Multimodality and contextualisation in advertisement translation: a case study of billboards in Hong Kong

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ABSTRACT

Though more and more non-verbal modes are deployed in advertising nowadays, related literature shows that non-verbal modes involved in advertisements are largely neglected in most research. The present paper demonstrates the role of non-verbal elements in advertisements and the need for the translator to contextualise the linguistic messages in advertisement translation. Through a detailed case analysis of billboards collected from Hong Kong, it explores the ways in which translated linguistic messages are contextualised by extra-linguistic components and indicates that the translation methods used in the mediation between different cultures are largely determined by the multimodal nature of billboard advertising. The theoretical insight into the notion of context in Relevance Theory (Sperber and Wilson 1986) has been applied to describe and explain how the linguistic and extra-linguistic modalities of the billboards can interact respectively within the cognitive environments of the original and the target audiences. Based on results from the case study, this article concludes that translators are not only influenced by multimodal aspects of the texts they translate, but that their translation methods tend to be *pre-decided* by the extra-linguistic elements of the advertisement to be translated as those elements are not to be altered in translation.

KEYWORDS

Advertisement translation; multimodality; contextualisation; billboard advertising in Hong Kong; Relevance Theory; cognitive environment.

1. Introduction

Advertising, as the engine of commerce, plays a critical role in the success of a company in this increasingly commercialised society. In the age of global economy, effective translations can be crucial when businesses are targeting a foreign market. However, producing effective translations of advertisements has long been a hard nut to crack for translators. Academically, this area of Translation Studies has also been challenging for researchers (Munday 2004).

The situation has worsened since multimodality has become a dominant feature of modern advertising. Translators are still mostly trained to focus on semantic aspects of the texts that they work on. It is therefore easy for them to neglect other elements of communication essential to advertising. The semantic elements in the language of advertisements, a core aspect that translators deal with, should of course be considered with great attention. However, in most cases, an advertisement has more than just linguistic elements, and, in fact, "is an interaction of elements" (Cook 1992: 5). There is a tendency to adopt non-verbal modes more than the verbal one and some outdoor advertisements depend primarily on visual

elements rather than on linguistic ones. Billboard advertising is a case in point. For instance, it is common to see billboards with large illustrations and just simple headlines or slogans in almost every city around the world. Even so, translation scholars have so far given priority to linguistic elements of advertising texts and neglected the interaction of the verbal and non-verbal modes in advertising translation (Macario and Boyte 2008, Smith 2006).

Inspired by the notion of context in Relevance Theory (hereafter RT, Sperber and Wilson 1986), the present study is to examine this interaction of the non-verbal and verbal elements and the translation methods used in four bilingual billboards collected from Hong Kong, aiming to explore the impact of the non-verbal modes on translating the verbal component in advertisements. Multimodality in advertising will also be discussed in relation to general advertising principles and linguistic requirements for a successful advertisement translation.

2. Related Concepts and Notions

2.1 Multimodality in advertising and headlines of billboards

In the current audiovisual age, advertising has developed into a kind of multimedia-assisted communication. It is increasingly dependent on multiple modes for effective promotion, thus using multimodality as one of its prominent features. Multimodality, a term borrowed from Kress's notion of modes (1997, 2001), refers to the combination of different kinds of modes, visual, audio, written, oral, spatial, etc. in human communication (Kress and Leeuven 1996, Kress 2003). Multimodality in advertising suggests the use of different communicative modes in a single advertisement. For instance, a print advertisement uses a combination of words, illustration, font and color to send a message, and this mixing and melding of modalities represents multimodality. In communicating the messages and intentions of the advertisers, these varied yet integrated modes act interactively.

