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Creation or translation? Bilingual campaigns in Basque advertising agencies

¿Creación o traducción? Campañas bilingües en las agencias de publicidad vascas

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ABSTRACT: Scientific research to date has not focused on the issue of bilingual advertising creation. As a contribution to this line of research, this article uses a specific sociolinguistic approach, taking the Basque country as its model. Thus, using semi-structured in-depth interviews, it describes the internal processes that major advertising agencies follow in order to create advertisements in two official Languages, Basque and Spanish. The study highlights the fact that the creation process is primarily in Spanish, adapting to Basque at a later date, a fact which has repercussions on the effectiveness of the campaigns in the second language. The

main conclusion shows a need to define and design a prototype model of bilingual development, which at the present time is nonexistent.

RESUMEN: La producción científica desarrollada hasta la fecha no ha indagado demasiado en la cuestión de la creación publicitaria bilingüe. Con el propósito de hacer una aportación en esta línea, el presente artículo se acerca a una realidad sociolingüística concreta, como es la del País Vasco. Por medio de entrevistas en profundidad semiestructuradas, se describe el proceso interno que las principales agencias de publicidad siguen para dar vida a anuncios en los dos idiomas oficiales, el euskera y el castellano. El estudio pone de manifiesto que el proceso de creación se desarrolla principalmente en castellano, mientras que la adaptación al euskera es una labor posterior, lo que condicionaría la efectividad de las campañas en este segundo idioma, según la hipótesis principal del estudio. Las conclusiones apuntan la necesidad de definir y diseñar un modelo prototípico de creación bilingüe, inexistente en la actualidad.

Keywords: Advertising, agencies, bilingual, creation, Basque Country.

Palabras clave: agencias, publicidad, bilingüe, creación, País Vasco.

1. Introduction

Globalisation has brought an influx of migrants to major cities, gradually creating areas of multicultural and multilingual diversity. This ongoing intermingling of cultures and languages has considerably increased the number of communities that are now bilingual. Given this scenario, advertising research needs to address the new challenge of how to establish a theoretical base for effectively managing this modern day “Tower of Babel”.

As will be explained below in a review of literature in this field, scientific research to date has tended to focus, on the one hand, on the upsurge of English in international campaigns, and, on the other, on the possible significance that the choice of language may have on consumer perceptions. Similarly, some studies have addressed the issue of minority languages in advertising, and there have also been contributions from the field of traductology. Nevertheless, the question of bilingual creation is a relatively unexplored field, since there are few scientific studies focusing on the procedures followed by the industry in creating advertisements containing more than one language. This research scenario of bilingual advertising creation provides the basis for this article, focusing on the Basque Country as the specific sociolinguistic reality. Thus, by means of a case study, this article will describe the internal processes used by agencies to create advertisements in the region’s two official languages, Euskera and Castilian Spanish.

2. *Review of current literature*

2.1. *International advertising and the presence of English*

Multinationals interested in conquering the global market need brands and products adapted to the specific cultural characteristics of different countries. Language plays a decisive role in any attempt to overcome geographical barriers¹. The work of researchers Barbara Mueller² and Marieke de Mooij³ has shown that multilingualism is a crucial factor when planning transnational campaigns, and needs to be factored in from the start. In addition to the need to think in multilingual terms, de Mooij recommends using simple and direct language, avoiding any puns or play on words directly linked to the language in which the advertising copy was originally created.

In short, the challenges of multilingualism in advertising are being overcome, and this is due increasingly to the extended use of English, which is clearly leading to standardisation of advertising. This fact has not gone unnoticed by researchers and today the list of studies on the presence of English in advertisements from various countries is an extensive one. Below we provide a summary of the main results of the research to date.

2.1.1. *Code-mixing and code-switching*

Several studies carried out in non-English speaking countries conclude that it is unusual for English to be the only language used in advertising. In fact, it is usually alternated with the local language or a mixture of both –a practice known as code-switching and mixing–, which may be less intrusive for the local public. As Elizabeth Martin⁴ explains, this occurs, for example, in France, where English continues to be used in international campaigns despite rigorous legislation protecting the French language. In the case of advertisements designed specifically for a French public, international firms also mix both languages in their campaigns. The author assumes that this code mixing could be a valid advertising tool, in that it gives rise to connotations beyond the implications of the English language.

Moreover, this phenomenon in advertisements in non-English speaking countries is a rich source of linguistic data, as there is evidence of morphosyntactic features which are not tolerated in conventional written discourse. The attempt to adapt English to the local language may give rise to new forms, such as the use of Chinese grammatical structure

¹ VALDÉS, Cristina, *La traducción publicitaria: comunicación y cultura*, Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona. Servei de Publicacions, Barcelona, 2004, p. 69.

² MUELLER, Barbara, *International Advertising: Communicating Across Cultures*, Wadsworth Publishing Co., Belmont, 1996, p. 90.

³ DE MOOIJ, Marieke, *Global Marketing and Advertising: Understanding Cultural Paradoxes*, Sage Publications, Thousand Oaks, 2010, p. 65.

⁴ MARTIN, Elizabeth, “Mixing English in French advertising”, *World Englishes*, vol. XXI, nº 3, 2002, pp. 375-402.

being translated literally into English⁵ or pronunciation of English phrases with a Dutch accent⁶.

2.1.2. *The use of English: Motivation and Effects*

So far two main reasons have been distinguished for using English, those of the utilitarian type –promoting the same brand and the same logo throughout the world, thus overcoming geographical and language barriers– and social or symbolic use –as a sign of innovation, prestige and quality–⁷.

