The effectiveness of second-person reference in enhancing reader memory in English-Chinese advertisement translation
An empirical study

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This research aims to account for readers’ perception of second-person pronouns and to test their effectiveness in enhancing reader memory in English-Chinese advertisement translation. We conducted an experiment in which 62 participants read the Chinese translations of 16 previously unseen English print advertisements. Two parallel Chinese versions were prepared for the experiment, one with second-person reference and the other without. The participants were first asked to read the translations and indicate which version they liked better. Two weeks later, they were divided into two groups and asked to rate their memory of the two Chinese versions. Statistical analysis shows that the ratings of the second-person version are significantly higher, which implies that second-person reference is effective in enhancing the participants’ memory.

Keywords: advertisement, emotion, memory, second-person, translation

Introduction

Advertisements have a specific goal to persuade recipients to accept a product or service. To achieve this goal, advertising frequently incorporates ownership-implying language or possessive pronouns (Kou and Powpaka 2021). Dealing with such possessive pronouns is a key issue in advertisement translation. Empirical research indicates that these pronouns have different effects on marketing communication, and the first and second person pronouns “my” and “your” gain more attention than the third person pronoun “his” (Kou and Powpaka 2021, 217). The plural and singular forms of personal pronouns can also produce different results. It is suggested that advertising with singular pronouns like “you”
is more effective for individualistic consumers than for collectivistic consumers (Kou and Powpaka 2021, 218). The first-person plural pronoun “we” is more powerful for current customers than the second-person pronoun “you”, but it is the other way around for potential customers (Sela et al. 2012). In this research, we intend to study singular second-person reference in English-Chinese advertisement translation and investigate how effective it is for potential consumers particularly the young, who, while living in a collectivistic culture, cherish individuality and uniqueness (ChoZan 2017).

We are aware that modern advertising is largely multimodal, and language works together with extra-linguistic elements like visual images. In this study, which focuses on the use of language, extra-linguistic elements such as visual images are excluded to avoid interference into the investigation on the role of second-person reference in enhancing reader memory. It is pointed out that the visual is an important entry point into an advertisement (Pieters and Wedel 2004), draws significantly more attention (Rutledge 2020, 74), has enormous impact on one’s attitudes, ideas, and actions (Barry 2020, 24), and is generally more memorable (Avgerinou and Pettersson 2020, 442). Therefore, including images would overshadow the role of language. We believe that the verbal text also has a part to play in attracting readers’ attention and deepening their impression. After all, when it comes to drawing attention, novelty or uniqueness overrides all other rules (Grabe 2020, 54). The proper use of language such as second-person reference can bring about a sense of novelty to consumers and is indispensable for effective advertising.

1. Research background

1.1 Functions of second-person reference

The use of second-person reference is common in advertising. Advertisers often make advertisements conversational and use “you” (Wells et al. 2006, 359) because addressing recipients directly gets their attention and deepens the impression made on them. Such direct forms of address also help to reduce “the impersonality of mass-media discourse” and imply “a one-to-one relationship between advertisers and addressees” (Smith 2004, 285). The popularity of second-person reference in advertising has been noted by a number of scholars of linguistic and translation studies (See Cook 2001, 157; Cui and Zhao 2014; Gao and Li 2017). Second-person reference is regarded as “one of the most distinctive features of advertising” (Cook 2001, 157). The second-person pronoun “you” is almost
ubiquitous in advertising, which is “most divergent from the uses of other genres” (Cook 2001, 157).

Second-person reference can be realized via various means such as second-person pronouns and imperatives. This study focuses on second-person pronouns in print advertisements. There are differences between English and Chinese regarding the use of second-person pronouns. In English, the pronoun “you” can express both informal and formal relationships (Cook 2001, 183), and have either an individual referent or a general one (Munday 2004, 209). In Chinese, on other hand, there are two pronouns, “你 (ni; you)” and “您 (nin; a respectful form of you)”, which are extensively used in English-Chinese advertisement translation. Second-person reference is handled flexibly in English-Chinese advertisement translation. Second-person pronouns are often added to the translation even when the original advertisement does not use such reference (See Cui and Zhao 2014).