The significance of visual modes in advertising has long been studied with great interest by scholars of advertising (e.g. Hopkins 1923, Rotzoll 1985) as well as from various other perspectives, including psychology (e.g. Kosslyn and Alper 1977, Rossiter 1980), consumer research (Mitchell and Olson 1977, Rossiter and Percy 1978), and marketing management (e.g. Zubcevic and Luxton 2011). For instance, Claude Hopkins, a pioneer advertising consultant, stressed in his famous *Scientific Advertising* (1923: 12), "Don't think that those millions will read your advertisements to find out if your product interests. They will decide by a glance – by your headline or your pictures." Hopkins' statement is particularly true in billboard advertising which usually shows large pictures and short headlines. Billboards are highly visible in top designated market areas because of their powerful presence. The headline in outdoor advertising

such as billboards, in contrast to its function in a newspaper or magazine advertisement which demonstrates the main content of the following body text, is like a caption in the way that it more often than not accompanies an illustration rather than other verbal text. Viewed from the cognitive perspective (Wilson and Sperber 1988a, 1988b, 1993, Wilson 1994), the headline, or slogan as it is most commonly called, is the linguistic element and acts as the most explicit mode of communication. It is generally indispensable in driving people into the action of purchase, no matter how many modes are deployed in an advertisement. Headlines are thus vital for the success of advertisements.

Even so, both advertising-focused and cognition-oriented studies have revealed that the various non-verbal elements in different advertising media are also crucial for the interpretation of the verbal message (e.g. Block 1981, Bamard 1995), mainly because multimodal advertisements have been designed to facilitate an interaction between the different kinds of modes involved in communication for the best possible advertising effect (Barthes 1977, Sparkman and Austin 1980). The headline and the accompanying illustration interact with each other and make the message conveyed in the billboard more explicit. However, in Translation Studies, only a few scholars have given attention to this neglect in the study of the role of non-verbal modes in advertisement translation (Nomura 2000, Valdés 2000).

2.2 AIDA and KISA

Scholars studying advertising have noted that to achieve the ultimate purpose of selling the product, advertisers are encouraged to follow AIDA, an acronym that indicates an established advertising principle modelling consumer reaction to a successful advertisement. The principle was formulated and developed by E. St. Lewis (1899), an American advocate of advertising. Although it has been criticised by some as outdated (see for instance Barry 1987), it is historically considered to be the best established model of advertising. In addition, billboard advertising, which is the object of our case study seems particularly well suited to it. The four letters of AIDA stand for the necessary stages that an advertisement needs to go through to work on a potential customer, i.e. (1) Attention; (2) Interest; (3) Desire; (4) Action. In other words, an appealing advertisement should be able to grab the attention of the potential customer, get him interested, fill him with desire, and push him into action. In AIDA, different psychological components form the foundation of the ultimate goal of action and cognition plays a vital role in the realisation of the principle. The consumers' cognition actually serves both as the starting point and the final stage of the psychological procedure in AIDA as attention, interest and desire all function at the cognitive level (Percy and Rossiter 1980). That is to say, only when the information reaches the cognitive layer of the addressee's psychology can the other reactions be triggered.

As it is assumed that an audience will take little notice of the advertiser's message, advertising language is expected to be short and appealing, hence "Keep It Short and Appealing" (Ding 1995), which is summarised as KISA, a linguistic principle outlining the two basic requirements of the language used in an advertisement. While being short refers to the length of the words used, being appealing suggests that the language used needs to be pleasing and persuasive enough to trigger a positive response, for instance the desire and even the action of purchase. The KISA principle is particularly significant in achieving AIDA in translating billboard advertisements. Due to the mobility of its audience, billboard advertising allows only a headline usually of "no more than seven words" (Lane and Russell 2004: 179). It is therefore even more crucial for the headline of an outdoor advertisement (in comparison with other advertising media) to follow the linguistic principle KISA as well as to achieve AIDA. In other words, only when the linguistic part is short and brief enough can the advertisement be understood quickly and potentially stimulate interest desire; only when the language is interesting enough and easy to follow can the receiver appreciate the message and thus generate desire and action of purchase.

2.3 Notion of Context in RT and Contextualisation

Context is crucial to advertising translation (Pan 2003), much in the same way as it is central to Translation Studies in general (Gutt 1997, Pan 2002, 2004) and it is to any discipline concerned with language use (House 2006). The main ideas about context have been developed in different research traditions, including psychology (Grice 1975, Sperber and Wilson 1986), sociolinguistics (Bateson 1972, Goffman 1974), pragmatics (Ochs 1975, Levinson 1983) and philosophy (Wittgenstein 1958). Among these, the notion of context that is particularly influential for the ideas in other traditions is the one developed by Sperber and Wilson as part of their Relevance Theory (hereafter RT). Based on Grice's (1975) theory of implicature in language use, RT is a linguistic theory providing a cognitive approach to the study of communication.

