

Explicitation as a Non-Professional Translation Universal: Evidence from the Translation of Promotional Material

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Abstract : Following the explication hypothesis, it has been proposed that explication is a translation universal, i.e., one of those features that characterize translated texts, and cannot be traced back to interference from a particular language. The explication hypothesis has been enthusiastically endorsed by some scholars, and firmly rejected by others. Focusing on the translation of promotional material from English into Arabic, specifically in the luxury goods market, the aims of this study are twofold: First, to contribute to the debate regarding the notion of explication in order to advance our understanding of what has become a contentious concept. Second, to add to the growing body of literature on non-professional translation by shedding light on this particular aspect of it. To this end, our study uses a combination of qualitative and quantitative methods to explore a corpus of brochures pertaining to the luxury industry, translated into Arabic at the local marketing agencies promoting the brands in question, by bilingual employees who have no translation training. Our data reveals a preference to avoid creative language choices in favor of more direct advertising messages, suggestive of a general tendency towards explication in non-professional translation, beyond what is dictated by the grammatical and stylistic constraints of Arabic. We argue, further, that this translation approach is at odds with the principles of luxury advertising, which emphasize implicitness and ambiguity, and view language as an extension of the creative process involved in the production of the luxury item.

Keywords : English-Arabic translation, explication, non-professional translation, promotional texts

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