The benefits of using second-person references have been acknowledged by various studies. First, second-person reference helps to structure advertising messages better. Research suggests that combining second-person and first-person reference can guide readers’ attention, gives more prominence to advertisers’ intention, and thus strengthens the persuasion of advertising (Gao and Li 2017). Second, second-person reference addresses readers directly and engages their attention. The use of “you” involves readers in constructing the textual meaning (Cui and Zhao 2014). Such involvement deepens the impression made on the reader and contributes to the promotion purpose of advertising. Third, the appropriate use of second-person reference creates an intimate and relaxing atmosphere like a face-to-face conversation (Torresi 2010, 128). In this way, it is in keeping with consumers’ inherent needs for association and belonging (Maslow 1987, 15–22), and it is in line with the communicative principles of politeness and cooperation, particularly the maxim of maximizing agreement with others as proposed in both the English and Chinese contexts (Leech 1983, 131–133; Yang 1999). However, it needs to be noted that second-person reference does not always create a relaxing atmosphere, and an example of this will be discussed in Section 3.

1.2 Emotional appeal of advertising

Using second-person reference is in line with the emotional appeal of advertising. Various models have been proposed to illustrate how advertisements work, which roughly fall into two categories based on emotional appeals and rational appeals (See Wells et al. 2006, 102; Wilmshurst et al. 1999, 319). We choose to focus on the former in this study because being emotional is an important feature of the advertising discourse (Torresi 2010, 128) and research shows that advertising based on
emotional appeal is more effective than advertising based on logic (O’Shaughnessy and O’Shaughnessy, 2004, 27). That is why advertisements aim at consumers’ psyche, subconscious mind and emotions more than their intellect to sell a product (Kaptan 2002, 1–2). The models of emotional appeal have identified such cognitive factors as attention, interest, desire, and memory, which are essential for an advertisement to function (Wells et al. 2006, 102; Ouyang 2000, 7–8). Second-person reference addresses readers directly and in this sense engages their attention. Meanwhile, it is relevant to interest, desire, and memory, which are all closely related to emotion (See Alexander and O’Hara 2009, 223; Bristow 1999, 6; Gunenther 1988). Psychological research has found that anything that concerns someone has the potential to arouse their emotion (O’Shaughnessy and O’Shaughnessy 2004, 27). As second-person reference concerns readers themselves, it has the potential to evoke their emotions and in this sense can influence their interest, desire, and memory.

To summarize, the use of second-person reference brings about positive advertising effects. It helps to structure an advertising message in a way that emphasizes the selling point (Gao and Li 2017), it engages consumers’ attention and memory (Cui and Zhao 2014), it facilitates communication and cooperation (Leech 1983, 131–133; Yang 1999), and it is in line with consumers’ needs (Maslow 1987, 15–22). In addition, the use of second-person reference also involves readers’ emotions, which has not been explored in depth and is to be discussed later in this paper. Despite the extensive research on the usefulness of second-person reference, how it is perceived by readers has rarely been investigated. Discussions on the use of second-person reference touch upon cultural differences and readers’ preference or mentality (See Delin 2000, 136–137; Cui and Zhao 2014; Ma 2009). However, readers’ perception of second-person reference in print advertisements remains yet to be explored, and, to the best of our knowledge, no empirical research has been carried out on second-person reference in advertisement translation and reader memory.

2. Research objectives and methodology

In light of the above review, this study aims to achieve the following two objectives. First, it intends to provide a theoretical account of readers’ perception of second-person reference, drawing upon research in psychology, advertising, and linguistics. As noted in Section 1, second-person reference brings benefits to advertising, such as engaging readers’ attention and memory, but studies so far have focused on the effects. Exploring readers’ cognitive processing of second-person reference can shed light on the causes of those positive effects. Second, this
study aims to confirm the effectiveness of second-person reference by carrying out an experiment. In this way, the research findings regarding the role of second-person reference in engaging readers’ attention and emotion and enhancing their memory can be consolidated and serve as a practical reference for international businesses and translators.

To achieve the first objective, this investigation refers to marketing and advertising studies (Wells et al. 2006; O’Shaughnessy and O’Shaughnessy, 2004), psychological research on emotion and memory (Alexander and O’Hara 2009; Bristow 1999; Parkin 1999; Surprenant and Neath 2009; Radvansky 2011), Mental Space Theory (Fauconnier 1994; Fauconnier and Sweetser 1996), and cognitive linguistic research on schema (Stockwell 2002; Culpeper 2009). The research in these areas is relevant to second-person reference and can reveal readers’ cognitive processing when they are addressed directly. Detailed elaboration will be provided in Section 3. More explanations regarding the experiment and findings, meanwhile, will be presented in Sections 4 and 5.