Particularly beneficial to advertising translation in practice and research is RT's notion of characterising communication as achieved by means of the consequent mutuality of the cognitive environment and the operation of inferential processes. Context in RT is thus conceptualised as a "cognitive environment", a psychological concept defined as "the set of premises used in interpreting" an utterance; it is a cognitive construct acting as a "subset of the hearer's assumptions about the world" (Sperber and Wilson 1986: 15). It relies on the mental availability of environmental factors internalised in one's cognitive structure for interpretation. According to Sperber and Wilson, cognitive environment consists of a huge variety of potential information. It includes "information that can be perceived in the physical environment, information that can be retrieved from memory"

and "furthermore information that can be inferred from the two sources" (Gutt 1991:25).

In terms of multimodal billboards, visual modes can act as the context for the interpretation of non-verbal messages, in the sense that such modes easily grab the audience's attention and quickly enter into their perception. On the one hand, the illustrations and pictures, designed to be eye-catching, have a powerful presence on billboards and can be internalised quicker than the verbal message. On the other hand, the headlines make the implicit non-verbal elements explicit, as verbal communication is believed to be most ostensive in the sense that "it introduces an element of explicitness where non-verbal communication can never be more than implicit" (Sperber and Wilson 1986:175). The cognitive operation of the inferential process of the linguistic stimuli relies on the context available to the audience. Therefore, in multimodal advertisements, as soon as the non-verbal yet attention-grabbing elements have been internalised as mentally available environmental factors to the audience, they help to form the "cognitive context" (Sperber and Wilson 1986:15) for processing the accompanying linguistic elements. Accordingly, in translating the headline on a billboard, the translator needs to consider the cognitive environment of the target audience, which usually consists of:

1) What is perceived in the physical environment, for instance, the pictorial elements, other verbal elements, and the frame of the billboard and its surroundings.
2) Relevant information retrieved from memory, including available socio-cultural as well as linguistic knowledge.
3) Further information inferred from the two sources, i.e. the impression formed from the interaction of all the elements comprising the advertisement, and other perceptions and available memories.

However, it should be noted that context in RT is not conceptualised as a condition prescribed before inference but the recognition produced in the very dynamic process of inference. In the process of interpreting a headline, the audience constructs the immediately given context based on their perception of the physical environment, in which the various elements interact and generate assumptions in their mind. Their cognitive environment is thus constantly changed, expanded and enriched, becoming the basis for further interpretation of newly perceived stimuli. In this sense, among other kinds of information that constitute the cognitive environment, the inference of the headline a billboard relies vitally on the pictorial elements in the advertisement, which therefore form the assumption most likely to be part of the cognitive context of the linguistic stimulus. The important message for the translator is that contextualisation is a necessity in handling the linguistic components in translation for advertising.

The term contextualisation was first used in sociolinguistics to refer to the use of language and discourse to signal relevant aspects of a communicative situation (Eerdmans, Prevignano and Thibault 2003; Gumperz 1982). Prior to the use of the word contextualisation, many cross-cultural linguists, anthropologists and missionaries had been involved in similar communication approaches, adapting a message or meaning to another cultural setting (Bernstein 1990). However, since the early 1970s, the meaning of the word contextualisation has widened. It is now used by religious and political groups to render their message into different settings by adjusting or accommodating words, phrases or meanings into understandable contexts in respondent cultures (Gumperz 1982). In this study, contextualisation is defined as placing a word or activity in a context in communication.

In line with the notion of context in RT, contextualisation in translation for advertising can be carried out on at least two occasions: 1) translating the slogan of an advertisement into different versions in a target language when the pictures or figures might produce different assumptions due to the difference in the cognitive environment of the target reader; 2) rendering the headline of an advertisement into a version which not only matches the illustrative components in the advertisement but also draws on the pictorial elements for its interpretation. The present paper will only discuss the second case, in which the translated billboard headlines will be analysed in the context of the non-verbal elements, so as to see how contextualisation of a headline within the multimodality of the billboard can better achieve the desired advertising effect.