The first of these motivations gives cause for reflection on the opportunity to create standardised campaigns throughout the world, or conversely, campaigns adapted to the cultural values of the target public in each location. This debate between adaptation and standardisation has been the focus of most of the research into intercultural advertising⁸. As Duncan and Ramaprasad⁹ explain, among the motives behind this commercial decision, language plays a significant role, since “‘standardization’ means keeping one or more of the three basic components of a multinational advertising campaign –strategy, execution, language– the same”.

Companies have tended to resolve this type of decision in a rather intuitive manner. The study of intercultural advertising is still in its early stages and there are no consensual guidelines to assist advertisers. Clearly, both positions have their advantages and disadvantages. On the one hand, promoting a single campaign reduces costs, helps to open up new markets and contributes to homogenising consumption patterns; although, conversely, the effectiveness of this type of campaign has been and still is widely questioned.

The second aforementioned reason, namely symbolic motivation, alludes to the aura that the language itself brings or, in other words, the connotations with which the advertiser imbues the advertisement through the use of that language. Helen Kelly-Holmes¹⁰, author of the book *Advertising as multilingual communication*, terms this symbolic use “linguistic fetishism”, a concept enshrined in Marxist theory of commodity fetishism. Marx maintained that the culture of capitalist consumption accords commodities a fetish, a symbolic value, thus forgetting their usefulness and the social relations or working conditions in which these commodities were produced. Similarly, this same process explains the emergence of foreign languages in advertising: the communicative and utilitarian value of words is relegated to a secondary plane, as due to the process of fetishism, the language is used mainly for its symbolic value, whereas the referential function is little less than irrelevant. This fetishism has its point

⁵ WEI-YU CHEN, Cheril, “The mixing of English in magazine advertisements in Taiwan”, *World Englishes*, vol. XIV, n° 3-4, 2006, pp. 467-478.

⁶ GERRITSEN, Marinel et al., “English in Dutch Commercials: Not Understood and Not appreciated”, *Journal of Advertising Research*, vol. XL, n° 4, 2000, pp. 17-36.

⁷ USTINOVA, Irina, “English and American Culture Appeal in Russian Advertising”, *Journal of Creative Communications*, vol. III, n° 1, 2008, pp. 77-98.

⁸ OKAZAKI, Shintaro, MUELLER, Barbara, “Cross-cultural advertising research: where we have been and where we need to go”, *International Marketing Review*, vol. XXIX, n° 5, 2007, p. 502.

⁹ DUNCAN, Tom, RAMAPRASAD, Jyotika, “Standardized multinational advertising: the influencing factors”, *Journal of Advertising*, vol. XXIV, n° 3, 1995, p. 55.

¹⁰ KELLY-HOLMES, Helen, *Advertising as multilingual communication*, Palgrave MacMillan, New York, 2005, pp 22-23.

of departure in the *country-of-origin-effect*. It was Dichter¹¹ who first suggested that a country of origin could have a “tremendous influence on the acceptance and success of products”. With regard to English, in general, it is employed for its usefulness in representing professionalism and international attractiveness¹², and besides, for its association with values such as modernity, technology and science¹³.

However, these beneficial effects have been questioned by other research. Studies carried out in Holland and Poland concluded that the use of English did not change the assessment of the advertisement and the advertiser, and nor did it influence the intention to purchase. They only found statistically significant differences in comprehension, given that English caused some problems to the objective group¹⁴. In fact, the degree of comprehension may be a key element in determining the efficacy of messages written in English. The results of a further two research projects also carried out in the Netherlands explain that English was preferred to Dutch when it was easy to understand, however, when it was difficult to interpret, the appreciation of both languages was the same¹⁵.

In addition to its use in advertising messages, English has also been analysed for the impact it may have on the cultural heritage of numerous countries. Today few would venture to argue that advertising plays an important role in shaping identity and ideologies. In this way, rather than being an inoffensive symbolic mechanism, English could become a vehicle for transmitting Anglo Saxon cultural values, particularly those associated with the United States. Accordingly, terms such as “westernisation” proliferate in current research works on intercultural advertising¹⁶.

2.2. Campaigns in bilingual communities

Within the sphere of bilingual communities, academics have examined how advertisements in two languages have been received in order to assist advertisers and advertising professionals in managing the bilingual phenomenon. Based on psycholinguistic and sociolinguistic theories, factors which could affect the efficacy of advertising aimed at a bilingual target have been analysed.

The initial research carried out in United States adopted a sociolinguistic approach with the purpose of studying how the use of the language of a specific ethnic group may influence attitudes towards the advertisement. This idea is enshrined in accommodation theory, which examines the factors that influence linguistic options chosen by bilingual

¹¹ DICHTER, Ernest, “The World Customer”, *Harvard Business Review*, vol. XL, n° 4, 1962, p. 116.

¹² CHESHIRE, Jenny, MOSER, Lise-Marie, “English and symbolic meaning: advertisements in the Suisse Romande”, *Journal of Multilingual and Multicultural Development*, vol. XVII, n° 1, 1994, p. 468.

¹³ PÉTERY, Dorottya, “English in Hungarian advertising”, *World Englishes*, vol. XXX, n° 1, 2011, 21-40.

¹⁴ Cfr. VAN MEURS, Frank et al., “The influence of the use of English in Dutch job advertisements: an experimental study into the effects on the intelligibility and appreciation of the text and on the image of the organization and of the job offered”, *ESP Across Cultures*, vol. I, 2004, pp. 93-110; PLANKEN, Brigitte et al., “The Effects of the Use of English in Polish Product Advertisements: Implications for English for Business Purposes”, *English for Specific Purposes*, vol. XXIX, n° 4, 2010, pp. 225-242.

