

# A STUDY ON CULTURAL FACTORS OF ENGLISH SLOGANS TRANSLATED INTO VIETNAMESE

*Nguyen Thanh Minh\*, Phan Ha Chi†*  
*Email: nguyenthanhminh@hdu.edu.vn*

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**Abstracts:** *As we all know, English is currently regarded as a worldwide tongue and is spoken in the majority of nations, including Vietnam. However, the structural and cultural differences between the two languages pose translation challenges in translating English to Vietnamese. Moreover, with international communication and integration, more and more English commercial slogans are being used in Vietnam. As a result, this study aims to explore how cultural factors affect the English-Vietnamese slogan translation process by analyzing slogan translations from English to Vietnamese in commerce, education, and society. At the same time, the study suggests translating slogans from a cultural point of view.*

**Keywords:** *translation, slogan, commerce, education, society, culture.*

## I. Introduction

Language is the most essential means of communication for human beings. Man has made it very affordable to understand and communicate with each other; however, it is difficult to express our thoughts in any second language. Many languages go extinct or vanish over time. Besides, every language derives from the culture of its respective country, which makes it more plentiful and various.

As we know, English is now considered an international language and is used in most nations, including

Vietnam. However, due to structural and cultural differences, there are challenges in translating English into Vietnamese. Moreover, English-language slogans are now utilized more frequently as a result of global communication and integration. Translating English slogans into Vietnamese poses challenges due to differences between the two languages.

In our daily lives, we frequently come across numerous slogans in a variety of sectors, but we have no idea how to translate them properly. As a result, it has been discovered that there are a lot of fascinating aspects of the process

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\* Hong Duc University

† Student, Hong Duc University

of translating English catchphrases into Vietnamese, which intrigues us and we really appreciate. That is the main reason why we chose the topic “*A study on cultural factors of English slogans translated into Vietnamese*” for our research. This topic will provide translations of slogans from English to Vietnamese in 3 different fields: commerce, education, and society, and offer suggestions for translating English slogans in the light of culture in these three areas. Finally, the study also provides five cultural factors that affect the translation of English-Vietnamese slogans and makes some recommendations so that the translator can successfully convey the message of the source slogan.

## **II. Theoretical background**

### **2.1. What is slogan?**

A slogan is a memorable motto or phrase used in political, commercial, religious, and other contexts as a repetitive expression of an idea or purpose.

Colin’s dictionary defines a slogan as a short phrase that is easy to remember. Slogans are used in advertisements and by political parties and other organizations that want people to remember what they are saying or selling.

Several linguistics say that a slogan is a brief and memorable phrase that encompasses an offering’s appeal.

### **2.2. Functions of slogan**

Slogans are not merely a group of catchy words; they are a strategic attempt at creating a persuasive image in the minds of consumers. Therefore, the functions of slogans can be as follows:

The basic purpose of a slogan is to sell a product/service. A genuinely successful slogan will not only benefit your brand but also be a long-term commitment.

Slogans aim to reveal more about your company, especially by providing more information about your pricing strategy, services, or what customers may look forward to.

Another essential function of a slogan is to position the brand in customers’ minds desirably and advantageously.

A slogan is the best way to clarify to the consumer, “This is who we are, this is what we sell and/or this is why we are the perfect choice for you!”

### **2.3. Features of slogan**

The features of a slogan may vary, but some common characteristics of an effective slogan include:

**Memorable:** A good slogan should be easy to remember and stick in the minds of the audience.

**Simple:** The slogan’s language should be simple and concise, making it easy to understand and communicate.

**Unique:** A unique and original slogan can help a brand stand out from competitors and create a memorable identity.

**Relevant:** The slogan should be relevant to the brand, product, or service it represents, conveying a key message or value proposition.

**Emotional Appeal:** A slogan that appeals to the audience’s emotions can more effectively create a connection and leave a lasting impression.

**Consistency:** Consistently using a slogan in branding and marketing efforts can increase brand recognition and awareness over time.

**Timeless:** A good slogan should remain relevant and effective over a long

period, avoiding trends or language that may quickly become dated or irrelevant.

Overall, a successful slogan should capture the essence of the brand or product in a memorable and impactful way while resonating with the target audience.