3. Contextualisation of headlines in advertisement translation

Analysed below are four billboard advertisements collected from the Hong Kong-Macao Ferry Terminal in Hong Kong. The aim is to explore the possible use of the notion of context in RT as an analytical tool to examine the contextual effect of the non-verbal elements on the verbal elements in the original and the translated advertisements. Among the four sample billboards, the first two are in bulletins advertising two new casino hotels, and the other two samples are from the posters promoting the ferry services available at the terminal (ST stands for the source text, TT for the target text, LT for literal translation).

Example 1

Illustration 1: A billboard promoting Crown Macao Hotel.

ST: 澳門皇冠，盛事盛放
LT: Crown Macao, great things happen greatly.
TT: Where Great Things Happen.

In Example 1, the billboard promotes the Crown Macao Hotel, a modern and luxurious hotel with a casino, targeting the high-end gaming market. While the Chinese headline *澳門皇冠 ,盛事盛放* (Crown Macao, great things happen greatly) is self-sufficient as it includes both the name of the casino hotel Crown Macao and the theme of the advertisement "great things happen greatly," the English version "Where Great Things Happen" is incomplete in structure and vague in meaning due to the absence of the antecedent noun. No one can tell from the clause what place the adverbial 'where' refers to. Linguistically, the ostensive stimulus is not relevant enough to be interpreted if it stands alone.

However, the headline does not stand alone but is accompanied by images of a superstar and the splendid skyscraper of the casino hotel (Illustration 1). Since pictures grab viewers' attention more easily (Cook 1992), the picture is bound to attract passers-by before the headline does. More importantly, the superstar presented in the picture is Chow Yun-Fat, a handsome and eye-catching international film star recognised as "the coolest actor in the world" by some American media commentators (Smith 1995). Chow has been adored internationally, particularly for his successful role in *God of Gamblers* and several other world famous films featuring gambling. For passers-by who have seen those films and been impressed by his image as a "Gambling King" or "Gambling God" in the stories, their perception of the pictorial elements in the billboard and memory of Chow being the God of Gamblers could constitute part of the cognitive environment needed for their inference of the English headline. At the same time, with the antecedent noun missing, the linguistic stimulus in the headline could function to direct the passers-by to find out what the adverbial 'where' refers to. It is easy for them to find the answer

in the sparkling image of the 36-storey tower of the Crown Macao behind Chou. The pictorial elements in the advertisement thus not only form the assumption that is most likely to be part of the cognitive context of the linguistic stimulus but also help to provide the information omitted verbally.

Example 2

Illustration 2: A billboard promoting MGM Grand Macao.

ST: 来·玩在今晚夜！
LT: Come· Play tonight!
TT: SEIZE THE NIGHT. COME

Example 2 presents a billboard promoting MGM Grand Macao, a casino resort in Macao, owned and operated through a partnership between MGM Mirage and Pansy Ho Chiu-king, the daughter of Stanley Ho, the Macao casino tycoon. Among the verbal and non-verbal elements on the billboard, the photo of the large bronze statue of a lion is so conspicuous that it is bound to grab people's attention instantly. For people who are interested in casinos, the Lion named "Leo the Lion" is a familiar image as it is the mascot of MGM, a world famous casino corporation. For those who are unfamiliar with MGM, the simple yet glorious bronze statue of Leo the Lion is such a powerful presence that it can impress the passers-by and drive them to find more information about it, either in the billboard or from the video played on the screen in front of the billboard (Illustration 2). The pictorial and visual information presented in the physical environment interact with each other and construct part of the cognitive environment needed for further interpretation of information perceived in other modes, including the Chinese and the English headlines in the upper left corner and the logo of MGM in the upper right.