3. Perception of second-person reference

3.1 Mental spaces of second-person reference

Mental Space Theory offers a unified way of understanding reference, co-reference, and descriptions. It is relevant to this research in that second-person reference invokes mental spaces. Mental spaces are “constructs distinct from linguistic structures but built up in any discourse according to guidelines provided by the linguistic expressions” (Fauconnier 1985, 16, as cited in Marmaridou 2000, 51). The basic idea is that mental spaces are set up via space-builders as we talk and think, thus creating a network of spaces through which discourse unfolds (Fauconnier and Sweetser 1996, 11). The term space-builder refers to grammatical expressions that establish a new space or shift focus to an old space (Stockwell 2002, 97).

We believe that mental spaces can be understood from a broader perspective, and space builders cover more than grammatical constructions. As shown in Figure 1, second-person reference also sets up a mental space, which is dependent upon the co-text as well as recipients’ experience, knowledge, and background. Second-person pronouns, together with the co-text of an advertisement, guide readers to think of their own experience or their schemata. For example, a Chinese advertisement for cosmetics goes as follows: “不涂口红的你，和男人有什么区别？[bu tu kou hong de ni, he nan ren you shen me qu bie; You, not using a lipstick, are no different from men!]”. The advertisement went viral in 2018 in China
Second-person reference and mental space

and caused quite a stir. It sets up a foundation space which is hypothetical, namely, if women do not use lipstick, and an expansion space, namely, they would lose the charm of womanliness and hence are no different from men. The advertisement might be labeled as sexist, because it appears to equate femininity with wearing makeup. It should be pointed out, however, that the second-person pronoun used here is singular, which means that the message is directed to individual women readers and aims at making them feel insecure about their womanliness if they do not use lipstick. Some may argue that sentences without second-person pronouns also set up mental spaces, which we agree is the case. Our point is that the use of second-person reference embodies more directionality, and together with the co-text evokes readers' schemata of their own experience.

3.2 Schemata of second-person reference

Mental spaces are closely associated with schemata. The Schema Theory has been proposed to account for how people comprehend and remember meanings (Culpeper 2009, 128). The term schema has no fixed definition, but it is often used to refer to the general knowledge a person has about a particular domain (Alba and Hasher 1983, 20), or an individual’s internal representation of a task (Land 2009, 52), which provides instructions for one’s performance (Land 2009, 53). Schema is also discussed under other terms such as “frame” which refers to the general structure of an event (Minsky 1975) and “script” which includes both general and specific information about an event (Schank and Abelson 1977). There is something in common in the various discussions, namely, people’s experiences constitute the basis of their schemata (Culpeper 2009, 130). In the case of reading a text, readers retrieve knowledge from their long-term memory and integrate it with the information derived from the text to produce an interpretation.
While schemata are regarded by some scholars as leading to potentially biased interpretations, as people may pay attention to the information consistent with their schemata but ignore exceptions (Culpeper 2009, 133), they advert to a common feature of human cognition, that is, resorting to personal experiences when understanding a text.

![Figure 2. Second-person reference and memory enhancement](image_url)

As discussed in Section 3.1 and depicted in Figure 2, second-person reference in advertising guides readers to build up a mental space closely associated with their background and personal experience. Such mental spaces are based on readers’ schemata, and schemata can be instantiated by references in a text (Stockwell 2002, 78). Such schemata are involved in the encoding, storage, and retrieval of information (Schank and Abelson 1977). The types of schemata that are activated from readers’ memory are determined by the combination of second-person reference and the co-text of advertisements. The former directs readers’ attention to themselves and sets up a mental space of their own experience, and the latter gives more specific clues about what aspect of schemata is evoked. In other words, second-person reference sets up a mental space about readers and the co-text of the advertisement activates their schemata and gives substance to the mental space. As noted in Section 1.2, anything that concerns oneself has the potential to arouse one’s emotions (O’Shaughnessy and O’Shaughnessy 2004, 27). In this way, the involvement of readers’ personal schemata touches upon their emotion. For example, in the advertisement analyzed in Section 3.1, the second-person reference directs readers’ attention to themselves, and the phrase “not using a lipstick” evokes their schema of going out without lipstick and, as suggested by the advertising text “no different from men”, they might think of the way others look at them. In short, second-person reference has the capacity to guide readers to contextualize themselves in the text and or define a specific profile (Smith 2004, 285), and in this process may involve their schemata and arouse their emotion. Emotional response has an impact on memory (Berkowitz 2000, 86, 93; Forgas 2000, 11). Therefore, theoretically speaking, since second-person reference engages readers’ personal schemata and emotion, it can deepen their memorization of an advertisement.
3.3 Memory enhancement

