

## DIFFICULTIES OF TRANSLATING PUNS IN SLOGANS\*

Lusine Bakhshiyan

Don't Put the Gen Aside, Recognise It!

(Lusine Bakhshiyan)

*Among the abundance of information in the modern world advertising has a leading part. Every day we deal with a great number of announcements, posters, video clips and other means of advertising. It is one of the most prominent, powerful, and ubiquitous contemporary uses of language. Visual content and design in advertising have a very great impact on the consumer, but it is language that helps people to identify a product and remember it. Both the mass media and marketing and advertising personnel have to consider the emotive power of the words they use. The language of advertising has accumulated a great potential of language means and techniques, thus making it highly interesting from the linguistic perspective. Studying the means of mass communication and advertising in particular is considered very actual as the linguistic process in this sphere reflects both sociopolitical development in the society and the language itself. New words and word-combinations are used for the first time remaining in the language afterwards. Announcing a new product or service, expanding the market to new buyers, announcing a modification or a price change, challenging competition and attracting investors demands a careful choice of expression. All this promotion starts with the brand name and slogan. Pun is one of the most common rhetorical devices used in advertisements and weighs much more in communication for its special features: ambiguity and double contexts. The pun, also called paronomasia, is a form of word play that suggests two or more meanings, by exploiting multiple meanings of words, or of similar-sounding words, for an intended humorous or rhetorical effect. [1]*

*Puns are divided into different categories, some of which are as follows:*

**Homography:** *This kind of pun refers to the words (i.e. lexemes) which are of the same spelling but of different meaning. [2]*

**US Airways: Fly with US / Летай с нами**

*The phrase uses the homophonic qualities of the abbreviation “US-the United States” and “us-the possessive pronoun”. The same pun is used in NYSF (Banking) slogan: **The World Puts Its Stock in US / Мир хранит свой капитал в США***

**Citibank: Your Citi Never Sleeps - СИТИ никогда не спит.** *Here the pun is based on the bank name and “city”.*

**To the Centennial of Armenian Genocide: Don't Put the Gen Aside, Recognise it! – He ugnoriuyte fakt, priznajte ego!** *- Here we used the word “gen” as “information, data” and “put aside” as “ignore”.*

**Homonymy:** *This kind of pun refers to lexical items which are of the same form but of different meaning. [3]*

**KitKat: Give me a break! / Мне нужен перерыв!**

*This pun is using “break” in the meaning of “a pause in work or during an activity or event” and “a piece of”.*

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Հոդվածը տպագրության է երաշխավորել ՄՍՀ օտար լեզուների ամբիոնը:

**Virginia Slims: You've Come a Long Way, Baby/Ты прошла долгий путь, детка** puns on the two meanings of the word “long” as “covering a great distance” and “of elongated shape”.

**Peugeot: The Drive of your life-Драйв твоей жизни.** Here punning is made on the two stylistically different meanings of “drive”-“a trip or journey in a car” and “thrill, exhilaration”

**Nokia: Connecting people- Соединяя людей** communicating “connect” as “put (someone) into contact by telephone” and “form a relationship or feel an affinity”

**Sharp: Sharp Minds, Sharp Products-Острые умы, продукты Sharp**

The punned word “sharp” implies the brand name and “having or showing speed of perception, comprehension, or response” .The same is in Intel’ s slogan: **Intel inside - Intel внутри.** “Intel” is used as a shortened form of “intelligent” and the brand itself.

**Homophony:** This kind of pun refers to lexemes which are of the same pronunciation but of different spelling and meaning.[4]

**Michelin (tire manufacturer):When it pours, it reigns – Когда льет, они царствуют.** The word "reign-be the best or most important in a particular area or domain " is used as a homophone for "rain".

**Nintendo (a video game company): Get N or get out-Возьми N или уходи.** The pun is based on the initial letter of the brand name and the preposition “in” imitating the common phrase (gets in or get out — заходи или убирайся).