## **2.4. Overview of translation**

### **2.4.1. What is translation**

One of the most well-known explanations of translation is stated by Newmark (1988:5,[1]), who defines translation as “*rendering the meaning of a text into another language in the way that the author intended the text.*” This definition stresses rendering the meaning of the source language text into the target language text as intended by the author.

### **2.4.2. Types of translation**

#### **a. Word-for-word translation**

In word-for-word translation, the source language word order is preserved, and the words are translated by their most common meanings, out of context. Cultural words are translated literally.

#### **b. Literal translation**

In literal translation, the source language grammatical constructions are converted to their nearest target language equivalents, but the lexical items are again translated singly and out of context.

#### **c. Faithful translation**

A faithful translation attempts to reproduce the precise contextual meaning of the original within the constraints of the target language’s grammatical structures. It attempts to be completely faithful to the source language writer’s intentions and text realization.

#### **d. Semantic translation**

Semantic translation differs from “faithful translation” to the extent

that it must take more account of the aesthetic value (that is, the beautiful and natural sounds of the source language text), compromising on meaning where appropriate so that no assonance, wordplay or repetition jars in the finished version.

#### **e. Adaptation translation**

Newmark (1988,[3]) states that: “*Adaptation has a property of lending the ideas of the original to create a new text used by a new language more than to be faithful to the original. The creation in adaptation is completely objective in content as well as form.*”

#### **f. Free translation**

In free translation, it reproduces the matter without the manner or the content without the original form. Usually, it is a paraphrase that is much longer than the original, a so-called ‘*intralingual translation.*’

#### **g. Idiomatic translation**

Idiomatic translation reproduces the “message” of the original but tends to distort nuances of meaning by preferring colloquialisms and idioms where these do not exist in the original.

#### **h. Communicative translation**

Communicative translation “*attempts to render the exact contextual meaning of the original in such a way that both content and language are readily acceptable and comprehensible to the readership*” (Newmark, 1988b:45-47,[3]).

## **2.5. Overview of culture**

### **\* What is culture?**

The first anthropological definition of culture comes from 19th-century British anthropologist Edward Tylor:

“*Culture...is that complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, art, law,*

*morals, custom, and any other capabilities and habits acquired by man as a member of society*” (Tylor 1871,[6]).

\* Some specific features of English-speaking countries and Vietnamese culture

In the world, two kinds of cultures create different Western cultures; however, each nation keeps its private characteristics in terms of geography, history, materials, customs, and habits. It means that its language reflects the culture of a nation, especially by vocabulary. Vietnam has complex terrain, long-standing agriculture, and a long, magnanimous fight against invaders. The monsoon tropical region, which is considered the main character of Vietnam, is reflected in names, means of production, rice processing, customs and habits about marriage, customs, and traditions about religion.

All these things are very popular in Vietnam; however, they are very strange to Western people. In Western culture, life is very active and free to accept new things, such as science, the Internet, etc. Besides, English is rye agriculture, which is different from Vietnam agriculture. Their work is more developing with advanced machines. Hence, their character is individual. Contrary to the Vietnamese, the English one is combinative of each other.

### **III. Research methodology**

#### **3.1. Aim of the study**

The study aims to:

Find out how English slogans related to commerce, education, and society are translated into Vietnamese, taking into consideration cultural factors.

Determine the five cultural aspects that impact the translation of English slogans into Vietnamese within the areas of commerce, education, and society.

Suggest effective solutions for translators to translate English slogans into Vietnamese more accurately.

However, this study only focuses on the cultural elements involved in translating English slogans into Vietnamese rather than exploring all aspects of translation across the fields of commerce, education, and society.

#### **3.2. Methods of the study**

This study will employ various methods and techniques, including analysis, comparison, and theoretical exploration of translation, slogans, and culture. It will also examine the importance of cultural context in translating slogans and how translators unaware of cultural differences can influence the target source.

### **IV. Findings and discussion**

With modern technology shrinking our world, international borders are becoming less of a barrier. The only barrier among the countries is culture. Due to the cultural differences between Vietnam and Western nations, translators must be aware of this issue when translating to prevent errors. Some of the following examples can prove the role of culture in translating slogans. If the translators make a mistake, their merchandise can be boycotted, or their message might be misinterpreted. Otherwise, they will succeed when they transmit a slogan that matches the culture.

