



# A Review of Foreign Languages in Advertising and Product Packaging: Socio-and Psycholinguistic Perspectives

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## REVIEW

### Abstract

Research on the use of foreign languages in advertising and packaging identifies English as a medium due to its modern universal appeal. As advertising vehicles become more numerous and diverse, foreign languages have veered from their purely linguistic function to assuming a more active role in influencing consumers' cognitions and behaviors. Research allows companies to tap into the implicit emotional connections and associations that foreign languages evoke in consumers and better assist companies in adjusting their consumer culture positioning strategies to various local markets. This review aims to encapsulate the theoretical complexities underpinning the mechanism of how foreign languages function and how understanding them may help advertisers and brand managers in influencing consumer behavior and perception. The existing body of research shows a surging interest in multilingual advertising and product packaging. The former is more consolidated with validated experimental designs and a wider application of relevant theories whereas the latter is still at its infancy and lacks the generalizability to diverse markets. The authors conclude that foreign languages are widespread. Drawing on the theories of linguistics, sociolinguistics and psycholinguistics, alongside considering markets' cultural sensitivities, the authors recommend employing foreign language cues in both advertising and packaging.

**Keywords:** consumer, label, association, congruence, country-of-origin effect, brand


Received: 16 November 2023

Accepted: 26 February 2024

Published: 15 May 2024

DOI:

15835/buasvmcn-hort:2023.0030

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## INTRODUCTION

There has been a salient academic interest on the impact of foreign languages (FLs) in advertising that has includes varied fields such as linguistics, marketing, multilingualism, sociolinguistics, psycholinguistics, international advertising, and consumer research (Hornikx & Van Meurs, 2020). This interest of FLs in advertising has been largely researched through the lenses of socio- and psycholinguistic perspectives (see also Alcántara-Pilaret al. 2015; Hornikx and van Meurs 2015; Hornikx et al. 2023). The former looks at the psychological and neurological factors that enable humans to process a foreign language and the mental representation involved in comprehending the marketing messages (Alcántara-Pilar 2017, Hornikx et al., 2023, Luna and Peracchio 2002). The Sociolinguistic approach delves into how society influences the usage of language and its connotations related to its country of origin (Hornikx and van Meurs 2020; Jaffe and Nebenzahl, 2001; Luna and Peracchio 2005). Advertising in itself, by definition, strives to build the brand in the mind of the consumers who act as a major source of their energy, not the product as a physical object itself (Fisk 2008, p. 152). Language is one catalyst of this energy and being employed rigorously in marketing, it is "thoroughly a linguistic business" (Thurlow, 2019, 36). Through

the lenses of socio- and psycholinguistic perspectives and taking cue from Hornikx et al. (2023), we group the relevant theories into two main clusters: 1) FLs as symbols and ethnocultural associations and 2) FLs as mental processes. These clusters are of relevance as they enable further empirical research of FLs into the mediums of product advertising such as TV ads, print ads, product packaging etc.

This article has three aims:

- to present relevant early research on FLs in advertising and present-day research on multilingual product packaging.
- to present a synthesized summary of the theories related to socio- and psycholinguistic perspectives relevant for the empirical research of FLs on consumer behavior.
- to present suggestions for further research resulting from the review.

## LITERATURE BACKGROUND

### Early research on FLs in advertising

While the interest in foreign languages in advertising until the 1980s was mainly limited to researchers in linguistics (as documented in Piller, 2003), the end of the twentieth century has seen the study of the use and effects of foreign languages in advertising under the lenses of various fields such as marketing, psychology, sociolinguistics, cultural studies etc. Even before the discipline of FLs came to the limelight, regional and national accents have been observed to be employed for products that are typical of a region or country where the accent is spoken. In a study by Peters et al. (1984, 186), they observe that in British television commercials makes 'use of accent in European product commercials such as Babarian beer or Italian wine:

The generalised northern working-class accent used in beer commercials invites masculine identification with the product and suggests a trust in the product by hard-working male speakers who endorse it. In the commercials where northern working-class speech is used most, extra-linguistic clues, in the form of worker camaraderie or the use of an older, trustworthy working man, are given to support the male atmosphere generated by the use of the accent.