¹⁵ Cfr. GERRITSEN, Marinel, *op. cit.*, pp. 17-36; HORNIKX, Jos, “English or Local Language in Advertising? The Appreciation of Easy and Difficult English Slogans in the Netherlands”, *Journal of Business Communication*, vol. XLVII, n° 2, 2010, p. 185.

¹⁶ USTINOVA, Irina, *op. cit.*, pp. 77-98.

speakers. Koslow, Shamdasani and Touchstone¹⁷ suggest that when the objective group is a minority population, the advertisement is more convincing if it features a character similar to the audience or if the text is written in their native language. Moreover, the authors noted that the change of code from English –the majority language– to Spanish –the minority tongue– obtained better assessments than monolingual English advertisements, as it was considered to be a sign of respect for the culture and language of the Hispanic community. Conversely, advertisements that used only Spanish were less well received. This was due to the fact that recipients of the message may feel singled out as members of a group with negative connotations, such as discrimination or a feeling of inferiority. As a result, advertisers should use a combination of English and Spanish.

Similarly, the direction that this change of code should take has been analysed. In accordance with the Myers-Scotton's *Markedness Model*¹⁸, Luna and Perachio¹⁹ suggested that in order to gain the allegiance of US Hispanic bilinguals it would be appropriate to begin with the native language, Spanish, and subsequently change to English, the predominant language. In this way, English would be the *marked* language, which is associated with increased status and power. However, it may not always be possible to maintain this marking model depending on the language of the communications medium in which the advertisement is placed. According to a new study based on the results established by Luna and Perachio, it would be preferable for the primary language to be that of the medium, and then for the second language to be introduced²⁰.

Intercultural research has also developed from a cognitive perspective. This approach defines how the choice of language may influence the effectiveness of the advertisement through the ease with which it is processed. In this respect, other research has found that in advertisements targeting Spanish and English bilingual individuals, it was preferable to use their mother tongue not for social or cultural reasons, but because the words of a second language are more difficult to process, as the Revised Hierarchical Model (RHM) suggests²¹. Similarly, several studies support the fact that bilingual recipients are better able to recall language when it is most easily processed, and it is well known that memory is a key factor in advertising effectiveness²². Furthermore, high levels of consistency between image and text facilitate processing by simplifying it, which permits improved recovery of a message that is not in the mother tongue²³. Finally, mention should be made of studies which have considered the effects of language from

¹⁷ KOSLOW, Scott et al., "Exploring Language Effects in Ethnic Advertising: A Sociolinguistic Perspective", *Journal of consumer research*, vol. XX, March, 1996, pp. 575-585.

¹⁸ MYERS-SCOTTON, Carol, *Duelling Languages: grammatical structure in codeswitching*, Clarendon University Press, Oxford, 1993, p. 113.

¹⁹ LUNA, David, PERACCHIO, Laura, "Advertising to Bilingual Consumers: The Impact of Code-Switching on Persuasion", *Journal of Consumer Research*, vol. XXXI, March, 2005, pp. 760-765.

²⁰ BISHOP, Melissa, PETERSON, Mark, "The Impact of Medium Language on Bilingual Consumers' Responses to Code-Switched Advertising", *Journal of Advertising*, vol. XXXIX, n° 3, 2010, p. 55.

²¹ LUNA, David, PERACCHIO, Laura, "What's in a Bilingual's mind?: How Bilingual Consumers Process Information", *Advances in Consumer Research*, vol. XXVI, 1999, pp. 306-311.

²² SCHMITT, Bernd et al., "Language and consumer memory: The impact of linguistic differences between Chinese and English", *Journal of Consumer Research*, vol. XXI, 1994, pp. 419-431.

²³ LUNA, David et al., "The Impact of Language and Congruity on Persuasion in Multicultural E-Marketing", *Journal of Consumer Psychology*, vol. XIII, n° 1-2, 2003, pp. 41-50

an emotional and affective perspective. Luna and Peracchio²⁴ also applied the so called *Conceptual Feature Model*²⁵ to advertising, which was a model of bilingual lexical-semantic organisation. Following this model, they used projective techniques to discover the meanings associated with the same words in two languages. They argued that some terms have more emotional force in the native language than the equivalent term in the second language. Therefore, in aspects more closely linked to the culture, such as the family, friends or religion, the mother tongue would have a greater emotional impact. Given this state of affairs, when advertising exploits the field of emotions, use of the mother tongue would be beneficial for the advertiser; not, however, when it appeals rationally to the audience. Along the same lines, as a recent study by Noriega and Blair²⁶ has shown, language influences types of thinking that are generated in response to advertisements. The authors concluded that an advertisement in the mother tongue engenders thoughts of family, friends, the home or the home country. These associations of self reference facilitate positive thoughts and recollections and, as a result, positive attitudes towards the brand, which often results in an increased intention to purchase.

2.3. *Minority languages and advertising*

The study of the status of minority languages acquires vital importance when designing effective linguistic policies. Nevertheless, as the modern expression of commercial activity of a people, advertising could contribute to expansion and normalisation of endangered languages. This fact has been recognised in the General Plan for promoting the use of Euskera (EBPN) which dedicates a whole section to advertising²⁷.

Studies analysing the use of Euskera in advertising are thin on the ground. In this respect, it is worth mentioning the pioneering work of Jesus Eguzkizaga, who published an article in the nineteen nineties acknowledging the limitations of creative advertising in this language, because of the need to translate from texts originally drafted in Spanish²⁸.