#### **4.1. Some successful translations of slogans**

The following samples should be analyzed in order to learn more about translating English slogans into Vietnamese.

It is believed that literality faithfully reflects contents in accordance with

forms. That is to say, we can maintain the originality of the source slogans by direct translation. With literal translation, we can switch directly between the target and source slogans to keep the original style and meaning.

*a. Commercial slogan:*

*Example 1: The slogan of Nokia*

The Nokia motto, “*Connecting People*,” is regarded as the most successful translating slogan from English into Vietnamese, “*Kết nối mọi người*.” Both in the source language and target language, the slogan also reveals the message of the producer. The slogan expresses the function of the product, which is not only to connect the telephone line but also to connect people. Thanks to Nokia, people can speak to each other. Nokia has become more well-known and well-liked among Vietnamese people as a result of its distinctive slogan. Moreover, the word “*kết nối*” also implies having a good relationship with someone so that you can understand one another. *The good translation expresses the Vietnamese community spirit, which is a typical cultural feature in this country.* Now, whenever we say Nokia, we remind “*Kết nối mọi người*”.

*Example 2: The slogan of KFC*

*“Finger licking good!”*

*“Vị ngon trên từng ngón tay”*

Using the free translation, the translator transmitted the producer’s message to consumers: “Although you have eaten the KFC, the flavour is still on your finger.” The process of moving the tongue over something’s surface in order to eat it is called “licking” in English. However, this behavior is considered unfriendly in Vietnam, particularly in

public. In Vietnamese culture, everybody often avoids opening their mouth, moving their tongue, or talking during the meal. Using free translation, this slogan was successfully translated into Vietnamese. But in Vietnam today, with cultural integration, this action is no longer rude. Licking fingers shows the good taste of the food a person eats. *Therefore, by considering customs and traditions carefully, the Vietnamese translation of this slogan is very good.* Thanks to that, it sends necessary marketing messages successfully to the customers.

*b. Educational slogan:*

Similar to commercial slogans, educational catchphrases are amiable and memorable. However, educational slogans employ formal language and refer to the trend of a program or target school.

*“Child-friendly school”*

*“Trường học thân thiện”*

The slogan of the program, “Child-friendly school,” refers to the type of school that UNICEF (United Nations Children’s Fund) promotes for use in primary and secondary education. In order to lower student dropout rates and relieve student burden, this initiative was established in Vietnam in 2008. The program’s slogan reveals that educators’ duty is to help the pupils, like going to school and feeling relaxed when they are at school. The writer used the noun phrase to be tidy, straightforward, and memorable.

*c. Social slogan:*

The slogan of International Volunteer Day:

*“Volunteering! Connect to Share”*

*“Tình nguyện! Kết nối để Chia sẻ”*



The theme of World Volunteer Day in Vietnam is “*Connect to Share*,” emphasizing how volunteering unites individuals, groups, and cultures. These catchphrases, written in both English and Vietnamese, describe the role of volunteers who wish to selflessly contribute to making the world a better place. When this slogan is translated into Vietnamese, it successfully reveals the destination of the original slogan.

#### 4.2. *Some suggestions for translation of English slogans under the view of culture*

Contrary to some of the examples given above, some slogans have errors in the translation because the slogan’s meaning has changed or does not match Vietnamese culture. Toury stated that “*Translation is a kind of activity which inevitably involves at least two languages and two cultural traditions*” (1978:200,[5]). As this statement implies, translators are constantly faced with the challenge of handling the implicit cultural elements included in a source text and determining the best method for effectively translating these elements into the target language. Discussing this problem, Nida said that “*Differences between culture may cause more severe complications for translator than do differences in language structure*” (Nida 1964:130,[4]). We can see that by some examples follow:

##### a. *Commercial slogan:*

The slogan of Henredon Furniture:

“*For those who value excellence*”

“*Cho những người đánh giá cao sự vượt trội*”

