Pragmatics and Translation in the Use of English Words in Banner Advertising on Portal Sites

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Abstract

In modern socity, online communication plays a vital role in social interaction of communicities. It is so common for online users to see display advertisements online while surting the Net. Specifically, most web banners diaplayed on portral sites consist of words, phrase, and sentences. Considering that the primary purpose of adversiting is persuation, the advertisement such as web banners is an examplary case to show the interaction among pragmatics, translation and advertising because the linguistic expressions employed in the banners represent its pragmatic use, leading to persuation and functioning as a communicative tool for the smooth communication between source text producers (adversisers) and target audience (online users). This can be part of the so-called translation process. In particular, we can easily witness the use of English words in web banners. Thus, this paper looks at web banners displayed on major four portal sites-Naver, Daum, Nate, and Zum, giving a special attention to the content contained in the web banners as well as the use of English words. As s result, we found that the frequencies of English words in each portal site were higher when the advertised products were targeting young online users, whereas the frequencies were lower when the users are older group than young people. The finding supports the prgramatic perspective that linguistic expressions are understood in social contexts and shows the so-called translation process which involves a shift from semantic meaning of words to their pragmatic use. Finally, we can conclude that the interaction is possible when we have the framework where translation, pragmatics, and advertising are all communitative components for social interaction within social contexts.

Keywords: Translation, Pragmatics, English Words, Banner Advertising, Portal Sites

1. INTRODUCTION

Pragmatics and translation are both concerned about the choice of language in social interaction. The context of a situation, the context of language use, the communicative purposes are all interconnected with the fields in that linguistic expressions are chosen between speakers or readers and hearers or writers to deliver or share certain ideas for effective communication. In particular, it is true that Social Network Service and portal sites as vital information windows have great effects on the perspectives and viewpoints to certain issues in media discourse. Online users find themselves immersed into display advertisements such as online banners, visual images and videos while surfing the net. So, advertisers have used this trend by employing display advertising as a marking tool because the users can be potential consumers to buy the commodities advertised through

display advertisements.

Given this, among various types of display advertisements, this paper focuses on web banners in order to figure out the effects of advertising in terms of translation and pragmatics. More specifically, our focus is given to the use of English words because English words are frequently used in web banners and the content contained in web banners. Considering that the written message delivered by web banners involves a shift from semantic meaning of words to their pragmatic use of words, the process is said to undergo translation. This is possible when we understand translation as a communicative activity taking place between texts and actual use of language, all of which are actively involved in the communication process (Valdes, 2019) [1]. So, in order to investigate this possibility, we have chosen web banners which mostly consists of language and selected four major portal sites (Naver, Daum, Nate, and Zum) and accessed them at a set time regularly and measured the frequencies of English words used in web banners and the contents contained in the banner advertisement.

2. THEORETICAL CONSIDERATION

2.1 The Use of English in Advertising

English is widely used by businesses to communicate with their customers in advertising. It is very common to see English words in any type of advertising-printing ads, visual ads, and banner ads (Pillar, 2000) [2]. One of the reasons for using English words might be that English is the most frequently used around the world. In fact, the use of English is effective for international businesses. Here a question arises whether ads with English are more pervasive than ads with the local language.

There have been many previous studies which examined advertisements with English with advertisements with local languages. Ahn and LaFerle (2008) [3] investigated reactions of Korean participants to an advertisement with body copy in Korean and an advertisement in English. Based on the responses, they claimed that those participants recalled Korean body copy better than the English body copy and the Korean body copy was better recalled and recognized than the counterpart.

Krishna and Ahluwalia (2008) [4] investigated the role of type of company (a multinational company vs. a local company) and the role of type of product (luxury products vs. necessities) in the effectiveness of a local, Hindi slogan versus an English slogan. According to the results, when the company was a multinational, respondents evaluated an English slogan more favorably than a Hindi slogan for a luxury product (for example, chocolate), whereas a Hindi slogan was evaluated more favorably for a necessity product (for example, detergent). The English slogan turned out to be linked more with complexity and sophistication, and the Hindi slogan was associated more with belongingness. In conclusion, there is not much evidence as to whether standardized advertisements with English are evaluated more or less positively than advertisements with the local language. Standardized advertising refers to the practice of advertising the same brand or the same product in the same way across countries, regardless of cultural context.

On the other hand, there have been arguments that foreign languages are used as a symbol, for which the literal meaning of the utterance in the foreign language is not important. Haarmann (1989) [5] investigated the use of different European languages in Japanese advertising. He found that languages such as English, French, German, and Spanish were frequently used. Because the Japanese generally cannot read or under-stand European languages, He argued that these languages must have a symbolic meaning—that is, they evoke associations with the country where the languages are spoken and with their inhabitants. This claim has been supported in the study by Kelly-Holmes (2005) [6], in which Dutch respondents were found to associate the French language with beauty and elegance and the German language with reliability. In case of English, there have been numerous claims about English evoking associations of globalism, modernity, and prestige. Piller (2001) [7] notes that the denotational message of the English does not interfere with the symbolic features of English and so, when recognizing that the message is written in English, readers will activate their stereo types about English such as prestige and modernity. It implies that English can be successfully used regardless of whether it is understood or not. It is because English itself is regard as a valuable language with elegance, prestige and others.

