web site. (5) For definitions and navigation help, see the Site Surfing Guide. (6) Stats may be cited, stating the source and establishing an active link back to Internet World Stats. Copyright © 2007, Miniwatts Marketing Group. All rights reserved.

Figure 1: Source: www.internetworldstats.com/stats7.htm (2007)

Other scholars in the field of translation studies have also analyzed the issue of standardization vs. adaptation. Veronica Smith and Christine Klein-Braley in their paper “Advertising – a five-stage strategy for translation” (1997: 182-3), group approach the translating of advertisements by five broad categories:

- Do not change advertisement: retain both graphics and text.
- Export advertisements: play on the positive stereotypes of the originating culture, retaining logo, slogan etc. in the original. If necessary, have additional copy in target language.
- Straight translation.
- Adaptation: keep visuals, change text slightly or significantly.
- Revision: keep visuals, write new text.

Jettmarova, along with Piotrowska and Zauberga in their paper “New advertising markets as target areas for translation” (Jettmarová 1995: 187), describe what they consider three main strategies usually followed in the translation of advertisements:

- Major transfer = literalness (image and semantic contents preserved, exotic features of the original highlighted).
- Translation with minimum changes = advertising compromise = partial adaptation (various degrees of departure from the original, partly adapted discourses).
- Adapted translation = cultural transplantation = total adaptation (images and text transformed to appear more alluring to the target audience, exchange of picture and sound or text for a domestic milieu).

For clarity they quote Hervey and Higgins and say that: “Literalness and adaptation constitute extreme variants of translational policy, the continuum in between being filled in by various degrees of departure from the original advert.”

This means that each instance of advertising or marketing is unique and the strategy adopted is a hybrid of the levels introduced by the two groups of linguists. Even in the same case of marketing translation, a combination of strategies can be used with success.

The issue of standardization vs. adaptation is nothing new. In fact Eugene Nida and Charles Taber discussed it in 1964 when they presented the notion of dynamic equivalence and its counterpart, formal correspondence/equivalence. In their own words:

“Messages differ primarily in the degree to which content or form is the dominant consideration. Of course, the content of a message can never be completely abstracted from the form, and the form is nothing apart from content; but in some messages the content is of primary consideration, and in others the form must be given a higher priority.”
(1964: 156)

This is the reason why the translator must choose either to be faithful to the form of the original message or try to convey to the readers of the target language the same effect that the original text caused to its readers. Nida continues to explain that there are varying degrees of such translations: “Between the two poles of translating (i.e. between strict formal equivalence and complete dynamic equivalence) there are a number of intervening grades, representing various acceptable standards of literary translating.” (Nida and Taber 1964: 160)

Nida and Taber describe these two poles fully in the book *The theory and practice of Translation*. The two authors also observed a tendency in translators to gravitate towards the first pole; that is translations seem to be oriented towards dynamic equivalence as the essence of the message being valued more than its form. It is true that Nida and Taber were primarily

interested in the translation of the Bible and not in marketing. However, Nida and Taber actually claimed with respect to testing bible translations: “this is something like market research” (Nida 1969: 163). In my opinion, both areas have many things in common. After all, religion, like marketing, is about spreading a message to as many people as possible.

What makes things more interesting are the notions that the two linguists use in order to justify the choice of dynamic equivalence over formal correspondence. These are *the principle of equivalent effect* and *the notion of cultural translation or translation from culture to culture*. According to Nida and Taber, a translation that is based upon the principle of equivalent effect “is not concerned with matching the receptor-language message with the source-language message, but that the dynamic relationship between receptor and message should be substantially the same as that which existed between the original receptors and the message” (Nida and Taber 1964: 159). This notion is what marketers should ask for from translators when they ask them to translate advertising: linguistic equivalents in a cross-cultural environment signify a successful localization. An absence of dynamic equivalence and a tendency towards formal correspondence signify a less successful adaptation of the marketing strategy. This process can be applied to both semiotic and linguistic segments of an ad.

Finally, the strongest arguments in favour of the adaptation approach come from Marieke de Mooij, a scholar who has studied the cultural paradoxes in international marketing and who in her 1998 book *Global Marketing and Advertising* expresses her views on the subject of standardized advertising strategies in the following words:

“Markets are people, not products. There may be global products, but there are no global people. There may be global brands but there are no global motivations for buying these brands.” (de Mooij 1998: 3)

In conclusion, in order to ensure the accessibility of a marketing campaign to different cultures, the practice of adaptation or localization is the most appropriate approach. Every marketing strategy has a clear objective, i.e. to convince consumers to buy a service or a product. This is the desired effect of every marketing move, of every advertisement ever made, and this is the effect to be duplicated while translating advertisements, to convince new consumers that speak another language to buy from the same source again and again. This is best achieved through an adaptation approach.