When exporting and promoting their products companies need to translate the information into the language of the target market. The lack of equivalence makes translation an impossible task because the whole process of translation is about finding the suitable equivalent to any linguistic unit. If translators don't find any equivalent they will come up with a word which doesn't fit the meaning of the word in the source language. One of the most difficult problems of translation is a pun intended for a foreign language audience. Because of the errors in the translation, the advertisements containing wordplay can get the opposite sense of humor, which can lead to the failure of the campaign. Here we deal with the difficulties of translating pun as it is almost a case of untranslatability. A translator can, however, resort to a number of translation procedures to compensate for this.

Ross Mckerras has emphasized six main aims of the wordplay:[5]

- the maintenance of the coherence of the narrativeness,
- isolation of the climax,
- identification of the hidden thought,
- the indication on the playfulness of the tone,
- making some expression to the written style,
- achievement of the poetic mood.

Also, he determined three main approaches to the transmission of the wordplay. The first one is to translate word by word and explain the wordplay in the footnote quite briefly or in the comments more detailed. The second method is – to select the wordplay in the target language and use it, even if it does not contain any words equivalent to the original. The third method is to select other means in the target language which could add some original spirit to the translation. It is also necessary to emphasize that using of the second or third methods can be performed only under the condition of the close control over either the original language also the target language. As in this case the translator deviates from the original text in a great measure, he must be ready to be criticized. As for the basic methods of the wordplay translation in advertising, all the advertisements can be divided into two groups: those that are translated into Russian by the corresponded wordplay, and those in which there is no any wordplay. If we analyse the advertisements that are based on the wordplay and translated into Russian also with the help of this stylistic device, we can find that the translation of some of them is based on the same image. It happens mostly in case of puns based on proverbs or anti-proverbs.

**Dodge (car manufacturer): Grab life by the horns – Возьми жизнь за рога.** This ad is based on the proverb “Take the bull by the horns”.

**The Hilton Hotel: All roads lead to Hilton – Все дороги ведут в Хилтон.** The world-famous saying: All roads lead to Rome was taken as a basis.

In order to achieve the best equivalence during the translation of the advertisements marked by the wordplay, you must know not only the target language, but also culture, history and mentality of other people. As for the advertisements in which wordplay during the translation is neutralized, the basic methods of the wordplay transmission are the following:

1) The omission – implies the complete rejection from the wordplay transmission.

**Volkswagen: Different Volks for different folks. – Разные машины для разного тебя.** (cf. Different strokes for different folks- на вкус и цвет товарищей нет)

2) Compensation – the replacement of the not transmitted element of the original text by the similar or any other element that can supply the loss of information and impress the reader by the equal or similar way. Compensation in the translation of the wordplay is a reconstruction of the source information of the original text with the help of any other stylistic and structural means, implemented by the translator after evaluation of the informational opportunities of the translating language and decoding of the wordplay. The equivalence of the translation in this case is achieved at the level of the joint text integrity. The wordplay is compensated easily by using one of the following methods:

a) Modulation (semantic development).

**Kraft Macaroni and Cheese: It is the cheesiest! Это наш лучший сыр.**

However, it should be noted that in this case it would be better to translate the slogan by keeping the semantic field: самый сырный сыр!

**Coffee Savarin: The coffee-er coffee. Большие кофе**

b) Explication – is a lexical and grammatical transformation, during which the lexical unit of the source language is replaced by the phrase, explicating its meaning, i.e. giving more or less full explanation or definition of this meaning into the target language. With the help of the explication you can transmit any untranslatable word. The disadvantage of such descriptive translation is unwieldiness and wordiness:

**Sloggi (underwear shop): It is string time –Время покупать у нас.** (Here the phrase “string time” implies a “spring time” and “string-a type of underwear”).

c) Paraphrase - in this case the lexical unit is replaced by the full description of its meaning. Despite the wordiness, this technique will most accurately convey the meaning of the original word or phrase.