2.2 Pragmatics and Translation in Advertising

Advertisement involves multimodality, which means that the interaction of various components- texts laden with letters, logos, pictures, symbols, visual and audio components produce meaning with an intense aesthetic and emotional potential. This leads to persuasive effect and fulfills communicative functions. Among the components, there is no doubt that texts consisting of letters, words, phrases, and sentences are of great importance because the text is truly oriented to the target consumers, delivering a message based on pragmatic use of language. So, web banners are one of good cases to show the interaction because most web banners consist of words.

Pragmatics, which is a linguistic field in the use of language within social contexts, differs from semantics which focuses on linguistic meanings associated with words, phrases, and sentences. Translation can be understood as the interpretation from source language to target language, and advertising is the method to promote a commodity through various tools (Ban and Noh, 2016) [8]. So, within this context, translation is defined as a communication activity between advertisers and potential consumers in terms of language in case of web banners. In terms of this perspective, translation can be conceived as a communication process from a purely linguistic process based on semantics because translated work is governed by a particular context at a particular time (Ban, 2018) [9]. It implies that translation is a communication activity taking place between texts and actual uses of language. Accordingly, pragmatics highlights the role of participants in communicative processes, and hence in translation, places emphasis on the function of text. From this perspective, the text is no longer an isolated unit, but is understood as a text-in-situation, playing a specific role in both the source text and the target context. Here the source text is produced by advertisers and the target text is the content received and understood by the target audience (online users). So, this process can lead to a shift of a focus from semantic meaning of a word to a pragmatic use of a word in that the effect of advertising is dependent on how the target audience perceives the advertisement. In this sense, linguistic expressions in web banners have great impact on the target audience because the language is a vital part in persuading the audience to make any decision for the given products.

According to Nord (1997) [10], there are two translation types called documentary translation and instrumental translation. The former is more oriented to a source text, whereas the latter is to a new text created which functions as an instrument of communication between the source text producer and the target audience. The pragmatic perspective refers to the latter case because the target text is oriented to be suitable for the target consumer within the target culture.

3. RESEARCH METHOD

This paper looks at web banners posted on major four portal sites such as Naver, Daum, Zum and Nate at midnight for two weeks from April 10, 2020 to April 30, 2020, giving a focus on the use of English words and on the contents contained in the banners. We have used four smart phones to exactly find out what web banners appear on each portal sites at a set time. The same banners posted on a single portal site more than once are excluded in the analysis, even though they appear in different days. For example, a web banner containing a sentence "*the best thing is that we can go to a mart, wearing a sun-cream only*" is one sentence. In this sense, two English words such as *sun-cream* and *mark* are used but the sentence is counted as one. But the same English words appearing in different web banners are counted properly because they are used in different web banners. For example, as shown in (1), the word such as *real* in the phrase *real class* spelled in Korean as *lealklas* is one of the frequently used expressions in Korean communities when we denote an excellent property to an animated object or a non-animated object. Proper nouns such as ones including the names of products and companies because proper nouns cannot be replaced with anything. The names such as *iPad, Coupang, Olive Young* are the examples as shown in (2). Proper names denoting humans are also excluded as in (3) because those names have high possibilities to be used only for familiarity with general people. For example, the names such as *Chelsu, Youngi* are traditional popular names referring to a boy and a girl respectively in Korean.

(1)   English words: real, mart, media, play, news
(2)   Proper names: iPad, Coupang, Olive Young, Kelly
(3)   Human names: Chelsu, Mary, Youngi

4. RESULTS

Translation, pragmatics, and advertising are closely related but differ in terms of their functions, as mentioned above . However, these three components share a common point in that they function as communicative tools by using language. So, in order to investigate the interaction among the three components, we have selected web banners containing words and gave a special attention to the content of web banners, and more specifically to English words in that most web banners contain English words in Korean web banners. Given that translation is defined as a communication activity between advertisers and potential consumers through the content of web banners represented by language, the contents of web banners were analyzed in terms of the frequencies of English words, the targeted commodities, the targeting age groups, the semantic meaning or the pragmatic use denoted by linguistic expressions on each portal site. In the analysis, we have focused on two things: One is the purpose of the frequencies of English words when they were used in web banners. The other is the relationship between the content of sentences in web banners and social contexts within the web banners.

Major four Korean portal sites are used when analyzing the content in web. Since popular portal sites are more used by online users than other sites, there are higher possibilities to have more web banners than other sites. The followings are the English words used in each portal site.