Starting with 1980s, foreign languages in advertising took a more discourse-oriented turn and veered off from purely linguistically oriented studies (Piller, 2003). Harold Haarman's (1989) pioneering research on the frequency of European languages in Japanese ads and the peculiarities of their employment, shifted the study of languages from foreign loanwords to the discourse of multilingual advertising. He discovered that European languages such as English, French, German and Spanish were being extensively exhibited to the Japanese public although the latter neither understood nor could read those languages. According to Haarman (1989), foreign languages serve as a hook to keep the Japanese public latched on to the ads served to them and that behind their usage, lurks a symbolic catch which evokes associations of the foreign language's country of origin. Haarman (1989) mentions as a case in point the usage of French which he notices is used for specific product categories such as watches, bags and parfumes that evoke associations of elegance and *bon vivant* (luxurious living).

Early research in the 90s were mostly focused on the possible linguistic rationales for the use of foreign language words and phrases in print advertisements, aimed primarily at a monolingual audience (see Domzal et al. 1995; Ray, Ryder, & Scott, 1991) and bilingual speakers (Luna and Peracchio 2001, 2002). Outside the linguistic realm, Leclerc et al. (1994, 263) internalized the positioning of FLs in marketing and described the phenomenon as *foreign branding* which means "pronouncing the syllables of a brand in a foreign language". The aim of *foreign branding* is to attract consumers to coveted products by employing a foreign ring to the brand name. Kelly-Homes (2005) gives an example of foreign branding with the French coffee brand *Carte Noire* in the UK ad (2001); the ad relies on French football player David Ginola's French accent to entice his female speaker ("Pascal, deux *Carte Noir!*"), thus, - reinforcing the "Frenchness" image by pronunciation (Kelly-Holmes, 2005). According to her, syntax, style, accent, dialect - all of these are exploited in advertising and can stand alone as an independent source of meaning, and in the process give meaning to a particular product in terms of cultural competence (Kelly-Holmes, 2000). Alden et al. (1999) expanded upon foreign branding by proposing three brand positioning strategies under the lens of culture: Global Consumer Culture Positioning (GCCP), Local Consumer Culture Positioning (LCCP), and Foreign Consumer Culture Positioning (FCCP). The usage of FLs in advertising mainly fall into FCCP which refers to "the strategy that connects the brand with local cultural meanings, reflecting identities, customs, and is served as consumption for locals in the framework of their culture, such as local products" (Alden et al. (1999, 77). A notable exception is the usage of English which due to its *lingua franca* status (see 1.3.), which belongs to the GCCP that "identifies the brand as a symbol of an entire global culture" (Alden et al. (1999, 77).

The end of the twentieth century has seen the study of the employment and effects of foreign languages both in the domain of business (marketing, advertising) and linguistics (applied linguistics, sociolinguistics, psycholinguistics) (as documented in Hornikx and van Meurs, 2020; Piller, 2003). Their studies have paved the way

for the expansion of the research agenda on FLs not just on TV and print ads but also in another less researched medium such as product packaging.

### Present-day research on multilingual product packaging

Packaging is often called “the industry’s silent salesmen” (Rundh, 2005, p.674) and as such, its importance cannot be underestimated as a driver of economies of scale (Khan et al. 2017). Research on foreign languages in product packaging is at its infancy and to the best of our knowledge, there are only a handful of papers on multilingual product packaging which have investigated the practice in various facets. Firstly, we consider multilingual product packaging as a subfacet of the general phenomenon of foreign-language display (FLD) which is “the appropriation of words or phrases from another language yet used within one’s own social group” (Eastman and Stein, 1993, p. 189). A variation of FLD is foreign branding which is “the strategy of spelling or pronouncing a brand name in a foreign language” (Leclerc et al. 1994, p. 263). FLD provides social information about the speaker’s desired presentation of self like employing English in advertising to denote globalness or French for elegance (Haarmann, 1984, 1989; Kelly-Holmes, 2005; Piller, 2001).

A recent number of research have investigated the evaluation of English on packaging in non-English speaking countries (e.g. Khan and Lee, 2020; Yener & Taşçıoğlu, 2020); Ho, Chiu, Jiang, Shen, & Xu, 2019; Khan, Lee, & Lockshin, 2015, 2017, Huettl-Maack and Schwenk (2016); Gopinath et. al. 2013). Huettl-Maack and Schwenk (2016) conducted their research in a western developed market (Germany) and indicated that choosing the right foreign language on product packaging can positively affect the consumers’ product attitudes, quality perceptions and even taste perceptions.