Joseba Andoni Etxebarria²⁹ shares this view, and reflects on the disadvantages of the fact that Basque speakers are also familiar with Spanish, which means that advertisers tend to use only the predominant language. Nevertheless, this author also enumerates the benefits of using Euskera in advertisements for those involved. Along these lines there are some works which extol the advantages of advertising in the Basque language assuming that it gives added value to commercial transactions. By way of example, the

²⁴ LUNA, David, PERACCHIO, Laura, "Moderators of language Effects in Advertising to Bilinguals: A Psycholinguistic Approach", *Journal of Consumer Research*, vol. XXVIII, 2001, pp. 284-295.

²⁵ DE GROOT, Annette, "Bilingual Lexical Representation: A Closer Look at Conceptual Representations", in *Orthography, Phonology, Morphology, and Meaning*, FROST, R. and KATZ, L. (eds.), Elsevier, Amsterdam, 1992, p. 393.

²⁶ NORIEGA, Jaime, BLAIR, Edward, "Advertising to bilinguals: Does the language of advertising influence the nature of thoughts?", *Journal of Marketing*, vol. LXXII, September, 2008, pp. 69-83.

²⁷ GOBIERNO VASCO, *Plan General de Promoción del Uso del Euskera*, Servicio Central de Publicaciones del Gobierno Vasco, Vitoria-Gasteiz, 1999, p. 34

²⁸ EGUZKIZAGA, Jesús, "Euskara eta Publizitatea", *Senez Itzulpen eta Terminologiazko aldizkaria*, vol. VI, nº 3, 1990, p. 51.

²⁹ ETXEBARRÍA, Joseba Andoni, "Publizitatea eta euskara, norazko biko ahaleginak", *Mediatika*, nº 10, 2004, pp. 217-243.

advertising professional Iñigo Fernández Ostolaza³⁰ criticises the lack of attention paid by Basque advertising agencies to this issue. He concurs with Eguzkizaga in pointing out that advertisers confine themselves to thinking of texts in Spanish, in order to translate them at the last minute. Fernández Ostolaza concludes his work with a number of guidelines for improving the situation.

Similar studies have been carried out in the field of other linguistic communities, such as Catalan, which include the works of Joan Sabaté. This author defends the requirement to pay less attention to the number of advertisements disseminated in Catalan and to focus instead on their quality. In this respect, Sabaté indicates that advertising agencies should include multilingual professionals in their ranks, and in particular they should employ copywriters who are skilled in various languages. The current reality, which this expert qualifies as “archaic”, is far removed from this ideal scenario; agencies do not have advertisers who speak Catalan and the message progressively becomes distorted as it passes from hand to hand, exacerbated by the fact that the advertisement is sent to an external linguistic consultancy. As a result, linguistic revisers become an essential component of the advertising creative process³¹.

The parallels between the Basque and the Catalan communities are well known, not simply for linguistic reasons but also for their historic connections. During Franco’s dictatorship (1939-1975), both the Catalan and Basque languages were subjected to systematic persecution. This prohibition removed both languages from public life, including the sphere of advertising. These restrictions have affected the development of these languages leaving them technically deficient in some aspects, a fact which still has repercussions in some spheres, including advertising. According to Sabaté³², the person responsible for creating Catalan advertising should be aware of these limitations. Similarly he assigns a “linguistic responsibility” to advertising companies which consists of implementing Catalan in a normalised manner in relations between businesses and consumers. Finally, he argues that all languages are equally valid for advertising purposes as copywriting is not specific to any particular language. Advertising and marketing norms are universal, and beyond the boundaries of language³³.

This section could not be concluded without mentioning other notable cases, such as the Irish language, which has been addressed by the researchers Kelly-Holmes and Atkinson³⁴. By analysing two newspapers published in Irish Gaelic, the researchers concluded that advertisements in the minority language were restricted to certain traditional products, a practice which tends to reinforce the marginal position of Irish Gaelic in Ireland and which accords a basically symbolic use to this language.

³⁰ FERNÁNDEZ OSTOLAZA, Iñigo, “Euskarazko hedabideak eta publizitatea”, *Bat Soziolinguistika aldizkaria*, nº 68, 2008, pp. 63-74.

³¹ SABATÉ, Joan, “Les agències de publicitat i la publicitat en català”, *Llengua i ús: revista tècnica de política lingüística*, nº 17, 2000, pp. 49-54.

³² SABATÉ, Joan, *La publicitat en català*, Pòrtic, Barcelona, 1999, pp. 147-148.

³³ *Ibid.*, pp. 256-257.

³⁴ KELLY-HOLMES, Helen, ATKINSON, David, “Minority Language Advertising: A Profile of Two Irish-language Newspapers”, *Journal of Multilingual and Multicultural Development*, Vol. XXVIII, nº 1, 2007, pp. 34-50.

2.4. Advertising translation

Although it is not the purpose of this article to investigate the notion of advertising translation, it is important to look at a number of theoretical approaches from traductology in order to consider this branch of epistemology and to clarify some of its concepts. It is worth highlighting the fact that the main monographs published to date on the translation of advertising texts have been written in Spanish³⁵. However, all these focus mainly on translating of international advertising and not on the situation of communities where several languages coexist.

Before proceeding further, with reference to the dichotomy between translation and adaption, it is essential to point out that in this work the two terms will be used synonymously, in the belief that in the case of advertising translation, every text has a degree of adaption beyond the merely linguistic or textual, or, in other words, we could venture to state that the work of an advertising translator is “writing copy rather than translating”³⁶.