(4)   The use of English words.
  a. Naver: real class, Friday, mart, season, play
  b. Daum: mark, date, coupon, project, life, zero, filter, hosting, black
  c. Nate: real, black Friday, happy, global brand, after
  d. Zum: highlight, grand open, media, play, news

The English words shown in (4) are the ones contained in the sentences in web banners on the portal sites. Note that any word used more than one is counted one. For example, the phrase such as *real class* are contained in three web banners but is counted as one. It also needs to be mentioned that the English words are spelled in Korean. For instance, the word *Friday* is spelled in Korean as *fraidei*. Based on the above data, we could easily find a common point shared by all portal sites in that most English word used in web banners are well known to the public. It seems to be because that anyone can use online, regardless of age, social class, sex, and education levels.

However, there are differences in portal sites in terms of frequencies of English words. As shown in (5), among the four portal sites, Naver and Daum had higher frequencies with 45% in the use of English words than Nate and Zum, and Nate (40%) was higher than Zum (30%) in the use of English words. In case of English words used in each sentence, Naver had the highest percentage with 11.2% and Zum had the lowest percentage with 8.2%. For example, in case of Naver, web banners contained 23 English words out of 250 words, which corresponds to 11.2%). Note that Nate was ranked between Naver, Daum and Zum with 10.9% So, both findings show that Zum had the lowest number in the use of English words.

(5)   Frequency of sentence including English words/ Frequency of English words/
  a. Naver: 45% (five out of eleven sentences) / 11.2% (27 out of 250 words)
  b. Daum: 45% (five out of eleven sentences) / 11.5% (32 out of 277 words)
  c. Nate: 40% (four out of ten sentences) / 10.9% (28 out of 256 words)
  d. Zum: 30% (three out of ten sentences) / 8.2% (21 out of 255 words)

The differences in frequencies of English words are related with advertised products posted on portal sites. For example, the products such as apartments, hospital, and home appliance (air cleaner, furniture) posed on

the portal sites Nate and Zum might be targeting adults, rather than young people because the products can draw more attention from the age group older than young people (for example, middle-aged people). On the contrary, it was found that Naver and Daum which used English words relatively more than the other portal sites contained what young people like such as game and electronic device. As shown in (6), the items which are popular with young people are advertised on the portal sites such as Naver and Daum. However, hosing and home appliance are advertised on the portal site Zum. However, the portal site Nate turned out to be in the middle between Naver and Daum, and Zum in terms of age because the items such as strollers, Olive young are not said to symbolize a certain age group.

> (6)   products/companies
> a. Naver*: iPad, Coupang*, underwear
> b. Daum: games, *iPad*, cosmetics,
> c. Nate: baby-stroller, *Olive Young*, *Market Kurly*
> d. Zum: *arte-Xii*, freezer, furniture

The findings show that web banners represent social contexts or social actions. For example, the portal site Zum contains English words lesser than the other portal sites. This supposes the assumption that main user of the portal site Zum is older than those users in the other sites. In fact, the advertised product in the targeted sites confirms the assumption in that they are favored by relatively older people than young people. For example, the name *arte-Xii* which refers to an apartment is one of the favorites of older people than young people. That is, it implies that the name of apartment such as *arte-Xii* would not be represented in Zum unless main online users are the social groups older than young people. Given this, let's look at the following sentences contained in web banners

> (7)   Sentences in web banners
> a. *Arte-Xii: the place where nature breaths.*
> b. *iPad: Experience iPad world. Entirely new iPad Pro, more stronger iPad Air, fast iPad.*

As mentioned above, (7a) is targeting the groups older than young people. This can be confirmed by the content of web banners which use the words such as *nature, breaths* because those words are favored more by old people rather than young people. Then some might argue that the use of English words is against the assumption in that English words go well with young groups. But this can be explained by the argument that the use of English words is symbolic, featuring prestige, elegance, and dominance. On the contrary, (7b) is more likely to be favored by young groups. The product iPad is one of popular items for young people. The content of web banners represents the trend by using the words suitable for young people- *new, stronger, fast* in that those words represents dynamic properties symbolizing young people.

5. CONCLUSION

This paper focuses on web banners as one form of display advertising posted on portal sites to investigate the interaction among pragmatics, translation, and advertising. As a result, it was found that more English words were used when major users for a portal site were younger than those for the others, thus supporting the assumption that linguistic expressions function as a bridge in communication between its practical use and advertising within a social context. Among the four portal sites-Naver, Daum, Nate and Zum, Naver and Daum had the same percentages in the use of English words, higher than the other two portal sites. But Zum had a lower percentage than Nate in the use of English words. Note that the items such as home appliances are favored by the age groups older than young people, whereas the items such as iPad and game instruments are popular with young people. So, based on the findings, we can conclude that more use of English words in a particular site represents that active online user visiting the site tend to be younger than the users visiting the other sites, and the site advertises a commodity suitable for their taste. Such an interaction among online users, advertisers, and commodities represents how pragmatics, translation and advertising are intertwined for

effective communication based on linguistic expressions.

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