Other researchers have delved into the use of English in product packaging in non-Western ethnic majority emerging markets which revealed that the employment of foreign languages in hedonic products is more effective in economically emerging countries than in developed ones (Khan et al., 2015, 2017; Khan and Lee, 2020; Yener and Taşçıoğlu, 2020; Khan et al., 2015, 2017; Ho et. al. 2019). The research from Khan and colleagues indicated that the localisation of packaging (in Pakistan and China) for foreign brands may not necessarily be effective and that standard packaging for hedonic products would result in more brand likeability. Ho and colleagues (2019) similarly supported this claim for the Chinese market showing different foreign languages (English, Japanese and Korean) on the product packaging label (coffee) influenced consumers’ preferences. The research by Yener & Taşçıoğlu (2020) validated the aforementioned results in Turkey and extended the research by postulating that the combination of foreign brand names and bilingual product labels is considered the most ideal.

All the above research are in line with the linguistic theory of foreign language-display which postulates that the congruence between products and countries of origin (COO) affects product evaluations (Hong & Kang, 2006; Hornikx et. al., 2013; Hornikx & Frank van Meurs (2016); Roth & Romeo, 1992; Usunier & Cestre, 2007; Verlegh et al. 2005). Putting it simply, foreign languages in advertising function as COO cues (Aichner, 2014; Kelly-Holmes 2005; Leclerc et al., 1994; Jos Hornikx & Frank van Meurs (2017); Melnyk, Klein, & Völckner, 2012; Ray et al., 1994). Due to the space limitations of this paper, we provide below a synthesized review table of FLs in advertising consisting of representative publications, medium of FLs cues, key insights and theoretical perspectives:

**Table 1.** Main representative publications of FLs in advertising & product packaging

Source	Language labels	Findings
<b>Dursun Yener and Mertcan Tascioglu (2020)</b>	Turkish versus English	Product evaluation and purchase intention are higher when the brand name is foreign, regardless of the product label language.
<b>Huda Khan, Richard Lee and Larry Lockshin (2015)</b>	English versus Urdu	The role of packaging is more pertinent for hedonic than for utilitarian products.
<b>Huda Khan, Richard Lee and Larry Lockshin &amp; Armando Corsi (2017)</b>	English versus Urdu	For hedonic products, standard packaging likeability would relate to brand likeability more than local packaging likeability would.
<b>Huda Khan &amp; Richard Lee (2019)</b>	English versus Urdu	The Markedness (i.e. expectancy) of different languages on products from different country-of-origin may be a factor in guiding the evaluation
<b>Huda Khan (2020)</b>	English versus Chinese versus Urdu	Preference for global (English) packaging when social consciousness is high.
<b>Udo Wagner &amp; Alisara Rungnontarat Charinsarn (2020)</b>	English versus Romanian language	Using unconventional lettering on product packaging an innovative way to signal COO and thus product quality.
<b>Han-Chiang Ho, Candy Lim Chiu, Dai Jiang, Jiale Shen &amp; Hong Xu (2019)</b>	English versus Japanese versus Korean	Highest attention, trust, quality, perception & purchase intention on products with English labels.

Note: Source: E. Shehu (2023)

The above diverse research agenda on FLs in advertising (TV ads, print ads, product packaging, slogans) falls mainly into two categories: sociolinguistics and psycholinguistics. Hornikx and van Meurs (2015) have compiled an excellent summary of the claims based on empirical evidence that each perspective attests to Table 2. Each of these perspectives will be discussed below with its own cluster of relevant theories that sheds light on the functions and competencies of FLs on consumer behavior.