Within taxonomy of translation, advertising work corresponds to what could be defined as “subordinate translation”³⁷, that is, verbal and non-verbal elements are interlinked and give rise to an indissoluble whole. In order to activate the mechanisms of persuasion, the translator needs to achieve an adequate connection between these elements. Similarly, the advertising message is usually closely linked to the culture as its starting point³⁸.

Therefore, the main contribution of researchers looking at advertising translation has on the one hand been concerned with overcoming the barriers that divide cultures, and, on the other, the linguistic strategies used to translate texts of this type. Analysis of these questions has led to a division between “*possibilist*” theories –those with a practical purpose, which describe and propose effective translation mechanisms– and “*impossibilist*” theories –which tend to highlight the non-transferrable nature of the advertising message from one language to another–³⁹. Although we will not look at these approaches in greater depth, we consider it appropriate to quote Anhot, who also inspired Marieke de Mooij’s metaphoric title of her article “Translating Advertising. Painting the Tip of an Iceberg”⁴⁰:

Translating advertising copy is like painting the tip of an iceberg and hoping the whole thing will turn red. What makes copy work is not the words themselves, but subtle combinations of those words, and most of all the echoes and repercussions of those

³⁵ Cfr. BUENO GARCÍA, Antonio, *Publicidad y traducción*, VERTERE, Monográficos de la Revista Hermeneus, Soria, 2000; DURO MORENO, Miguel, *Traducir publicidad o el arte de pasar hambre*, Comares, Granada, 2001; CORPAS PASTOR, Gloria et al., *En torno a la traducción-adaptación del mensaje publicitario*, Servicio de Publicaciones de la Universidad de Málaga, Málaga, 2002; VALDÉS, Cristina, *La traducción publicitaria: comunicación y cultura*, Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona. Servei de Publicacions, Barcelona, 2004; LORENZO, Lourdes, PEREIRA, Ana M^a, *Traducción subordinada (III). Traducción y publicidad*, Servizo de Publicacións da Universidade de Vigo, Vigo, 2004; DÁVILA-MONTES, José Manuel, *La traducción de la persuasión publicitaria*, The Edwin Mellen Press, New York, 2008.

³⁶ BOIVINEAU, Roger, "L' a.b.c. de l' adaptation publicitaire", *Meta*, vol. XVII, n^o, 1972, pp. 18.

³⁷ MAYORAL, Roberto, *et al.*, "Concept of Constrained Translation. Non-Linguistic Perspectives of Translation", *Meta*, vol. XXXIII, n^o 3, 1988, pp.356-367.

³⁸ VALDÉS, Cristina, *op. cit.*, p. 69.

³⁹ DÁVILA-MONTES, José María, *op. cit.*, pp. 28-82.

⁴⁰ DE MOOIJ, Marieke, "Translating Advertising. Painting the Tip of an Iceberg", *The Translator*. vol. X, n^o 2, 2004, pp. 179-198.

words within the mind of the reader. These are precisely the subtleties which translation fails to convey. Advertising is not made of words, but made of culture⁴¹.

With regard to the contributions of translators for the purposes of this article, from the translators' perspective it was claimed that advertising agencies still fail to use professionals to undertake translations, because as Bueno describes: "if anyone has been missed out of this important team [that of the advertising agency] it is precisely a professional translator"⁴². This fact could be related to the scant number of translated advertisements, but it could equally be contended that it is the advertising copywriters themselves who are responsible for adapting the texts to the local language: "Advertising is barely translated: it is directly created [...] or –the little that is translated compared to the amounts that are created– is adapted (that is, recreated) in advertising agencies"⁴³. Thus, Duro Moreno qualifies the advertising translator as a "hungry artist" and dedicates several lines of his book to describing the hardships and difficulties involved in this work. So much so, that the author even reaches the point of doubting the existence of the advertising translator as such or rather, if such a post exists, he considers that it would head the list of jobs in danger of extinction⁴⁴.

3. Subject of the study

As we mentioned in our introduction, the purpose of this research is a study of the creative process of bilingual advertisements in the Basque Autonomous Community (BAC). The choice of this geographical area for our analysis is not accidental, and results from a number of specific criteria. On the one hand, within the administrative confines of the BAC, the legal framework established by the Statute of Autonomy of 1979 confirms both Euskera and Spanish as official languages of the region. In addition, according to a sociolinguistic survey carried out in 2006⁴⁵, 84% of *euskaldunes* (Speakers of Euskera or Basque language) live in this area, that is, 557,600 out of a total of 665,800 speakers.

Although from a legal perspective there is a policy of equal official status of two languages, reality shows that the vernacular language is relegated to minority status, for which reason the public authorities have taken a number of measures to date to remedy this fact. In terms of the issue that concerns us, the Basic Law on the Standardization of the use of the Basque Language (Law 10/1982 of 24 November) contains two articles relating to advertising. Point one of Article 8 states: "For the purposes of official advertising, all regulatory provisions or official decisions issued by public authorities of the Autonomous Community of the Basque Country should be bilingual"⁴⁶. Moreover, Article 27 states: "The Basque Public Authorities shall encourage the use of Euskera in

⁴¹ ANHOLT, Simon, *Another One Bites the Grass. Making Sense of International Advertising*, John Wiley & Sons, New York, 2000, p. 5.

⁴² Bueno García, *op. cit.*, pp. 81.

⁴³ Duro Moreno, *op. cit.*, pp. 169.

⁴⁴ *Ibíd.*, p. 174.

⁴⁵ GOBIERNO VASCO, IV. *Encuesta Sociolingüística*, Servicio Central de Publicaciones del Gobierno Vasco, Vitoria-Gasteiz, 2008, p. 202.