In addition, the Chinese and the English headlines, targeting their own respective readers, provide linguistic stimuli that enable the readers to retrieve different memories. Specifically, the expressions *今晚夜* (tonight) in the Chinese headline and "THE NIGHT" in English tend to stimulate different associations in the readers' minds. On the one hand, the Chinese headline is actually in Cantonese, a dialect of Chinese not only used in Hong Kong, Macao, and some areas in the southern part of the Chinese Mainland but also well-received in other parts of China probably due to the booming economy in the areas where it is spoken as well as the popularity of Cantonese songs around the whole country. To people who know Cantonese or sing Cantonese songs, the linguistic structure of *玩在今晚夜* (play tonight) in the headline alludes to the lyrics of popular Cantonese songs. Two Cantonese songs are even titled *今晚夜* (Tonight). One is the theme song of a popular Hong Kong TV series. The other is the song used in a well-known show named *Enjoy Yourself Tonight* or *E.Y.T.* which is shown by Hong Kong TVB. The show was quite entertaining and welcomed in the Cantonese areas in China, and in fact enjoyed such popularity in Hong Kong that it lasted 27 years and was one of the world's longest running live-shows. Its theme song *今晚夜* was popular in Cantonese-speaking areas and is still frequently broadcast on the radio there. A nice memory could be triggered by the linguistic stimulus in the Chinese headline and the association could produce a certain degree of contextual effect.

On the other hand, the phrase "seize the night" in the English translation is likely to activate a range of different associations in the English readers' cognitive environment. Those who are the fans of suspense thrillers will probably recall *Seize the Night*, a novel written by the best-selling author Dean Koontz, whose books have often appeared on *the New York Times Bestseller List*. Some English readers might think of a popular English song named *Seize the Night* or of a famous concert, since *Seize the Night* was used as the name both of a well-known song and of a 2007 world concert tour by Meat Loaf, a famous American rock singer and stage and screen actor who has appeared in over 50 movies and television shows. The lyrics of the song are also very operative, and have such lines as "Come with me and seize the night, Now's the time for some inspiration, Leave the day and lose the light, No taboos only new sensations."

No matter what information has been activated from their memory by the operative phrase, the English reader might produce assumptions like 'the place advertised is full of mysteries and adventures as well as fun and fashion.' Such an assumption fits well with MGM Grand Macao's own claim on its official website about the casino resort: "a place where the inhibitions are discarded and new desires found." Even without association with those pop songs and bestsellers, 'the night' itself is a word which can stimulate fascination, even more so when associated with a renowned casino resort. The English headline is thus powerful and persuasive to

Western gaming tourists heading for Macao, most of whom are familiar with MGM Mirage, which owns casinos and hotel resorts in different parts of the world, including the MGM Grand in Las Vegas. Additionally, the MGM Lion Statue, the largest bronze statue in the Western Hemisphere, located at the entrance of the MGM Grand Las Vegas, is a familiar image to gaming tourists. In this way, when the perceivers look at the advertisement, both the English and the Chinese headlines are contextualised by the pictorial elements as well as other verbal elements.

The next two samples are posters promoting two brands of ferry service between Hong Kong and Macao. The pictorial illustrations of the vessels on both posters help tourists to interpret the messages in the advertisements better, but to a varying degree due to the difference in the cognitive environments of the ST and TT readers, as elaborated below.

Example 3

Illustration 3: A billboard promoting CotaiJet.

ST: "金光飛航"舒適、省時
澳門氹仔瞬在眼前
LT: Golden Sparkling Speeding Route is comfortable and time-saving; Taipa of Macao will come into sight right now.
TT: Travel in style – direct to Taipa, Macao.

In Example 3, CotaiJet, a ferry service operated by Cotai Chu Kong Shipping Management Services Co. Ltd is advertised. Compared with the Chinese headline, the English is briefer with just seven short words. In particular, the Chinese name of the brand *金光飛航* (Golden Sparkling Speeding Route) is omitted form the English version. However, with the picture of a blue vessel below the headlines, it is not difficult for the perceivers to infer that what is being advertised is a ferry service. Moreover, the English *Cotai Strip* on the body of the vessel indicates the specific destination of the ferry, i.e. Cotai Strip, a section of Macao joining the two islands of Coloane and Taipa of Macao which resulted from the

Macao government's major land reclamation project. The term Cotai Strip is an ostensive linguistic stimulus to foreign tourists who are interested in gaming, since it is the name of the casino and tourism district of Cotai in Macao. It is named after the Las Vegas Strip in Las Vegas (Cotai Strip n.d.), and its name was coined by the Las Vegas Sands Corporation who were responsible for building a strip of hotel-casinos in Cotai. Compared with the Chinese original which includes both the brand *金光飛航* and the destination *Taipa, Macao*, the English headline is briefer, conveying the essential advantage of the route, "direct to Taipa, Macao". The reason why "Taipa, Macao" is indicated as the destination instead of Cotai, in both the Chinese and the English headlines, is obviously because Taipa is more familiar to both ordinary Chinese and foreign tourists, compared with Cotai, a new section in Macao resulting from a recent land reclamation project.

