

Translation of English Brand Names into Persian: Type of translation and font size in focus

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Abstract

The aim of this study was to find the appropriate type of translation of English brand names Iranian consumers prefer, i.e. phonetic, semantic and phonosemantic types of translation. Also, it was aimed at examining the type of font size Iranian consumers tends to see on packages of English products. To this end, the distinction between male and female participants as well as the participants' level of proficiency was considered as two key factors. Six fictitious brand names were created and the 55 selected participants (43 females and 12 males with upper-intermediate, intermediate and pre-intermediate English proficiency levels) were asked to fill a questionnaire related to the goals of the research. Statistical analyses were then done. The results revealed that Iranian consumers, with different levels of proficiency, tended to use phonetic translation. Also, it was revealed that females with different proficiency levels tended to see English brand names larger than their Persian translations in terms of font size, whereas male participants did the reverse. The findings were discussed in connection with translation and marketing.

Key words: brand names, font size, marketing, translation, products

Introduction

A brand name is an arbitrarily adopted name that is given by a manufacturer or merchant to an article or service to distinguish it as produced or sold by that manufacturer or merchant and that may be used and protected as a trademark (Merriam-Webster online dictionary). A brand name is not just a printed title and letters. According to Darvish Sefat and Hasan Zadeh Safari (2012) if the brand name is evaluated positively in consumers' view, it means that product(s) of that brand name has/have best situation in consumers' minds.

Today, because of international transportation, international cooperation and communication, international business cooperation, import and export strengthen all around the world. Some products may never have the chance to go completely global because companies have already been branded with names that have embarrassing meanings abroad (Wooten, 2010). Sometimes a famous brand name of a country cannot succeed even in its neighbor country's market because the brand name has a negative connotative in there: maybe the company of that brand name doesn't want to translate its brand name whereas consumers of TL want to see the

translation of brand name, perhaps the brand name translates incorrectly, or even its translation is not favorable in that area and etc.

According to international norms, brand names typically are made up of various elements such as (1) Name: The word or words used to identify a company, product, service, or concept, (2) Logo: The visual trademark that identifies the brand, (3) Tagline or Catchphrase: phrase that attracts attention, (4) Graphics, (5) Shapes, (6) The Colors, (7) Scents, (8) Tastes and (9) Movements, etc. When we translate a brand name we just deal with its name then we should summarize other characteristics into that name in TL. Therefore, we should choose the best translation for our products or for products which we import in our country. Since they are consumers who should like the brand name and enter it in their daily lives, companies have to consider consumers' tastes and ideas. Unfortunately, some Iranian companies don't pay attention to translation of brand names. Some of them even don't consult an amateur translator for translating brand names. Then, the translations of their brand names even don't show the correct company name. They just stick the equivalences of each letters together- even the letters which are not pronounced in SL of brand names. Of course, this is not that bad; sometimes we see that words/structures were written incorrectly. Recently, most imported products are seen with their SL labels and Iranian companies just add their names and their related licenses to them.

Background to the Study

Haig (2008/2004, p. 50) suggested five important characteristics for brand name: (1) The brand name should introduce the quantity and features of products, (2) It should pronounce easy; short name are better, (3) It should be unique and distinct, (4) It should be registered and supported legally, and (5) it should translate in foreign languages easily.

Yasin, Noor, and Mohamad (2012) believe that the brand name should not be translated into TL, because the brand name equity will be disputed. When a brand name especially a brand name which comes from a technical and famous country enters to another country, people of that country consider that product as a high quality one because that special brand name is a favorite brand name in its country-of-origin. They discussed the manner in which brand's country-of-origin image contributes to the development of brand equity.

Newmark (1988) about the translation of label said "this is a provisional translation, usually of a new institutional term, which should be made in inverted commas, which can later be discreetly withdrawn. It could be done through literal translation." (p. 90)

A category of translation types of brand names which some scholars such as Zhang and Schmitt (2001) used in translation of brand names is a three-factor framework as follows:

1. Phonetic translation: The sound of translated brand name should be the same as original one (the SL alphabetic letters of brand name change into TL alphabetic letters).

2. Semantic translation: A pure semantic translation should explain the lexical meaning of the SL brand name. But as Zhang and Schmitt (2001) pointed out most of brand names cannot be translated in this way and this is possible when the brand name's meaning exists in the dictionary. Thus, we have to use *non pure* translation. In non-pure brand name translation, we use some words to explain the characteristics of product. The non-pure translation is what Kursheva

(cited in Sykes, 1997, p. 225) referred as "extra linguistic information, the implicit information of text".