⁴⁶ GOBIERNO VASCO, "Ley 10/1982, de 24 de noviembre, Básica de Normalización del Uso del Euskera", *Boletín Oficial del País Vasco (BOPV)*, nº 160, 1982, p. 3.141.

advertising”⁴⁷. Thus, it may be assumed that the public authorities use both languages in all their campaigns.

The types of advertising agency currently operating in the Basque market are small or medium sized compared to the larger agencies of Barcelona or Madrid, and have an average of eight employees per agency⁴⁸. According to the Basque Country Industrial and Business Exporters Catalogue (CIVEX)⁴⁹, only six advertising agencies employ more than twenty staff: AD HOC, ARISTA, AURMAN, DIMENSIÓN, PUBLIS and TRUPP. These are precisely the agencies with sufficient resources to produce campaigns for large scale advertisers, and, therefore, they were selected for the purposes of this research. For good reason, these agencies permit an analysis of the overall creative process, obviating the need to include different sized agencies in the study.

4. *Research Design and Methodology*

The main goal of the research is to ascertain what the process of bilingual creation entails and how those entrusted with the task view their work. The relation and presence of Basque and Spanish in the creation of advertising campaigns may condition the effectiveness of those campaigns in one of the two languages. Indeed, in several broadcast bilingual campaigns the message in Basque was meaningless without its counterpart in Spanish; so it is highly likely that the creative process is developed in Spanish to the detriment of the version published in the Basque language. Thus, the main hypothesis of this research will be that even though a campaign may be bilingual, the creative process is no different and a translator outside the agency will be commended with the task of adapting the texts (headlines or slogans) into Basque.

The study presented herein is intended as the point of departure for a line of research which can be approached using a wide range of methods. In this case, a qualitative methodology has been used, based on semi-structured in-depth interviews. An attempt will be made to confirm –or, if appropriate, disprove– the proposed hypothesis on the basis of the subjects’ comments, while determining the details of the bilingual creative process. It will also be interesting to learn at first hand the thoughts and opinions of those involved in the work of advertising.

A total of eight experts were interviewed from two different professional groups. Six were advertising professionals from the aforementioned advertising agencies, and they were chosen on the basis of their role within the company –Managing Director or Accounts Manager– and also their professional history. Thus, interviewees were able to provide an overview of the process, that is, they had an in-depth knowledge of every step in the procedure followed to create an advertisement, from the moment that it is commissioned by an advertiser to its final dissemination. In addition, two translators were interviewed following a specific script. The choice of the latter was made based on the information facilitated by advertising agencies about translating agencies and professionals working with their company.

⁴⁷ *Ibíd.*, p. 3.144.

⁴⁸ LEÓN, José Luis, ETXEBARRÍA, Joseba Andoni, *Agencias de publicidad y anunciantes en mercados locales: País Vasco*, Universidad del País Vasco, Leioa, 2004, p. 69.

⁴⁹ Available online en <http://www.civex.net>

5. Results

5.1. *Bilingual advertising creation: peculiarities and problems*

A considerable number of advertisements created by the agencies analysed are bilingual. The biggest advertiser in this case is the public authority, as the law requires the authorities to use the region's two official languages in public communications. However, with companies in the private or industrial sector, advertising depends on the type of product and the customer's attitude. Thus, it is vitally important to ascertain initially whether or not there is an interest in advertising in Euskera.

Unquestionably, bilingualism complicates the process of creating advertisements. There is generalised consensus that working in two languages is a considerable obstacle to communication: "Having to use two languages on the same hoarding does little to help make an impact or draw attention". There were also some who were more explicit in their reluctance to use bilingual advertising: "I believe in monolingual advertising, I would be happy to create campaigns solely in Basque or solely in Spanish".

Other problems raised by bilingualism are those concerning time and budget. In the advertising sector, it is normal to work against the clock: "All our campaigns were due yesterday". This frenetic work rate affects advertising tasks in general, but even more so in the case of bilingual projects. When a promotion is devised simply in one language, the available time left for adapting it to another language is minimal. For this reason, translations are not always as adequate or appropriate as they could have been had there been more time allocated to adapt the texts to Euskera. Furthermore, a bilingual campaign tends to double the costs, which directly affects the budget and not all clients are prepared to spend the amount needed to cover this expense.

5.2. *The creation process in Basque agencies*

Our principal aim is to analyse the situation of the larger agencies with respect to bilingual advertising, and therefore it would be pertinent to begin with advertising professionals' perception of their specific sphere of activity. It is particularly striking that the interviewees all coincide in maintaining that Spanish patently predominates in the Basque advertising sector. When asked about the language in the creation of bilingual campaigns, there are numerous comments such as: "Most advertising professionals think and create in Spanish", "the major Basque agencies mainly work in Spanish", "95% create in Spanish except for a few exceptions of small agencies working in the Basque language". In addition, although the persons creating the advertisements are bilingual and their mother tongue is Euskera, "they usually have a strong tendency to create in Spanish, as it is easier for them and their advertising references are in the Spanish language". In this regard, one of the Managing Director's comments was particularly relevant: "Whatever they may say, bar a few exceptions, campaigns are devised in Spanish". This statement leads to the conclusion that there is a noticeable lack of confidence in whatever professionals of other agencies may say. Hence, in line with our main hypothesis, sector representatives share the same opinion regarding the prevalence of Spanish.

When considering the way that their own agencies worked, the question was not so clear. Despite the fact that in all cases it was admitted that they worked with translating companies, they did not find it easy to acknowledge that it was translators who provided the creativity in the Basque language version. In this respect, according to statements made in the interviews, we were able to divide the agencies into three main blocks – each consisting of two agencies –, although the distinctions between them may at times be blurred and varied from campaign to campaign.