**Alka-Seltzer: Plop plop, fizz fizz, oh what a relief it is! – Веселье без похмелья!**

d) Equivalence –the objective situation described in the original text is transmitted by other structural and stylistic means, and sometimes other semantic components.[6]

**We do not make a mountain out of a molehill. We make only sites. – Мы не делаем из мухи слона. Мы делаем только сайты.**

e) Adaptation - a kind of transformation at the result of which not only the change of the description of this or that situation takes place, but the situation is replaced itself.[7]

**Mr. Clean will clean your whole house and everything that's in it. - Mr.Proper все отмыл и квартиру освежил.**

3) Loan translation - a way to transfer the original lexical unit by replacing its component parts - morphemes or words (in case of collocations) – by their lexical correspondences in the translated language. Applying this method of translation, the translated text cannot be called complete, as pun disappears as well as the pragmatic goal of a stylistic device. [8]

**Bank of England. As old as England.– Английский банк. Старый как мир.**

4) *Transliteration. This technique is similar to the borrowing of the foreign words. It is the process of transcribing the word from one written system to another by the sounds of the original word. [9]*

**Experimentos - Экспериментос.**

5) *Lexical – semantic replacement - is a method of transmitting of the original lexical items by using the units of the translation language, the sense of which does not coincide with the sense of the original units, but can be derived by means of a certain type of logical transformations.[10]*

**Pick Enterprise. We'll pick you up. - Выберете Enterprise. И мы вам поможем.**

6) *Grammatical replacement - is one of the ways to transfer the wordplay during which the grammatical unit in the original text is converted into the unit of the target language with other grammatical meaning. [11]*

**The Future's Bright, the Future's Orange. – Будущее яркое. Будущее ORANGEвое.**

*We can conclude that the main criteria of translation adequacy of wordplay in the advertising should be considered not only by keeping of the mental image lying in the original text, but also by the impact that should be provided by the advertisement. In any case, for the full-value translation of the advertisement the translator should feel the creative potential and know the target language so well to pass or replay the wordplay fully as well as various stylistic figures.*

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**ԱՄՓՈՓԱԳԻՐ**

**Բառախաղի թարգմանության դժվարությունները կարգախոսներում  
Լուսինե Բախշյան**

Շնորհիվ իր երկինաստության և համատեքստային առանձնահատկության՝ բառախաղը ժամանակակից գովազդում գործածվող ամենատարածված ոճական հնարն է: Գործնականում լինելով անթարգմանելի՝ այն պահանջում է որոշակի թարգմանչական աշխատանք: Գովազդային տեքստի լիարժեք թարգմանություն ստանալու համար թարգմանիչը պետք է հիանալիորեն տիրապետի թարգմանվելիք լեզվին, ունենա ստեղծագործական կարողություն, որպեսզի փոխանցի կամ վերստեղծի բառախաղը:

*Բանալի բառեր՝ բառախաղ, գովազդ, կարգախոս, բացթողում, փոխհատուցում, անբարգմանելիություն, բարգմանվող լեզու:*

## РЕЗЮМЕ

### Трудности перевода каламбура в слоганах Лусине Бахшиян

Каламбур – самый распространенный стилистический прием, используемый в современной рекламе в силу своей неоднозначности и двойного контекста. Каламбур – непереводаемая стилистическая единица, поэтому его перевод требует особого подхода, заключающегося в ряде переводческих процедур. Чтобы получить полноценный перевод рекламного текста, переводчик должен использовать стилистические возможности языка-реципиента и знать его достаточно хорошо, чтобы переиграть или передать игру слов.

*Ключевые слова:* каламбур, реклама, слоган, опущение, компенсация, непереводаемость, язык-реципиент

## Summary

### Difficulties of Translating Puns in Slogans Lusine Bakhshiyani

Pun is the most common stylistic device used in the modern advertisements for its ambiguity and double context. Being almost a case of untranslatability it demands certain translating procedures. In order to get the full-value translation of the advertisement the translator should feel the creative potential and know the target language well enough to pass or replay the wordplay.

*Keywords:* pun, advertising, slogan, omission, compensation, untranslatability, target language.