3.2 Centralization vs. Decentralization of the production of the marketing campaign

Let us now discuss the practical aspects of a campaign. Here is a very simplified portrait of the traditional creative process followed in an advertising agency. At the center is the Creative Director, who is in control of the whole process, from the briefing to the output of the campaign. If the brief lacks information, creative directors may require some clarifications from their client or planners. Then they interpret what the client wants and think of a way of conveying the message to the target audience. This is followed by a phase of negotiation and approval of the idea with the client, then the production and implementation of the campaign initiated. The Creative Director can decipher and assess the feedback directly and immediately and, since the results are clear and obvious, praise or blame can be attributed with a certain level of confidence.

This approach breaks down when it comes to international campaigns. The Creative Directors find themselves confronted with unfamiliar cultures. Even if a brief is very detailed with regard to consumers in a foreign country, the Creative Director will lack the cultural parameters to evaluate the data and expectations. They may fail to seek clarifications because

problems may not even occur to them. Issues vital in a foreign market may appear irrelevant. External consultants might warn about the most obvious pitfalls, but the Creative Director will never have the ease and confidence which he enjoys in the home market. Creative Directors and their teams thus suffer from a knowledge deficit.

Since Creative Directors cannot produce a campaign with full awareness of its potential effect, their communication becomes disempowered, and their creative leadership is exposed to criticism and challenged by local agencies and markets. At this point the traditional process can follow two routes: either the campaign is developed as if it were for the home market and then translated and adapted for the foreign market by translators and localization specialists (as suggested by Ogilvy back in 1983), or the creative work is carried out by different creative teams in each of the relevant markets. Let us analyze the two approaches in more detail.

3.2.1 The centralized approach

In this approach both the Creative Director and the client feel reassured because they are acting within familiar territory. However, they risk disappointment when the campaign is launched in foreign markets. The Creative Director and the team could create content that, had they known the target market better, they would have never released. This approach also means that the creation of the foreign campaign is entrusted to an external translator, whose work the Creative Director cannot really evaluate and which might not be in line with the client's demands. To overcome this problem, the client's country managers have traditionally carried out the evaluation and given final approval, but this practice is fraught with dangers. Country managers can assess whether the language is correct, but they do not have the wider picture of the whole campaign and they often lack the sensitivity that enables a professional creative or copywriter to tell a *good* translation from a *great* translation. They might also disagree with the corporate line and try to tweak the message to suit themselves. Moreover, since the country manager is also the client, relying on the client for linguistic feedback and cultural consultancy can make both the Creative Director and the client nervous about repercussions, since it gives the client an extra chance to judge the agency.

Additionally, translating a ready-made campaign into a foreign language places an unreasonable burden on the translator. The translator is considered to be the sole agent responsible for the success or failure of a campaign in a given market, even when that market's needs and culture were not considered at an earlier stage.

3.2.2 The decentralized approach

In the decentralized approach, on the other hand, brand and message consistency are at risk, and the result might alienate the client, who may feel that certain markets have strayed too far from the core values of the brand. This approach may also entail some other potentially adverse consequences. The implementation of a single big idea may become impossible, undermining the creative leadership. We also find what my colleague at the advertising agency Euro RSCG Mario de Bortoli used to call the *primadonna effect*: creatives from different local agencies squabbling about the superiority of their ideas and local creative teams becoming reluctant to recognize leadership. Local centrifugal forces thus tend to make the control of the campaign unfeasible. In the end, the lead agency has difficulty determining responsibilities. Depending on the campaign results, there is a strong chance that the client will seek a change of the lead agency.

4 A new framework for the development of international advertising campaigns. The role of the trans-creator.

What we have seen so far with regard to the way advertising agencies operate indicates that a new approach needs to be envisaged. The creative and communicative process needs to be nimble, reactive, multilingual, multicultural and economically viable.

I would like to propose a new way of handling international advertising campaigns that I believe achieves these requirements. The approach can be summarized as follows:

1. Prioritization of communication, in accordance with the principles of Vermeer's *Skopostheorie* of translation.
2. Integration of the trans-creator in the creative process.
3. Centralized co-ordination of multilingual communication with the help of trans-creators.

This approach should result in a convergence of the various national sub-brands towards a global brand.

4.1 Application of Skopostheorie to the translation of advertising

At the beginning of the paper, within the definition of term translation, I discussed skopos theory and concluded that its functional, flexible and adaptative approach is what cross-cultural advertisers need. In this view, translation is conceived primarily "as a process of intercultural communication, whose end product is a text which is capable of functioning appropriately in specific situations and context of use" (Schäffner, 1998a: 3). "A text in *skopostheoretic* approach is regarded as an offer of information from its producer to a recipient" (Karoubi 2005). "Translation is then a secondary offer of information about information originally offered in another language within another culture" (Schäffner, 1998b: 236). Therefore the translator must interpret the information contained in the source text "by selecting those features which most closely correspond to the requirements of the target situation" (Shuttleworth & Cowie, cited by Karoubi 2005). From this point of view, the translation process is not determined retrospectively by the source text, its effects on its addressees, or the intention of its author, but prospectively by the function of the target text as determined by the target recipient's requirements, which is the ideal scenario in global advertising.