Among the various cognitive factors mentioned in Section 1.2, memory is a reliable indicator of advertising effectiveness. For example, research on branding identifies memorability as “one of the most crucial factors” (Lee and Ang 2003, 323), and consumers’ ability to recall a brand is regarded as “one of the best predictors” of marketing success (Gontijo and Zhang 2007, 32). Memory is not only important for branding but also essential for advertising in general.

As the “most central aspect of human thought”, memory has three primary definitions, referring to “the location where information is kept”, “the thing that holds the contents of experience” or “the mental process used to acquire, store, or retrieve information” (Radvansky 2011, 1). It can be seen that the term memory covers both the content of memorization and the process of memorizing. In this research, we mostly mean the mental process to store and retrieve information. As to the content of memory, it is hard to delimit. As far as this study is concerned, what is memorized may not be the advertising text per se, but the information perceived as useful, needed or interesting and generalized by the reader, and in some cases the feeling, emotion or atmosphere brought about by the advertisement. Such vague content of memory mirrors two features of memory, namely, reconstruction and impurity.

The reconstruction principle means that memory is constructive and any possibly useful information may be exploited to construct a response to a cue (Parkin 1999, 21; Surprenant and Neath 2009, 8; Schank and Abelson 1977). It is related to the principle of impurity. One consequence of reconstruction is that people’s memory is not pure or accurate, for they may resort to a wide variety of information (Surprenant and Neath 2009, 8; Schank and Abelson 1977). The human brain can create a memory that is not entirely true by combining actual events with suggestions received from others (Łabendowicz 2018, 263). As analyzed in Sections 3.1 and 3.2, second-person reference guides readers to set up mental spaces that evoke their schemata. In this way, readers are involved in the meaning making process (Cook 2001, 201). Such involvement is the basis of all linguistic understanding (Tannen 2007, 32), which results in “searching, information processing and decision making” (Colbert et al. 2001, 83). Readers’ memory enhanced by second-person reference is reconstructed and not pure because of the introduction of schemata, but still it is an indicator of advertising effectiveness.

Readers’ memory shows to a great degree how well an advertisement has engaged their attention and emotion and aroused their interest and desire, as illustrated in Figure 3. Memory is affected by many other factors such as depth of processing (Craik and Tulving 1975; McLeod 2007) and distinctiveness
(Surprenant and Neath 2009, 8), but attention and emotion play more prominent roles as far as the second-person reference is concerned. First of all, psychological research has revealed attention as one of the variables that influence memory (Alexander and O’Hara 2009, 223). As noted in Section 1.1, second-person reference engages readers’ attention and in this sense it can enhance their memory. Besides, one’s interest and desire, working alone or together, evoke one’s emotions, and, as noted in Section 3.2, emotional response contributes to one’s memory. Memory entails the integration of “biological, cognitive, and emotional systems for encoding, manipulating, maintaining, and retrieving details about experiences” (Alexander and O’Hara 2009, 223). Research on the physiological and neurological mechanisms of memory suggests that they are influenced by emotional arousal (Alexander and O’Hara 2009, 226; Bristow 1999, 6). Experimental psychologists studying moods have also revealed that “events associated with more intense moods become more memorable” (Gunenther 1988, 65). For instance, making people feel comfortable helps enhance their memory (Bristow 1999, 1), and being comfortable is a type of emotional response. As Alexander and O’Hara (2009, 223) put it, “few researchers would refute the notion that memory is linked with emotion and that this connection has a strong basis in shared neural circuitry.” As discussed in Section 1.1, while second-person reference can generally contribute to a friendly and relaxing atmosphere and makes readers feel comfortable, there are cases, like the cosmetics advertisement analyzed in Section 3.1, where questioning is pointed directly toward the reader. In either case, the use of second-person reference has an impact on the reader’s emotion and thus influences their memory. In short, using second-person reference facilitates readers’ memory, and exploring their memory can shed light on how effective the advertising texts are in appealing to readers’ interest and desire, arousing their emotion, and engaging their attention.
4. The experiment