In addition, the physical context also contributes to the principle of KISA in the sense that the location of the billboard as part of the physical environment helps tourists in forming the right assumption about the starting place of the ferry service. It is thus not necessary to put this information into the limited space of the billboard. As for the description of the journey in the phrase "travel in style", the picture of the splendid looking vessel can serve as evidence and give tourists confidence that they will enjoy a comfortable journey.

Example 4

Illustration 4: A billboard promoting TurboJET

ST: 出發隨心所欲　購票網路全面開通
LT: Start off anytime at will. All networks of ticket purchase are available.
TT: Start Off Anytime.　Get Your Tickets Online.

In Example 4, the poster promotes TurboJET, the ferry service run as part of the operations of the Hong Kong-based Shun Tak-China Travel Ship Management Limited. The English translation also strictly follows the principle of KISA. To start with, it is short: only seven words. In addition,

its message is appealing as regards convenience. It is good for any tourists to know that they can "start off anytime" and get their tickets online. Yet the English translation could hardly stand alone, for no information about the 'product' or 'service' is provided, and the name of the brand advertised is not given. However, the pictorial element illustrates the service with a picture of the red vessel. On the body of the vessel, the name of the brand TurboJET can be seen. Additionally, the picture of a man booking online with his mobile reinforces the ostensive reassurance of the convenience stated in the Chinese four-character phrase *隨心所欲* (at will) and the English expression "Get Your Tickets Online." The obviously satisfied smile on the face of the man and the promising words "Start off Anytime" in the English headline interact and result in an appealing translated advertisement which fulfils the AIDA principle.

4. Discussion

Based on the analysis of the sample headlines and their translations on the billboards displayed at the Hong Kong-Macao Ferry Terminal, we will discuss the findings in relation to the notion of RT as well as to the KISA and the AIDA principles. Translation methods used in handling the billboard headlines are also discussed, followed by a summary of implications.

4.1 Findings

Firstly, our analysis shows that the translations and the original headlines are not self-sufficient in meaning and pose problems for inferring the intended information if they stand alone. Most significantly, none of the sample translated headlines gives the name of the brand advertised. For instance, in Example 1, though the name of the casino hotel appears in the Chinese original, it is omitted in the English translation. The same is true of Example 3, in which the brand name Cotai Strip in the ST is omitted in the TT. The success of the translations depends largely on the non-verbal elements which form part of the cognitive context in processing the linguistic message. Secondly, it is found that non-verbal elements also help the translated headlines to conform to the KISA principle. Generally speaking, "keeping it short" is comparably more challenging to achieve in copywriting the headlines on the billboards displayed in Hong Kong, since because of the bilingual nature of this international commercial centre, two versions are necessary. The translation thus has to be as short as possible due to the limited space available and the low span of attention of the moving pedestrian. We have seen that all the samples contain very short and concise English translated headlines. The realisation of KISA in all those headlines is found to depend on the pictorial elements serving as the immediate context for the headlines. For instance, among the samples, the longest Chinese

headline is found in Example 3, and it has 16 characters but there are only seven words in its translation. None of the translated headlines exceeds seven words and the shortest has only four (See Example 2). However, with the non-verbal and other verbal elements accompanying them, those headlines do not pose any problem in understanding. It shows that the translator has taken into consideration both the verbal and non-verbal elements in translating the billboard headlines so as to achieve the KISA principle while fulfilling the function of AIDA of the billboard advertising.

4.2 Context-dependency of translation methods

In the sample headlines, we have seen that all the non-verbal elements in the original advertisement remain unchanged and only the headline is translated. With the images and other visual materials being static, the linguistic signs have to be manipulated to match the non-verbal modes of communication. The methods used in translating headlines on billboards are thus highly context-dependent.