**Table 2.** Summary of claims supported by empirical evidence

<b>Psycholinguistic account</b>	<b>Theoretical perspectives</b>
<b>FLD is more difficult to understand than the consumers' first language</b>	Revised Hierarchical model
<b>FLD evokes different associations than the consumers' first language</b>	Conceptual Feature model
<b>Foreign languages in advertising seem to attract the consumers' eye for longer than their mother tongue.</b>	Curiosity theory
<b>Recall of foreign languages in advertising may be higher or lower than of the consumers' mother tongue</b>	Revised Hierarchical Model
<b>Sociolinguistic account</b>	
<b>Foreign language associations evoke ethnocultural associations</b>	Language attitudes
<b>Foreign languages in advertising are more effective when they are congruent with a product typically linked to the country where the language is spoken</b>	Country-of-origin Effect
<b>Comprehension of foreign languages in advertising plays a minor role in their effectiveness</b>	Linguistic fetish

Source: Hornikx and Van Meurs (2015)

### **A sociolinguistic perspective of FLs as symbols and ethnocultural associations**

Foreign languages, as a medium of advertising, can be said to have symbolic value, i.e., the capacity to call up associations with the country where the foreign language is typically spoken (Hornikx et al., 2023). These associations are subjects to any biases as they are coded by language and built into the memorizer's language (Hunt and Agnoli 1991, 381). According to Sapir (1949), language itself is responsible for molding thoughts and shaping how society perceives reality. From this stance, the concept of "linguistic relativism" was developed by Whorf (1956) and became known as the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis which postulates that language influences thought, and in its strongest form, that language controls both thought and perception (Hunt and Agnoli 1991, 377).

Based on this hypothesis and on the sociolinguistic perspective in general, foreign languages not only simply evoke a country of origin, but also a larger network of associations related to that country of origin (Hornikx and van Meurs, 2020, 73). A country-of-origin effect is generally understood to stand for the impact that generalizations and perceptions about a country have on a person's evaluations of the country's products and/or brands (Jaffe and Nebenzahl, 2001, 41). It was Ingrid Piller (2000), one of the first adherents of the symbolic association of foreign languages with the country of origin who after having analyzed more than 70% of the German ads, surmised that most of them were multilingual. According to Piller (2000), the study of foreign languages must be scrutinized through the lenses of symbolic nuances which orient the perceptions of the consumers' choices more than the literal translation of its content. As Piller (2001, 30) puts it. No matter whether the target group can actually understand the meaning of a foreign form or not, they will be able to identify the form as belonging to a particular language. They will then transfer the ethno-cultural stereotype about the group most frequently associated with that language onto the product.

Based on their associative power and COE, three are the sociolinguistic perspectives on FLs in advertising: 1) *linguistic fetish*, 2) *foreign-language display* (FLD), and 3) the *Markedness Model*. The claim that foreign languages not only simply evoke a country of origin, but also a larger network of associations related to that country of origin was later also corroborated by Kelly-Holmes (2000) who negated the idea that consumers need to grasp the meaning of foreign words in an ad in order for it to have an impact on the former. Her assumption is based on the theoretical construct of *linguistic fetish*, a core tenet in FLs as symbols and it refers to the phenomenon of using

languages for symbolic (fetishised) rather than utility (instrumental-communicative) purposes in commercial texts (Kelly-Holmes, 2017, 135). Kelly-Holmes (2000, 71) further describes it as “the language [which] appears to achieve value independently and this value is not the product of its communicative value, but rather of its symbolic value”. She evokes the decades’ long catchphrase ad from Audi, “Vorsprung durch Technik (literally meaning ‘development through technology’) in which the German catchphrase is used in combination with the product to associate the product with German technology and reliability.

A special case in point is English which is not necessarily ethnoculturally associated to any particular country (US, UK etc.) but neutrally evokes a number of associations such as modernity, internationalism or cosmopolitanism, trendiness (Kelly-Holmes 2005, Krishna and Ahluwalia 2008). Kelly-Holmes (2005, 104) further points out that: “English has meaning, use and significance, to a large extent, independent of the countries in which it is spoken, and its use in multilingual advertising is, not exclusively but very often, not motivated by a desire to allude to the perceived stereotypical characteristics of countries with which the language is associated. (p. 104)”

The second construct, based on the sociolinguistic perspective of associations which relates specific associations to specific foreign languages (Haarmann, 1984, 1989; Kelly-Holmes, 2005; Piller, 2001; Hornikx et al. 2007), is the concept of *foreign language display* (FLD). *Foreign-language display* (FLD) is “the appropriation of words or phrases from another language yet used within one’s own social group” (Eastman and Stein, 1993, p. 189). In FLD, a foreign language is used by brands as an unregulated strategy of the country-of-origin (COO) effect for the marketing of the products (Aichner, 2014, 8). In order for the COO effect to happen, there needs first to be a generally accepted congruence (a match) between product-country (Usunier & Cestre, 2007), eg. pasta-Italy etc. (see Table 3 below).