4.1 Participants

Altogether, 62 participants were recruited, 53 female and 9 male, all aged between 19 and 21. As we were studying English-Chinese advertisement translation, we aimed at those who were thoroughly familiar with Chinese and had a good command of English. The participants were all Chinese native speakers proficient in English. They were junior students majoring in English and had passed TEM-4 (Test for English Majors Band 4), the standardized national English proficiency test in China. Female English majors far outnumber male ones in China, which explains the gender imbalance in our participants. To ensure that they would be competent enough to understand English advertisements, we carried out an online survey among 27 sophomores specializing in English, who had not taken TEM-4 yet, on the linguistic complexity of the English advertisements to be used in the experiment. They rated the linguistic simplicity and comprehensibility of those advertisements on a five-point scale. The mean scores fell between 1.33–2.92, hence all below 3 (medium difficult). In other words, the texts were easy for sophomores, and we believe that the participants in our experiment, who were junior students, would not have difficulty understanding the English advertisements.

4.2 Experiment materials

4.2.1 Newness of advertisements

We ensured that the experiment materials were new to the participants. Research using pupil dilation measure finds that participants’ cognitive activity is impacted if they are acquainted with the content and other properties of texts, which is called the familiarity effect (Hyona et al. 1995, 602). Using advertisements that the participants had not seen before could avoid such familiarity effect and any possible bias. We collected 16 slogans from local print advertisements in an American city. We deleted the brand names because they were concise and memorable and might interfere with our exploration of second-person reference. We just indicated the product category in the experiment. The advertisements chosen for this study were about gift shops, shopping malls, hotels, colleges, bars, health products, cosmetics, clothes, accessories, automobiles, and real estates. The participants of the experiment showed interest in such products or services and could be regarded as potential consumers. We checked the availability of those advertisements on the internet, and found four of them were presented online as well. We planned to delete those four advertisements at first, but changed our mind after
interviewing the participants. We learned that they had not been to that American city before, so 12 of the advertisements would appear new to them. We then asked them about their online behavior. As they were English majors, they all browsed English websites to read news or search for information. However, only 5 participants (8% of the total) said they would pay attention to an English advertisement especially when it was placed side by side with a Chinese one because they wanted to explore the artful use of language and translation. 57 participants (92% of the total) said that they rarely noticed English advertisements when surfing on the internet. Therefore, the possibility that the participants had seen the four advertisements in question appeared very low. Besides, as there were no ready Chinese translations available, we had to prepare the Chinese versions ourselves, and these would be new to the participants.

4.2.2 Parallel versions

We invited a group of 21 graduate students who were taking the course *Advertisement Translation* and had had at least two years of translation experience to translate the slogans. We asked them to follow two criteria: to make the translations as natural as possible, and to produce parallel versions, one with second-person pronouns and one without. We emphasized that the two versions would not need to be strictly parallel to each other but they should be parallel in terms of the key points of appeal. We made this decision because naturalness was often in conflict with two versions being parallel.

Presenting strictly parallel versions would increase the validity and reliability of this study. However, it would undermine the ecological validity of the experiment. Ecological validity involves maintaining the integrity of real-life situation in the experimental context, and naturalness is essential (Schmuckler 2001, 421). A translation without second-person reference would be perfectly natural as it is, and adding such reference might make it sound awkward. Take the following T-shirt advertisement as an example: “Make your statement to the world.” A satisfactory translation would be: “彰显个性，绽放独特光芒 [zhang xian ge xing, zhan fang du te guang mang; show personality and unique radiance].” Adding second-person reference to the first or second clause would result in a parallel translation that was unnecessarily wordy: “彰显你的个性 [zhang xian ni de ge xing; show your personality]” or “绽放你的独特光芒 [zhan fang ni de du te guang mang; show your unique radiance], because the words “个性[personality]” and “独特 [unique]” already contain implicit reference to the readers’ own characteristics. Such manipulated translations would be grammatical, but not as concise or rhythmical as the version without second-person reference. Adding second-person pronouns just for its own sake would be against the purpose of this study and the intention of using second-person reference. Such tension often arises when
researchers try to maintain adequate scientific control while mimicking as faithfully as possible real-world situations, and one method to ease such tension is to sacrifice validity in some dimensions while maintaining validity in other dimensions (Schmuckler 2001, 424). Therefore, we asked the graduate students not to produce strictly parallel versions but natural translations with parallel points of appeal.