3. Phonosemantic translation: In phonosemantic translation, we should consider both phonetic and semantic feature of a brand name.

Zhang and Schmitt (2001) used these three methods to translate their six fictitious brand names from English into Chinese by Chinese consumers. They found that phonetic and phonosemantic features are more acceptable among Chinese consumers. Also, they explained that people preferred the large font for English names when they used phonetic translation, and the large font for Chinese names in phonosemantic translation.

Kum, Yih Hwai, and Cheng (2011) also used these three methods plus Hanyu Pinyin¹ method and found that the Chinese people tend to use phonetic and semantic when they want to translate Chinese brand names into English.

This category for translating brand names was also used in this study. This category is concise, complete, and understandable (even for people who aren't familiar with linguistics). It actually incorporates the translation of all brand names.

Hong, Pecotich, and Shultz (2001) stated that the direct translation and phonetic translation are two common methods in the east and southeast of Asia to translate foreign brand names. In direct translation the brand name represents in TL with different sound but same meaning of SL, whereas in phonetic translation the brand name has same sound of SL but may have different meaning.

Yan (2007) also examined phonetic, semantic and morphological (phonosemantic) requirements of Chinese and English brand names. He found that the semantic and phonosemantic translations are proper for brand names which tend to be localization and the phonetic translation is proper for brand names which tend to be internationalization.

Most researchers either just defined the characteristics of a good brand name translation (e.g. Wooten, 2010), they just defined some theories, or they examined the types of translation of existed brand names which have been use for many years by consumers, but few of them consider the ideas of consumers and the way they want to pronounce foreign brand names (e.g. Kum et al, 2011; Zhang and Schmitt, 2001).

In Iran, no specific research has been conducted about the translation of different types of foreign brand names by consumers, especially in language and linguistics courses.

About cognitive analysis of brand name, Zhang and Schmitt (2001) stated if we want to understand the effect of phonetic, semantic and phonosemantic translation on consumers' perception and evaluation, we should consider the way of representation of language in consumers' mind. Then, we should distinguish degree of presence of prior types of brand name: country-of- origin type or native language of target country.

Based on what was stated above, this study examined the best way of translation of English brand names into Persian as preferred by Iranian consumers. Because most of the products which are imported to Iran have their English brand names (even if they come from non-English speaking countries, their brand names are written in English alphabetic letters) and

¹ - the standard method of Chinese logographic language

then labeled by Iranian companies, most Iranian companies just write the product names in English and write their companies name in Persian. They do not pay attention to what their consumers want to see and how they want to pronounce products. This study examined which type of translation Iranian consumers prefer to see for English brand names. It made use of phonetic, semantic and phonosemantic translations (the method used by Zhang and Schmitt, 2001) to see which one is acceptable by Iranian consumers. The researchers tended to know which type of brand names Iranian consumers desire to see on the packages of products. The study also examined Iranian consumers' tendency towards font size for English and Persian brand names. To check the above-mentioned, the following two questions were addressed:

Research questions

1. Which translation types do Iranian consumers of different sex and language proficiency prefer for English brand names rendered into Persian?
2. Which font size do male and female Iranian consumers of different language proficiency prefer to see for English brand names rendered into Persian?

Method

Materials

This study is a survey which aimed to find the type of translation (phonetic, semantic or phonosemantic) Iranian consumers desire to see and the font sizes of English and Persian brand names they prefer on packages of different products. Six fictitious English brand names were created by five persons. Three of the creators were living in foreign countries with English as their native or second language (America, Canada and Australia). The other two were Iranian translators who were studying English in translator training programs in universities and worked as translators as well.

It is to be noted that fictitious names were used because participants should not have had any background knowledge, prejudice or bias about brand names and also they had to create a new form for each name. The products which were used in this study included fruit juice, crackers, contact eyes, cell phone and cloth.