**Table 3.** List of product-country fit (product ethnicity)

<b>Ethnic product</b>	<b>Countries</b>
<b>Beer</b>	Belgium, Germany
<b>Bicycles</b>	The Netherlands
<b>Cheese</b>	France, the Netherlands
<b>Chocolate</b>	Belgium Switzerland
<b>Coffee</b>	Brazil
<b>Cosmetics</b>	France
<b>Fragrance</b>	France
<b>Hamburgers</b>	USA
<b>Jeans</b>	USA
<b>Pasta</b>	Italy
<b>Shoes</b>	Italy
<b>Sushi</b>	Japan
<b>Tea</b>	China, India, UK
<b>Vodka</b>	Russia
<b>Watches</b>	Switzerland
<b>Wine</b>	Chile, France, Germany, Italy

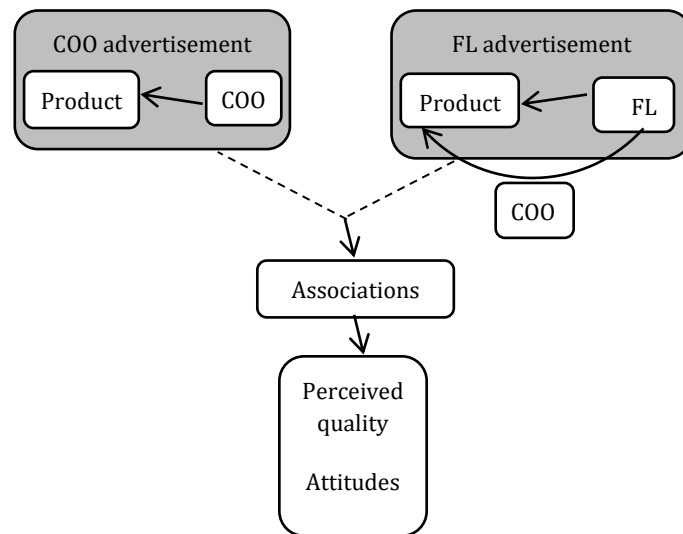
Source: Usunier and Cestre (2007)

Hornikx and van Meurs (2017) put to the test the aforementioned FLs as unregulated COO effect and their effectiveness as implicit COO cues. Their study and theoretical framework revealed that FLs acted indeed as an implicit mechanism for COO cues as they caused a COO effect by evoking symbols and ethnocultural associations Figure 1.

In their results, FLs effectively influenced consumer behavior in advertising “because of underlying connections that consumers make between languages, countries, and products” (Hornikx and van Meurs 2017, 13). FLD is an important concept that provides a framing theory into the relationship between FLs and COO cues.

The third theoretical construct needed to deconstruct FLs for evoking ethnocultural associations is the Markedness Model developed by Myers-Scotton (1993). This model argues that words in a foreign language stand out from the surrounding native language, and therefore evoke associations with that foreign language and correspondingly, with the country where the language is spoken. Originally developed to explain social motivation why people code-switch in a conversation (i.e. alternating between two or more languages), it posits that people code-switch to ‘use the possibility of making code choices to negotiate interpersonal relationships, and by extension to signal their perceptions or desires about group membership’ (Myers-Scotton, 1993, p. 478).

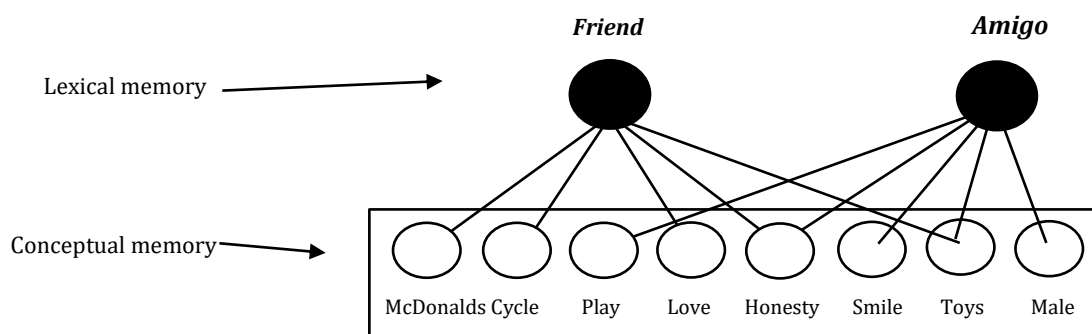
The three theoretical constructs (*fetishism*, *foreign-language display* and the *Markedness Model*) present foundational insights into the sociolinguistic perspectives of FLs in advertising functioning as symbols and ethnocultural associations.