Henredon Furniture is the high-grade trademark in Italia, where individuals value distinct lifestyles, and there is a social class divide. Otherwise, Vietnam

is a republic country with no distinction between social classes. When the products of this company enter the Vietnam market with the same slogan, it seems not to match the Vietnamese culture. In Italia, the headline can judge customers, but in Vietnam, it doesn’t respect customers because, in Vietnamese culture, people venerate community lifestyles. *Therefore, the slogan is not suitable for the culture of this country.* The slogan is distinctive to customers, making it inappropriate for Vietnam’s culture. The slogan is translated into Vietnamese with a literal translation, so it is identical not only in sentence structure but also in meaning. This slogan in the source language conveys the idea that the producer is providing the finest quality to consumers, while in Vietnamese, it means that only knowledgeable consumers may utilize the product. Meanwhile, the Vietnamese, who have an Eastern culture, are modest and simple. Thus, this slogan should be fixed and translated by free translation as: “*Giá trị tuyệt vời dành cho bạn.*”

Next is the slogan of Sunsilk:

“*Life can’t wait*”

“*Sống là không chờ đợi*”

When translating Sunsilk’s slogan, the copywriter made some mistakes, which led to misunderstandings about the message of the production. In English, the production wants to send customers the message, “The women live with passion and urgency, as well as having the confidence to take leaps of faith with their lives and looks.” However, when it is translated into Vietnamese, the meaning of the text changes. The tagline “*sống là không chờ đợi*” may be understood as encouraging hastening and urgent life. Because this is a product for women in

Vietnam, the translator must be familiar with Vietnamese culture. One of the characteristics of Vietnamese people, particularly women, is their endurance and patience; however, *when the slogan is translated into Vietnamese, it seems to be the reverse of this quality*. This slogan may be fixed and translated into Vietnamese as “Cuộc sống không chờ đợi bạn” to be suitable with the Vietnamese culture.

*b. Educational slogan:*

The slogan of the Foreign Trade University:

*“To be Harvard of Vietnam”*

*“Để trở thành Harvard của Việt Nam”*

The Foreign Trade University, which has set up the destination, is to become Harvard of Vietnam. Harvard is a prestigious private university in the United States. The university’s mission is very obvious in English but less apparent in Vietnamese. Everyone in Vietnam wonders, “Why compare public schools with private schools?” because the disparity between private and state universities is so great. Also, while many Vietnamese people are unaware of Harvard, some understand this university is highly reputable. In this statement, the word “Harvard” serves as both a symbol of the best possible education and the name of the renowned university. Therefore, the slogan of the Foreign Trade University is better when using the communicative translation by replacing the word “Harvard”- a personal noun with a common noun so that it can be translated as “Sẽ là một trường đại học danh tiếng của Việt Nam.”

*c. Social slogan:*

The last is the slogan of the “Earth hour” event:

*“Turn off the lights, turn bright the future.”*

*“Tắt đèn, bật sáng tương lai”*

This is the first time Vietnam has joined in this event. The slogan has a very close meaning to the source language. However, in Vietnamese language, the word “tắt đèn” is obscure. In Vietnamese literature, the novel called “Tắt đèn” was written by the author Ngô Tat To. It discussed the struggles faced by farmers before the 1945 revolution. Whenever anyone attends the phrase “Tắt đèn,” people usually think of “chị Dậu”- the main character of “Tat den”- who connects with the dark and is the symbol of the poor farmer with the bad future. As a result, this slogan can be rectified and translated as “Tiết kiệm điện cho tương lai tươi sáng” to suit the cultural context in Vietnam.

Thomas Friedman - the author of the book, *“The Lexus and the Olive Tree”* said: *“There are two ways to make a person feel homeless - one is to destroy his home and the other is to make his home look and feel like everybody else’s home”* (1999,[2]). The most excellent way to prevent homelessness is to understand the culture you are translating into and give readers the impression that your message or product is tailored to meet their requirements.

#### ***4.3. Effects of five cultural aspects in translating English slogans into Vietnamese***

After analyzing a number of English slogans related to three different fields, such as commerce, education, and society, it is undeniable that Vietnamese culture has a huge impact on translation. There are five cultural aspects affecting the translation of slogans from English to Vietnamese: The geographical and psychological aspects;

Custom and traditional aspects; Religious aspect; Material aspect and Historical aspect.