The first group comprises those who, in general, endorse creation as a uniquely Spanish process, irrespective of whether or not the advertiser requested a bilingual campaign. When the item has taken shape in Spanish, the text is sent for translation to an external company. Nevertheless, these two advertising agencies have professionals who can speak both languages with ease, although their job in the company is not that of copywriter. Given this state of affairs, at times it is these bilingual employees of the advertising company who propose a possible adaptation. However, as “they are not sufficiently confident” that the alternative that they have proposed in Euskera is correct, the result is always sent to a linguistic reviser to check the text. It is often this reviser who decides on the final version. The following comment by one of the Managing Directors who is also Creative Director is particularly revealing: “I am not the creator in advertisements in Euskera, it is my linguistic reviser”.

The second group consists of two agencies which, despite creating their projects in Spanish, have the results translated in-house. The copywriters or, if appropriate, bilingual employees, may propose the possible adaptation but this is always with external assistance and supervision. The agencies in this group assume an ongoing collaboration with various translation companies. In the case of one of these agencies, when alluding to the Accounts Manager’s explanation, the support provided by translators consists of telephone consultations and queries in order to ensure that the solution proposed by the copywriter is correct. The degree of influence that these conversations have on the final version varies, but it may affect the overall translation or a new alternative version may be presented, which would lead us to classify them in the first group of agencies. Furthermore, the head of the second agency introduced us to a new member of the advertising scenario in the form of the expert consultant. His company uses the services of a highly experienced university professor of communications in Euskera. As the advertising agent interviewed described, “thanks to him the translated slogans take on a different allure”.

Based on the results of the interviews, the third and final group was created, consisting of agencies which mentioned a differentiated bilingual process. Firstly, the creative team responsible for devising the advertisements has the ability to create advertising texts in both languages. The advertisement takes shape simultaneously in Spanish and in Basque. It is well known that the definition of the creative strategy is one of the fundamental pillars of advertising. In bilingual copy writing, the key issue is for both items to respond to the same strategy, even if they are not clearly related. In this way, there could be two separate items, where consistency would be evident in their having achieved the same objectives, and not from the exact linguistic equivalence between the Spanish and Basque versions.

Nevertheless, of the two agencies classified in this last group, the interviewee of one of these commented that they do not always work in the bilingual manner described. At times, depending on the agency’s workload, staff working on the project do not speak Euskera. Moreover, some advertisers want both versions to coincide, that is, the same headline but in two languages. In general, the creative process tends to be in Spanish

and the texts are then sent to a company for translation. As such, we should classify them in the first group.

In addition, the representative of the second agency who mentioned simultaneous creation in two languages describes the work of his company as follows:

The process is the same except that there are different people involved. If we are working on a bilingual Euskera and Spanish campaign, the creative writers are Basque speakers, they are bilingual, but it is the same if we are working on campaigns in English. Not all the creative writers can work on that campaign, what we do not want is to translate the campaigns, the campaigns have to be designed and conceived in these languages from the start.

These words bear witness to the opposition to creating in a single language. When asked about the translators' work, the consideration that they are given is clear:

We work with translators for other purposes, to translate the bulk of long texts; although you have people who speak Euskera, you still need to check the work with specific translation companies who are aware of the particular structures and idioms of the language, and the authorities' obsession with the specific use of Basque language. But it is not a creative process with translations.

We considered it appropriate to cite the literal comments of this Managing Director because they contradict what one of the translators interviewed had said. When we interviewed him he was actually working for the agency to which we refer. The tasks he was performing differed considerably from the contribution accorded to translators by the Managing Director. At that precise moment, he was translating the slogan for a radio advertising spot and the headline for a graphic advertisement. As in the case of other advertising agencies, this expert explained that his usual work for this company consisted of adapting the most visible elements to Basque such as the headline or the slogan for a campaign. It would therefore call into question the whole truth of this advertising professional's statements. Thus, the difficulties inherent in admitting that translators are the creators of the text in the Basque language need to be taken into account.

From the foregoing it may be seen that the way a bilingual advertisement is created often varies from one campaign to another in all the agencies. Even though according to the comments made in the interviews, it is true that an attempt was made to group the agencies into blocks, we anticipated that the distinctions between them would be somewhat diffuse and variable, and in all cases exceptions were mentioned. Although it may be stated that each creative process is unique, the standard process to follow when devising a monolingual advertisement is clearly defined in all the agencies. In contrast, in the case of bilingual campaigns, no agency had a specific creative model. Furthermore, as will be shown below, the factors affecting quality of the campaign frequently escape the advertising agency's control.

5.3. The role of professional translators

Advertisements in Euskera are often the result of the dialectic between translators and advertising copywriters. When the adaptation to Euskera loses the associated connotations present in the Spanish version, with the concomitant loss of appeal and

effectiveness, nobody usually takes the blame. The majority of advertising executives accept the fact that campaigns are translated into Euskera as something normal and sometimes even reach a point of absurdity, where the Basque version is impossible to understand without the original Spanish. In these cases, practically all those involved blame the translator.

Conversely, the conclusions drawn from the interviews with translators indicate that, given the conditions in which the text reaches them, they cannot do any better. According to one of the translating professionals interviewed who works with three of the advertising companies mentioned, the agency's internal process totally defines the translatability of the message: "The advertising agencies create advertisements without considering that their copy will have to be translated into other languages". As a result, both translators stated that they were not satisfied with the solution proposed; not from a linguistic or language standpoint, but from the perspective of advertising persuasion. "Based on what has been created in Spanish we are able to see how the Basque version is short, it does not carry the whole meaning or it does not fit with the image". This perception is shared by the advertising professionals, as they admit that the version in Euskera is not always as persuasive as its Spanish original.