The translation practice was organized as a class activity for the course. We informed the graduate students that their translations would be used in an experiment. They showed great interest and promised not to reveal their translations to anyone after class. As they had been taking the course Advertisement Translation, they were familiar with the features of the advertising discourse and the methods of translation. They were able to come up with Chinese translations that were appealing in linguistic form due to the use of particular sound patterns and syntactical structures and in semantic meaning due, for example, to the use of imagery. They worked in groups of three or four, and each group was responsible for three or four advertisements. They submitted two Chinese versions which they believed to be the most effective to us. To illustrate, for the T-shirt advertisement mentioned above, they turned in the following translation with second-person reference: “让世界看见，你的光彩[rang shi jie kan jian, ni de guang cai; let the world see your radiance]”. The use of second-person reference was natural, and translation was concise and rhythmical. Meanwhile, the two versions were parallel to each other in terms of the key points of appeal as indicated in the brackets:

**Version 1**–让世界看见[to show], 你的[uniqueness]光彩[radiance]
**Version 2**–彰显[to show]个性[uniqueness], 绽放[to show]独特[uniqueness]光芒[radiance].

It can be seen that, despite the different wording, the key messages of the two versions remained parallel and in this sense were comparable.

4.3 Experiment procedure

The experiment covered two steps. We chose to use questionnaires in this study to collect data, as information thus gathered can reveal participants’ traits and experiences (Hu et al. 2020, 523). We prepared two online questionnaires for the two steps. It was easy to fill out the questionnaires, and the participants just needed to click the button in front of the option they wanted to choose. We explained to the participants the purpose of each questionnaire face to face, and they filled the online questionnaire during the class. The results were gathered online afterwards.
In the first step, we showed the participants the 16 advertisements matched with two Chinese versions via the online questionnaire. The two Chinese versions were presented randomly. Sometimes the second-person version appeared before the other version and sometimes after. The texts were presented in the font of Times New Roman (size 16) which was comfortable to the eye. We asked the participants to evaluate the Chinese translations as language professionals and potential consumers and choose a version they liked better. Such assessment would be impressionistic and intuitive to a great extent, but this approach was justified as far as the evaluation of advertisements was concerned. After all, readers seldom make a systematic analysis when seeing an advertisement; instead, they tend to judge it based on their first impression and personal emotions (See Johnson 2007, 53; Lerman 2007; O’Shaughnessy and O’Shaughnessy 2004, 27).

As discussed in Section 3, theoretically speaking, second-person reference engages readers’ attention, guides them to set up mental spaces with their personal schemata, and thus involves their emotion and facilitates their memory. According to the Ebbinghaus Forgetting Curve, memory retention is 100% at the time of learning a piece of information, but it drops rapidly to 40% within the first few days, after which, the loss of memory slows down (Shrestha 2017). Since the Ebbinghaus Forgetting Curve has been emulated by other studies (Hu et al. 2013), we believe that the curve is reliable. Therefore, we closed the link of the first questionnaire after the first step so that the participants had no access to those texts, and we implemented the second step two weeks later. We assume that the participants’ memory of the translations should have been stable by then and what was retained was their long-term memory.

We did the second step via the other online questionnaire. We treated the Chinese translations as individual advertisements and divided them randomly into two groups without the original English texts. Both groups included texts with and without second-person reference, but we made sure that each group only had one version of the same advertisement. We also divided the participants into two groups randomly, one with 29 people and the other with 31. They were asked to rate their memory of those advertisements on a five-point scale, and the scores of those advertisements could show how well they remembered the texts.