Three different font sizes were also selected to be evaluated by Iranian consumers for English brand names and their Persian translations. They are as follows:

Type 1: English brand names with fonts larger than their Persian translations

Type 2: Persian translations with fonts larger than their English source names

Type 3: Persian and English names with the same font

A questionnaire was used to collect the needed data. In the first question of the questionnaire, participants saw 6 names of six different groups of products (juice, cracker, cloth, cell phone and contact lenses). They were told that these products might be used for actual products in future and would appear on products' packages. Participants were asked to write one type of translation, i.e. phonetic, semantic or phonosemantic, which they liked to pronounce for each of the six groups of products. In the second question, they were required to choose one of the three font sizes mentioned above. (See Appendix)

Participants

The participants of this study were 55 Persian native speakers (43 females and 12 males) with three levels English proficiency, i.e. Pre-intermediate, intermediate and upper- intermediate. At the first stage of selecting the population, the participants were selected purposively because at least they could read Basic English and understand the meaning of phonetic, semantic and phonosemantic translations. At the second stage, they were selected randomly from among the people who had enough knowledge for the present research. The participants were English translator training majors (both M.A. and B.A. levels) at Islamic Azad University of Shahreza, Kish institute of science and technology and some private companies whose personnel used English language in their daily jobs (e.g. computer programmers, food industry experts, etc.). The age of the participants ranged from 16 to 68.

Procedures

Each participant received a Persian questionnaire. After the completion of the questionnaire by participants, the types of translation were judged by an M.A. student of English translation and a high school English teacher. The frequency of selecting each font size was also calculated. Then, bar chart and cross-tabulation count were used to show the obtained results and thus answer the research questions. Thus, the type of translation and the type of font size the participants preferred according to their gender and different language proficiency levels were determined.

Results and Discussion

Selection of the type of translation according to language proficiency level

Table 1 below shows the preferred type of translation by participants with different levels of language proficiency:

Table1. The preferred type of translation according to different levels of language proficiency:
Cross tabulation Count

	preferred type of translation			Total
	phonetic	semantic	phonosemantic	
Upper-intermediate	20	16	18	54
Intermediate	72	61	29	162
Pre-intermediate	54	28	32	114
Total	146	105	79	330

As table 1 shows the "intermediate group" with 162 answered items is the largest group of the participants. The "Pre-intermediate group" with 114 answered items stands at the second level and the "upper-intermediate group" with 54 answered items is the third group. Also, according to

results shown in table 1, phonetic translation with 146 translations is the first preferred type of translation. Semantic and phonosemantic types of translation, with 105 and 79 translations respectively, are second and third preferred types of translations by consumers. These results are illustrated in figure 1 below:

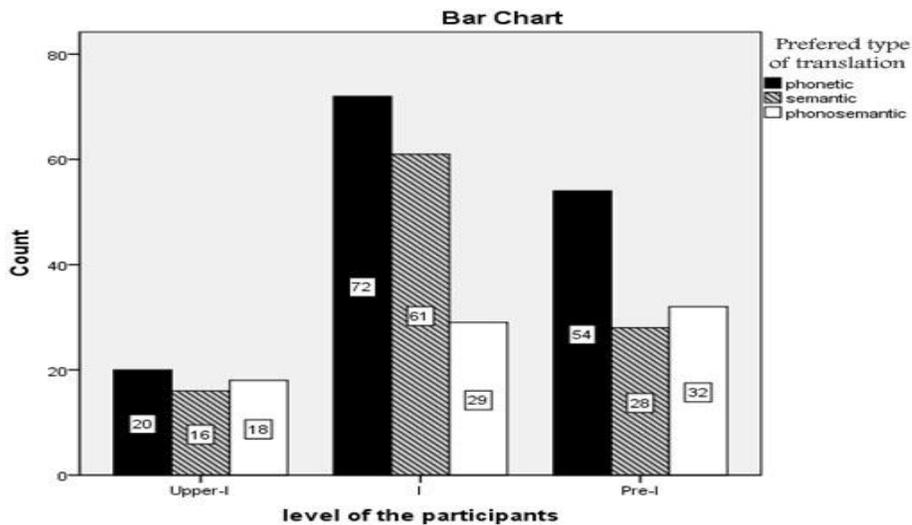


Figure 1, The bar chart of preferred type of translation

Selection of font size of brand names and translation based on gender

To answer the second research question, the number of male’s and female’s answers were counted. The participants were just to choose the type that they liked. The results of statistical analyses in this respect are shown in the following table (Table 2):

Table 2, the preferred size type: Cross tabulation Count

preferred size type	gender of the participants		Total
	Male	female	
type one	28	118	146
type two	30	75	105
type three	18	61	79
Total	76	254	330