As illustrated in the case study, the translated headlines are in the same physical environments as the originals. The difference in terms of cognitive environments of the original and the target readers only lies in the assumptions formed by information retrieved from memory, which includes the social and cultural as well as linguistic knowledge. With the same physical context but distinct information in the target reader's memory, the translated headline not only needs to fit into and to be able to interact with the other elements in the advertisement and its surroundings but also to be able to interact with the information which might be retrieved from the target reader's memory.

This explains the different methods used in translating the headlines. For instance, the illustrations in Example 1 and 3 present the pictures of the advertised brands in English and provide the English target reader the needed physical environment for the inference of the translated English headlines. That makes the omission of the brand names in the English translations possible and helps to implement the KISA principle in the translated headlines. In Example 4, specification is deployed in the English translation of the headline, as compared with the Chinese original *購票網路全面開通* (All networks of ticket purchase are available), the English translation *get your tickets online* mentions just one of the specific ways of getting tickets. In Example 2, though the linguistic structures of the ST and TT are very similar, the method of "adaptation", in the sense used by Vinay and Darbelnet (2000: 91), is used. Adaptation, as one of the seven translation procedures proposed by the two authors, refers to the way of rendering used when the type of situation being referred to by the original message is unknown in the target culture. As illustrated in the analysis of Example 2, the literal translation of the Chinese *今晚夜*, a

phrase of stimulating an association in lots of Hong Kong locals and other Cantonese speakers, would hardly make any sense to the English audience because of the difference in the information that can be retrieved from memory. With the English expression *seize the night* used in the translation, the ST is adapted, and the TT creates a new set of associations in the target reader's cognitive environment.

4.3 Implications

The findings from the case analysis raise several points regarding translating billboard headlines. To start with, modes other than the linguistic mode function unavoidably, and in fact beneficially, as context in the cognitive processing of the linguistic elements. The interplay of verbal and non-verbal elements in the advertisements should therefore not be ignored in headline translating. Secondly, for outdoor advertising in different forms, because short and appealing linguistic messages are more appealing and thus easier to remember, the KISA principle is particularly important as they ensure the use of the cognitive processes identified in the AIDA model. To arrest the eye of the passers-by who are moving, the billboards usually accompany their headlines with clear, large and informative pictorial components. The pictorial elements make short and appealing translated headlines possible and the advertisements striking.

At the same time, an awareness of multimodality in billboard advertising helps the translator to adhere to the KISA and the AIDA classical principles and ultimately fulfil the goal of selling products or services. In addition, the translator should keep in mind that the intended contextual effect of a translated headline comes from the cognitive process of all the available assumptions which constitute the cognitive environment. Hence, the possible cognitive environment of the target addressee should be taken into consideration. However, above all, the choice of the translation methods in most cases depends on a careful analysis of the various elements provided by the multimodalities in the advertisement, because the extra-linguistic elements, as stimuli sent out by the advertiser and as implicit messages facilitating the linguistic communication, serve as the most immediate physical context of the headlines.

5. Results and concluding remarks

Based on the notion of context in RT, this paper has examined features of multimodality in billboard advertising in relation to translation. With a focus on the pictorial elements in the billboard samples chosen, the analysis shows that the non-verbal modes function as part of the cognitive context used in inferring the verbal elements; the visual elements contribute to the contextualisation of the translated headlines. The multimodal nature of today's advertising helps to produce translations of headlines in line with the KISA and the AIDA principles. This study also indicates that the choice of translation methods is *pre-decided* by the

extra-lingual components of a billboard as those elements are not to be changed in translation.

The study suggests that the multimodality of advertising and the interaction between different modalities in advertisements have to be taken into consideration by the translator in rendering billboard headlines accompanied by pictorial elements and other verbal or non-verbal ones. At the same time, to guarantee the intended contextual effect for the target customer when reading a translated headline, the translator needs to predict the cognitive context generated from the interplay of the non-verbal elements and the related information available in memory as well as the interaction of the cognitive environment of the target reader with the possible translations of the headline. The paper therefore concludes that multimodality is not only helpful in realising AIDA in advertising but also effective in facilitating the realisation of the KISA principle in advertisement translation. It is vital for the translator to make full use of the contextual effect of the multimodal elements in translating the linguistic elements in the multimodal advertisements.

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