One key weakness with the self-rating system lies with the social-desirability bias, as participants tend to respond to test items in a way that is socially and culturally acceptable or positive (Chung and Monroe 2003, 292), which greatly undermines the validity of experimental and survey research findings (King and Bruner 2000, 80). We thought about using recall tests in combination with the self-rating method. There are various empirical tests to assess “what information is in memory, what can be remembered later, and how easily it is remembered” (Radvansky 2011, 45). To name a few, in the free recall test, participants report
as much information as they can; in the forced recall test, participants are asked to report a certain amount of information and in this way weaker knowledge in their memory can also be assessed; and in cued recall test, people's memories are associated with a context or setting (Radvansky 2011, 45–46). However, those tests are not suitable for advertisements. As discussed in Section 3.3, what people remember about advertisements is not the text per se and in some cases may be just a feeling or impression. Therefore, the free or forced recall does not work, as participants may not recall anything about the advertisements they saw two weeks ago. The cued recall test also poses as a problem regarding what kind of cues to provide. In this study, to avoid the distraction of extra-linguistic factors, we showed the participants texts only, so there would not be any appropriate cues aside from words. As just mentioned, what people remember after seeing advertisements is not necessarily textual. Therefore, using words as cues is not suitable either. What is more, the results of the three types of tests are variant relying on individual tests’ materials (Surprenant and Neath 2009, 7). Comparatively speaking, the self-rating method can shed light on participants’ mentality more effectively as long as measures are taken to minimize social-desirability bias and obtain truthful answers.

In this study, we kept the questionnaire anonymous and assured the participants that there would be no evaluative consequences. Given that Chinese people have face consciousness (Zhang and Kim 2013, 75), we spent time addressing any questions or doubts they had. We reiterated the research objective which was to test the effectiveness of linguistic design on one’s memory. Therefore, if their impression of an advertisement was very poor, it would not mean their memory was poor but that the advertisement was not well designed. Finally, we explained to them what the five-point scale meant, with 1 indicating a very vague or no impression and 5 indicating clear memory of the advertisement. We made sure that the participants understood the rating system and had no worries or concerns. They filled out the questionnaire in a relaxed and lighthearted manner. We believe that their answers were reliable. Later when we processed the original data, we found participants giving the score “1” (indicating very poor impression) to a number of translations. This showed that they were truthful with us and did not give higher scores just to look good.
5. Research findings and discussion

5.1 Step 1

62 participants took part in the first step of the experiment. The results are summarized in Table 1.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Advertisement</th>
<th>Votes</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Version 1</strong> (with second-person reference)</td>
<td>540</td>
<td>54.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Version 2</strong> (without second-person reference)</td>
<td>452</td>
<td>45.6%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

It can be seen that Version 1 receives 540 votes, accounting for 54.4% of the total. In other words, more than half of the participants liked the version with second-person reference better.

Version 1 receives 88 more votes (8.8%) than Version 2. As noted in Section 4.2, both versions are endowed with the characteristics of advertising and made as appealing as possible. The key points of appeal are parallel except that Version 1 uses second-person pronouns. The fact that Version 1 was preferred by the participants showed that second-person reference played a role in winning their favor. As discussed earlier in this paper, second-person reference together with the co-text of an advertisement involves readers' emotional response by focusing their attention on themselves, invoking their personal schemata, and setting up a mental space of their own. We are aware that advertisements without second-person reference could also evoke readers' schemata and mental spaces; however, as mentioned in Section 3, the use of second-person reference implies more directionality and turns readers' attention to themselves. In this way, Version 1 was more engaging and preferred by the participants.

5.2 Step 2

60 participants took part in the second step of the experiment. They were divided into two groups and had access to one Chinese version of the 16 advertisements. The effectiveness of the translations in deepening their memory was explored via their ratings. The higher the score, the more effective the translations were in enhancing the participants' memory. After collecting the data, we calculated the mean score of the two versions. (M=mean, SD=standard deviation, MD=mean difference)
Table 2. Ratings of the translations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Advertisement</th>
<th>Version</th>
<th>M</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>MD</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2.898</td>
<td>.995</td>
<td>.101</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2.797</td>
<td>.996</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3.559</td>
<td>.952</td>
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As shown in Table 2, except for Advertisements No. 7 and 14 where the mean difference is −.288 and −.017 respectively, for 14 advertisements out of 16, accounting for 88% of the total, Version 1 has a higher mean score, which implies that translations with second-person reference were generally better remembered. We then conducted a statistical analysis of the two versions’ mean values to further explore the significance of such difference. We carried out Shapiro-Wilk normality tests first to check the distribution of the data.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Advertisement</th>
<th>Observations</th>
<th>W</th>
<th>V</th>
<th>Z</th>
<th>Prob&gt;z</th>
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<tr>
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<td>1.415</td>
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<td>.979</td>
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<td>−1.693</td>
<td>.955</td>
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As shown in Table 3, the p values for both sets of data are above .05, and the data are thus normally distributed. We then did a paired samples t test, the results of which are shown in Table 4 where “DF” stands for “degree of freedom”.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Version 1 (n=16)</th>
<th>Version 2 (n=16)</th>
<th>M</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>M</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>MD</th>
<th>t</th>
<th>DF</th>
<th>p</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>3.252</td>
<td>.053</td>
<td>3.07</td>
<td>.062</td>
<td>.182</td>
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<td>15</td>
<td>.001</td>
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</table>