As table 2 shows, the total number of male preferences for font size type is 76 (i.e. 28 preferences for type one, 30 preferences for type two and 18 preferences for type 3. Also, the table shows that the total number of female preferences of preferred size type is 254 (i.e.118 preferences for type one, 75 preferences for type two and 61 preferences for type three. These results are illustrated in figure 2 below:

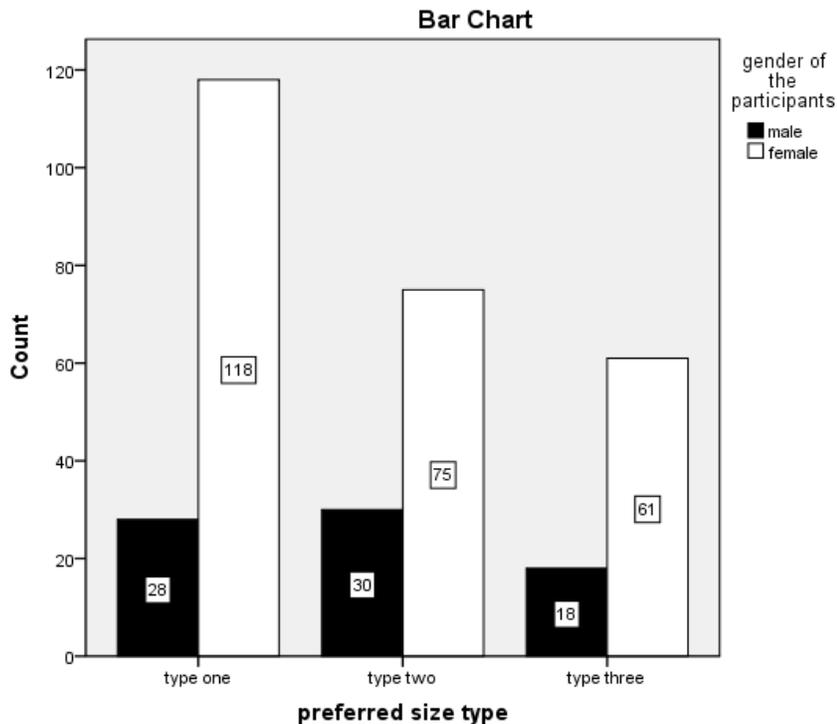


Figure 2, the preferred size type according to gender of the participants

As is seen in both tables and figure above, male participants preferred to see Persian translations larger than their original English brand names (type two, $n=30$) in terms of font size, while female participants preferred the reverse (type one, $n=118$).

Conclusion

The aim of this study was to find the appropriate type of translation of English brand names Iranian consumers prefer, i.e. phonetic, semantic and phonosemantic types of translation. Also it aimed at examining the type of font size Iranian consumers prefer to see on packages of English products.

Lotfollahi, ketabi and barati (2013) studied the existent translations of cosmetic and hygienic products based on Vinay and Darbelnet's approach. They compared 10 English print advertisements for cosmetic and hygienic products with their translations. They revealed that the main translation procedures used were literal translation and borrowing. Borrowing was especially common in translating brand names. As a result, they concluded these translations are bound to their source language.

As mentioned before, Hong, Pecotich, and Shultz (2001) stated that the direct translation and phonetic translation are two common methods in the east and southeast of Asia to translate foreign brand names. In direct translation the brand name represents in TL with different sound

but same meaning of SL, whereas in phonetic translation the brand name has the same sound of SL but may have different meaning.

Based on statistical analysis of the present study, Iranian consumers prefer to use phonetic translation more frequently. Thus, it is concluded here too that translation of brand names are bound to their source language. The results of the present study are applicable to both translation and marketing. In the field of translation, brand name is considered as a proper noun that Iranian consumers prefer to translate phonetically.

A final word is that Iranian companies should direct their attempts towards phonetic translation for their imported products. Also, if their products are related more to female consumers, they should show English brand names larger than their Persian translations in terms of font size. And, if their products are more related to male consumers, they should show Persian translations larger than original English brand names in terms of font size.

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Appendix

با عرض سلام خدمت دوست محترم

ضمن عرض تشکر برای همکاری جنابعالی در تکمیل پرسشنامه، لطفاً قبل از تکمیل پرسشنامه مطالب فوق را کامل و با دقت بخوانید.

این پرسشنامه جهت بررسی نوع ترجمه نام های تجاری محصولات مختلف توسط مصرف کنندگان طراحی شده است. در این پرسشنامه به ۶ گروه محصول مختلف (آبمیوه، کلوچه، لوز طبعی، پوشاک، شامپو و تلفن همراه) ۶ نام تجاری به زبان انگلیسی نسبت داده شده است.