4.2 Integration of the trans-creator in the creative process

As mentioned above, the rapidly evolving market situation means that most creatives and copywriters no longer have a full picture of what their target market is like. Very often the Creative Director of an international campaign and most agents on their target market do not speak the same language and do not share the same culture. What should be done? In my opinion, the Creative Leader (as opposed to the Creative Director) can retain control of the international campaign to levels that are almost equal to that of domestic campaigns. This can be done by working in close contact with a figure that I call the *trans-creator*.

Who is a trans-creator? A trans-creator is an individual with a thorough knowledge of a target culture and language. A trans-creator would usually be a trained translator with creative awareness. The role of the trans-creator is to mediate between a Creative Leader and a target culture. Trans-creators would therefore act as *alter egos* of Creative Leaders and would

provide them with the missing perceptive ability for a given language/culture. They would also provide the insight needed to produce culture-adapted messages. The trans-creator would guide the Creative Leader in the process of creation, by providing background information, interpreting feedback, contributing creative ideas, managing the right level of localization consistency (the aim is to have a global brand not a global 'bland'), and sharing responsibility for successes and failures. The trans-creator would also help to protect the brand's identity across markets.

In order for trans-creators to be successful, their relationship with the Creative Leader has to be close. The payoff can be substantial: Creative Leadership can be restored, which will enable the first step towards establishing or consolidating what I call "an international cross-cultural superbrand".

4.3 Centralized co-ordination of multilingual communication with the help of trans-creators

Today, a brand wishing to retain strength and credibility at global level must be able to communicate universally recognized core values at the same time as it adds a local spin in each target market. By delivering a constant message around a certain core value, every new instance of communication will reinforce the association between that value and the brand. Any contradiction in the message could confuse the consumer and damage the association with the universal value. The way this universal value needs to be delivered depends very much on the target culture since, as Child (2002) points out, "in presenting the same face to the world, a company risks presenting the wrong face to entire nations".

I believe that the only way to guarantee consistency in the core values and the respect of local needs is to have a centralized process, which includes a person who can help the brand communicate its values to the target markets, the trans-creator. The same person will be able to decipher the feedback and feed the new cycle of communication. However, this function (i.e. the linguistic function of advertising) can be properly performed by trans-creators only if they become a permanent part of the creative process. As Guidère acknowledges, "the language function needs to be permanently ingrained in the communication process, a language function which covers a much wider spectrum of competences than that of pure linguistic transcoding" (Guidère 2002).

Since we are talking about commercial communication, the ultimate function of the trans-creator is that of helping the Creative Leader to create the most effective and flexible adaptations, with a wide range of applicability to various media, in order to save costs. This means that their influence on the creative idea is bound to be significant, especially because, according to Anholt:

"Creative people are often quite bad at distinguishing between concepts that are striking because they sound good in their own language, and concepts that are good because they are actually based on a more universal truth, which will appeal to human beings on a profounder level, irrespective of language and culture".
(Anholt 1998)

By identifying those universally recognized values, the trans-creator can help brands discover what their core values will have to be in a completely new market, the global market.

Technology can help trans-creators find solutions in their work. Translation memory tools, glossaries, the Internet, intranet systems and content management systems allow the trans-creator, the Creative Leader and their team (including planners) to be in control of the communication and to guarantee a maximum of consistency and flexibility across the media

and across cultures. The process does not need to be duplicated in each market, thus increasing effectiveness and reducing costs.

One of the consequences of lower production costs, especially when it comes to the adaptation of advertising, is that the foreign markets that were previously unviable in terms of communication return on investment can now be explored thanks to the money saved. This, in turn, makes the brand even more international.

5 Conclusion: Towards a truly global brand?

In 1990 the Belgian translation theorist Dirk Delabastita asserted that:

Advertising texts – like literature – are a clear representation of the social and cultural environment of a given language or country; its nature is dynamic and metamorphic: the influence it receives could be comparable to the one it exerts.

(Delabastita 1990: 97)

When Delabastita wrote those lines, two-way dialog was not yet normal in corporate communication. His statement, however, can help us understand the nature of the interaction between corporate communication and culture. If corporate communication has to move within the culture it uses codes familiar to that culture and also has the possibility of contributing to the evolution of the culture. By coordinating the communication of various target markets according to the principles of *Skopos* theory, in this case according to their commercial and branding objectives, brands can achieve a cross-cultural convergence towards a super-brand, with core values that are shared across all markets, and additional local values that increase relevance in specific markets.

The main difference between trans-creators and traditional translators, even those involved in advertising campaigns, is that they know how to put their knowledge of the target culture at the service of specific commercial aims or *Skopoi*.

What remains to be defined is where in each culture the super-brand and its core values can find a suitable place (cf. Floros (2008) in this volume). While it is true that each culture has a rich heritage to draw on, there is always an area that each culture offers to the creative mind: the world of imagination, which is the remit of advertising. By creating a new layer in the collective imagination of consumers worldwide, a strong cross-cultural core of values can be established, capable of interacting with each culture on its own terms and overcoming cultural antagonisms. In order to define this new space, two fundamental sets of skills are needed: the linguistic and cultural skills of the trans-creator, and the creativity and imagination of the Creative Leader. When these skills work together at their best, core values can be conveyed to many cultures, as brands like Nike or Coca-Cola know.

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