As shown in Table 4, Version 1 has a higher mean score ($M=3.252$, $SD=.053$) than Version 2 ($M=3.07$, $SD=.062$), and this difference is statistically significant ($t=3.895$, $p=.001$). As introduced in Section 4.2, we carried out the second step of the experiment two weeks after the first step, so it was not a matter of short-term memory. Instead, what the participants still remembered was an indicator of the effectiveness of the translations in terms of engaging their attention and emotion. The result has the following implications.

First, the mean scores of the two versions are just slightly over 3, which indicates moderate memory. In other words, neither version was eminently impressive to the participants. This did not mean that the result was insignificant or the experiment failed. On the contrary, it was actually a legitimate result because we used texts only and did not include visuals in the experiment. As noted in our Introduction, visuals would play a more powerful role in attracting readers’ attention and deepening the impression made on them. However, this research aims to explore the role of language, so we excluded extra-linguistic elements. In addition,
as mentioned in Section 4.2, we deleted brand names as well, because they would be concise and hence memorable. Therefore, the ratings in the second questionnaire are purely the result of engagement with written texts. They are not that prominent probably because the role of verbal text in enhancing readers’ memory is moderate. However, research in this regard is meaningful because we need to ascertain what kind of language is more effective when incorporating other extra-linguistic elements and producing multimodal advertisement translations.

Second, we are aware that the difference between the versions’ mean scores, despite the statistical significance, is very small. The mean score of Version 1 is higher than that of Version 2 by only 0.182. Still, the difference matters to this study. As just analyzed above, this study uses verbal text only, and the role of verbal text in engaging readers’ memory may be quite limited. The mean scores of both versions are not that high, and it is within such moderate ratings that we have found a slight difference between the two versions. Such slight difference is realistic because we controlled other factors that might attract readers’ attention and impact their memory such as visuals or brand names. As mentioned earlier, the two versions are parallel to each other in terms of the key points of appeal. The difference between them, however small it is, is attributable to the use of second-person reference. As analyzed in Section 3.2 and 3.3, second-person reference works together with other co-textual elements to guide readers to set up mental spaces and invoke their schemata, which engages their emotion and hence memory. Accordingly, the general higher mean score of Version 1 shows that the use of second-person reference can improve the effectiveness of advertisement translations. We are not suggesting that using second-person reference alone will immensely enhance readers’ memory, but theoretically and statistically speaking, it plays a positive role. If it is properly combined with extra-linguistic elements such as visuals, the effect can be substantially strengthened, and more studies are yet to be done in this regard.

Conclusion

To conclude, this study explores the role of second-person reference in English-Chinese advertisement translation in terms of engaging readers’ attention and emotion and enhancing their memory. It makes an original contribution in the following two aspects. First, theoretically, this study accounts for the perception of second-person reference in relation to Mental Space Theory and Schema Theory. It holds that second-person reference guides readers to set up mental spaces that evoke their schemata. In this way, their personal experience and emotions are involved, which in turn deepens their memory. Second, empirically, this study
carried out an experiment to test the effectiveness of second-person reference. Statistics show that the mean scores of the version with second-person reference are higher than those of the other version. All in all, this research suggests that the appropriate use of second-person reference in Chinese advertisement translations together with other co-textual elements can be an effective tool in engaging readers’ emotion and memory. However, there are two major limitations in this research. First of all, we used texts only to explore the role of second-person reference and excluded any distraction from extra-linguistic elements or brand names. As a result, the participants’ impression of those advertisements was medium and the difference between the two versions was small. The second limitation is that we tried to design the two versions of the same advertisement to be attractive and natural to Chinese native speakers. It was done for the sake of ecological validity, but as a result the two versions were not strictly parallel to each other in terms of wording. We tried to offset this limitation by making sure the key points of appeal were parallel. In the future research, we plan to design an experiment using versions that are strictly parallel both in terms of meaning and linguistic form and apply the pupil dilation measure to test the effectiveness of second-person reference in engaging participants’ attention and cognitive activity.

References


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