The results show the different effects of five cultural aspects of translating English-Vietnamese slogans.

Geographical and psychological factors, customs, and traditions are heavily considered when translating slogans.

Commercial slogans provide information about items or programs to attract customers. Therefore, a businessperson can only sell more things by knowing psychology and customer behavior.

Educational slogans refer to the trend of a program or the targets of a school. Therefore, translators need to understand psychological and geographical aspects as well as customs and traditions to successfully translate a suitable slogan.

Social slogans are usually aimed at the community. This means that only with a thorough understanding of a community's historical, religious, geographical, and psychological aspects, as well as customs and traditions, can the translator use the correct words to convey its goals or destination to objects.

Religious, material, and historical aspects are also found in most of the slogans, but they are less than the above elements. To be effective, every slogan has specific characteristics: it uses simple and colloquial language, the sentences must be short, usually imperative or interrogative, or even sentences without a predicate. With the second element in translating "culture," after studying the commercial, educational, and social slogans, some suggestions are recommended for translating better as follows:

Translators must first develop a working grasp of Vietnamese culture in order to translate slogans effectively. However, there are times when the translator will not be able to faithfully convey the original meaning, therefore they must adapt.

While translating slogans, translators always consider all facets of Vietnamese culture, including historical, material, geographical, psychological, customs and traditions, and religious aspects, to ensure they do not make any mistakes in conveying the information to the objects.

In short, the more a translator is aware of the culture and the complexities of differences between cultures, the better she or he will be.

## V. Conclusion

The role of translation in the development is considered as varying and various pictures through "translation," and since critical language is concerned with the processes of producing and interpreting text, and with the way cognitive processes and socially shaped are, it can be considered as an alternative perspective on translation studies. We are aware that cultural exchange with other nations is essential for a country's development. Cultural diversity makes human rights visible, but this recognition requires conversations, which brings us back to "language" as the major tool for discussions.

The study "*A study on cultural factors of English slogans translated into Vietnamese*" analyses the culture in translating English Vietnamese slogans. The study has attempted to investigate the equivalence between English and



Vietnamese translations of commercial, educational, and social slogans. The major findings demonstrate that Vietnamese culture plays a significant role in the Vietnamese translation of English slogans. When translating slogans, two of the five cultural aspects- psychology, customs, and traditions- are initially considered.

Cultural diversity makes human rights visible, but this recognition requires conversations, which brings us back to “language” as the major tool for discussions.

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## NGHIÊN CỨU VỀ CÁC YẾU TỐ VĂN HÓA TRONG DỊCH THUẬT KHẨU HIỆU TIẾNG ANH SANG TIẾNG VIỆT

*Nguyễn Thanh Minh<sup>‡</sup>, Phan Hà Chi<sup>§</sup>*

**Tóm tắt:** Như chúng ta đã biết, tiếng Anh hiện nay được coi là ngôn ngữ toàn cầu và được sử dụng tại đa số các quốc gia, bao gồm cả Việt Nam. Tuy nhiên, sự khác biệt về cấu trúc và văn hóa giữa hai ngôn ngữ đặt ra nhiều thách thức trong quá trình dịch thuật từ tiếng Anh sang tiếng Việt. Hơn nữa, cùng với sự giao lưu và hội nhập quốc tế, ngày càng có nhiều khẩu hiệu thương mại bằng tiếng Anh được sử dụng tại Việt Nam. Do đó, nghiên cứu này nhằm khám phá tác động của các yếu tố văn hóa đến quá trình dịch khẩu hiệu từ tiếng Anh sang tiếng Việt thông qua việc phân tích các bản dịch khẩu hiệu trong các lĩnh vực thương mại, giáo dục và xã hội. Đồng thời, nghiên cứu cũng đề xuất cách tiếp cận dịch khẩu hiệu từ góc độ văn hóa.

**Từ khóa:** dịch thuật, khẩu hiệu, thương mại, giáo dục, xã hội, văn hóa.

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<sup>‡</sup> Trường Đại học Hồng Đức

<sup>§</sup> Sinh viên Trường Đại học Hồng Đức