از شما دوست محترم خواهشمندم که با فرض این مسئله که شما یکی از مصرف کنندگان آینده این محصولات خارجی در کشور خود می باشید، بگویید که دوست دارید این نام های تجاری را چگونه ترجمه و استفاده نمایید. بنابراین لطفاً

(۱) ابتدا برای هر نام تجاری معادل فارسی ای متناسب با سلیقه خود و با استفاده از سه تکنیک ترجمه آوایی، ترجمه معنایی غیرمستقیم و ترجمه آوایی- معنایی بنویسید.

❖ منظور از ترجمه آوایی انتخاب الفبای فارسی مناسب برای هر حرف و یا آوای انگلیسی و سپس کنار هم قرار دادن این حروف در کنار یکدیگر می باشد.

مثال:

Sh → ش + U → و + G → گ + R → ر + A → ا = Shugra → شوگرا

❖ منظور از ترجمه معنایی غیر مستقیم یعنی نوشتن یک یا چند ویژگی از

ویژگی های بارز نوع محصول (مثلاً Shugra یک نام تجاری برای شکلات است که برای معادل معنایی غیر مستقیم آن "شیرین کننده ی دهان" بیان شده است).

❖ و منظور از ترجمه آوایی- معنایی، نوشتن معادلی است که هم از نظر آوایی به کلمه نزدیک باشد و هم از نظر معنایی.

مثال :

معادل آوایی- معنایی	معادل معنایی غیر مستقیم	معادل آوایی	نام تجاری و نوع محصول
شکر شکر**	شیرین کننده دهان	شوگرا	Shugra (شکلات)

** معادل آوایی - معنایی نباید لزوماً تکرار یک یا چند کلمه باشد.

(۲) انتخاب کنید که آیا دوست دارید هنگام طراحی برچسب محصول مورد نظر، نام فارسی منتخب شما با سایز بزرگتری نوشته شود یا

نام انگلیسی محصول و یا اینکه دوست دارید هر دو نام تجاری به یک اندازه باشند؟

ضمن قدردانی از همکاری شما دوست عزیز لطفاً در صورت وجود مشکل با ایمیل آدرس parisa_mz64@yahoo.com تماس حاصل بفرمایید.

با تشکر

۱-جنسیت: زن مرد

۲- سن:

۳- مدرک تحصیلی:

۴- رشته تحصیلی:

۵- شغل:

۶- سطح آشنایی با زبان انگلیسی: عالی خوب متوسط ضعیف

۷- لطفا ترجمه پیشنهادی خود (معادل فارسی نام تجاری) را در کادر مربوطه بصورت خوانا بنویسید.

	ترجمه پیشنهادی	نام تجاری محصول	نوع محصول
۱		Fresh fruit	آبمیوه

	ترجمه پیشنهادی	نام تجاری محصول	نوع محصول
۲		Comfit	کلوچه

	ترجمه پیشنهادی	نام تجاری محصول	نوع محصول
۳		Vivid	لنز طبی

	ترجمه پیشنهادی	نام تجاری محصول	نوع محصول
۴		Target	لباس

	ترجمه پیشنهادی	نام تجاری محصول	نوع محصول
۵		Pearl	شامپو

	نوع محصول	نام تجاری محصول	ترجمه پیشنهادی
۶	تلفن همراه	Easy Cell	

۸- لطفا یکی از گزینه های زیر را برای سایز نام های تجاری روی بسته بندی محصول انتخاب کنید:

نوع اول (نام انگلیسی با فونت بزرگتری نسبت به نام فارسی نوشته شود).

فارسی	ENGLISH
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نوع دوم (نام فارسی با فونت بزرگتری نسبت به نام انگلیسی نوشته شود).

ENGLISH	فارسی
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نوع سوم (هر دو نام به یک اندازه نوشته شوند).

ENGLISH	فارسی
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- (۱) آبمیوه : نوع اول نوع دوم نوع سوم
- (۲) کلوچه : نوع اول نوع دوم نوع سوم
- (۳) لنز طبی : نوع اول نوع دوم نوع سوم
- (۴) لباس : نوع اول نوع دوم نوع سوم
- (۵) شامپو: نوع اول نوع دوم نوع سوم
- (۶) تلفن همراه : نوع اول نوع دوم نوع سوم