One of the keys to success could be to make the adaptation a "creative translation". All the interviewees were in agreement on this point. Thus, for example, one of the Account Managers interviewed stated:

The copywriters create the campaign in Spanish and then claim that they are aware that every language is a world in itself, and that is why they advise the translator that he or she is free to adapt the text, and has the freedom and flexibility to translate communicatively rather than providing a literal translation. This is the general opinion of the creative writers in all the agencies.

On the other hand, the advertising agencies tend to criticise the translators for being too literal, and moreover, state that they have to ask for a more creative translation. The translators however claim that "sometimes it is the agency itself that does not allow them to stray too far from the original text", so that it is not easy to find a midway between the literal and free translation. However, the information that they receive is not always sufficiently comprehensive to enable them to explore the field in greater depth; because as the advertising business works at such a frenetic rate, translators only receive the plain text. As a result, since they cannot analyse the advertisement as a whole, the freedom to distance the text from its original Spanish is severely restricted. Under the circumstances, it is the translators themselves who tend to ask for more information about the advertisement in order to avoid any incongruence between the image and the text.

To conclude, it is important to emphasise that there is no specialist professional translating copywriter currently working in the Basque market. Advertising executives attribute this lack to the low demand for this type of service, as the current volume of translations would not be sufficient to sustain a permanent job or provide enough work for a company. Conversely, there is a degree of qualification among some translators who have been working for advertising agencies for some time, but, to achieve a good level, it is "essential for teamwork and coordination between the agency and its translators".

6. Discussion and conclusion

Although in the traditional creation process a number of widely known general stages can be defined⁵⁰, there is no standard model for producing a bilingual advertisement. The procedure employed to create an advertisement in two languages varies, and different campaigns may also vary within the same agency. This mechanism, which could be qualified as improvisation, reveals the scant importance given to this issue to date.

Furthermore, all the agencies use one or several translating companies, a fact which indicates the need for translations deriving from monolingual creation. Even though this study does not have sufficient information to define the proportion of projects involved, it has determined that it is customary to carry out the internal work of the agency solely in Spanish. In the light of this situation, it is clear that the effectiveness of the campaign in the second language is beyond the scope of advertising agencies, because to a considerable degree this will depend on the translatability of the text and the creativity of its translator.

The study also noted that sporadically texts in Basque are created by the copywriters or an in-house employee; however, always with the supervision of an external adviser in order to check that the language used is correct. It is therefore appropriate to conclude that agencies do not employ professionals with sufficient fluidity and knowledge of this language. The guarantee of quality in advertising texts as a result falls not on the advertising professional, but on the linguistic reviser or the translator. In this regard, it should be emphasised that it is the advertising professionals who should be responsible for ensuring that advertisements have the same guaranteed impact in the Basque language, since they are the people who are aware of the campaign objectives and the persuasive mechanisms of the language.

All the interviewees manifested their scepticism with respect to the effectiveness of the translated slogans, as they believed that for an advertisement to be successful it should be devised in the language itself. Hence, they questioned the premise that translated advertising has the same seductive power. This may have a direct relation with the fact that advertising executives do not wish to admit that this is the work strategy employed in their agency.

In contrast, when they comment on the Basque advertising sector and the *modus operandi* of their competitors, they unanimously declare that it is a world in which the main working language is Spanish, and that it is the translators' work to create and adapt the text to Euskera. Therefore, creating the Basque version is a procedure which is external to the advertising agency, and the effectiveness of the texts remains beyond the scope of the agencies. The fact that the texts resulting from this process rarely satisfy the expectations of those involved, points to a need to analyse this issue in greater depth. Only then will it be possible to establish working guidelines appropriate to the bilingual creative process which will ensure the efficacy of advertisements written in the Basque language.

In terms of translating professionals, there is a striking lack of specialisation in this field. The reason may be the scant demand for this type of service, as it is alleged that the volume of advertising translations could not sustain or justify a full time post.

⁵⁰ 1) Hold a *briefing* session (jointly with the client and the agent); 2) define the strategy (Accounts and Strategic Planning Departments); 3) create the idea (Creative Department); 4) design or create the advertisement (Graphic Design department or an external producer); 5) Media planning (Media Department).

However, translators working continuously with advertising agencies do acquire a degree of specialisation, because over time they become familiar with the idioms and constructions of advertising language.

Having reached this point, it would be appropriate to discuss whether the trend should continue in this direction, that is, with specialisation of professional translators, or if on the contrary, given the low level of satisfaction mentioned by all the parties involved, it is time to analyse the shortcomings of this course of action and to establish new practices. In this way, advertisers will also ensure the efficacy of creative processes in Euskera which will unquestionably be to the benefit of all concerned.

In the light of the foregoing, our analysis shows that there is a need to define and design a prototype for bilingual creation. The advertising executives interviewed are aware of the fact that advertising messages written first in Spanish and subsequently translated into Basque totally condition the effectiveness of the advertisement in the latter language. Despite everything, this is the continued rationale of Basque advertising agencies. Another important question is the role that advertising plays in linguistic normalisation of a language. In relation to the case analysed, it would be appropriate to revise the current procedure and its usefulness in contributing to the normalisation of Euskera, particularly with regard to the campaigns organised by the main bilingual advertiser, the public authority. In this regard, it would clearly be appropriate for public authorities to go one step further and require advertising agencies to optimise their bilingual creation processes in order to ensure the efficacy of advertising in both of the languages concerned.

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