**Figure 1.** FLs as implicit mechanisms of COO  
Source: Hornikx and van Meurs (2017)

**A Psycholinguistic perspective of FLs as mental processes**

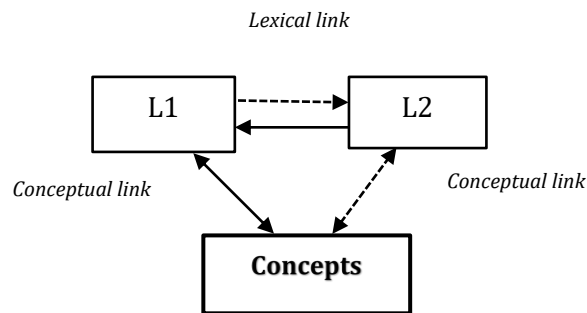
The second cluster, FLs as mental processes, falls under the umbrella of psycholinguistics and concerns itself with the theories that lay claim on how FLs are processed in the mind. Three theories dominate in this cluster: the Conceptual Feature Model (CFM), the Revised Hierarchical Model (RHM), and the Curiosity Theory. Both models view language as structured mental representation (Hornikx et al., 2023, 4). CFM was developed by De Groot (1992) which postulates that words activate a series of conceptual meanings which vary from language to language. Luna and Peracchio (2002) applied the CFM model on the lexical English word *friend* and Spanish word *amigo* Figure 2.



**Figure 2.** Conceptual Feature Model  
Source: Adapted from Luna and Peracchio (2002)

Their study elicited a series of conceptual nodes for the two words which overlapped with each other (e.g. both meaning honesty) but may also diverged (*amigo* for male and *friend* for love) (see CFM applied in Luna and Peracchio 2002, p. 460). The second theory, the Revised Hierarchical Model (RHM; Kroll and Steward, 1994) was developed to account for the observed asymmetries in accessing word meanings from bilingual speakers. The RHM was developed to explain how words from different languages are mentally processed by language users. Just as in CFM, albeit with a difference in varying strength, bilingual individuals possess a “hierarchical arrangement of words and concepts, with a separation at the lexical level but with connections to a semantic system that is shared across languages”

Dufour and Kroll (1995, 166). The theory Figure 3, posits that language users of L1 (native language) have a better comprehension efficiency due to the larger lexicon in L1 than in their L2 (second language).



**Figure 3.** The revised hierarchical mode  
Source: Kroll and Steward (1994)

According to this asymmetric strength model, in terms of lexical links, the link between L2 → L1 is stronger, than that between L1 → L2. Simply put, bilingual speakers access concepts in L2 (lexical inferiority) through the use of L1 (lexical superiority) as the latter, by default, plays the role of an intermediary to reach concepts by default (see Alcántara-Pilar et al., 2015). If the right translation-equivalent word is used, lexically and conceptually overlapping with L1, FLs can serve as a hook for consumers in terms of better recall, recognition, and product evaluation (Luna & Peracchio, 2001).

The third theory of psycholinguistics in advertising, the Curiosity Theory, holds that FLs act as attention-seeking mechanisms by impeding the automatic processing of the ad and consequently arresting their attention for a longer timespan (Domzal, et al., 1995; Petrof, 1990; Piller, 2001; Sella, 1993. Domzal et. al (1995) argues that the usage of foreign languages in ads “functions as attention bait as its application deviates by normal standards by being unexpected and eye-catcher” (Domzal et al. (1995, 100). Piller (2001, p. 163) further argues that “a general advantage of the use of a foreign language is that it impedes automatic processing and thereby arrests the attention of recipients for a longer time span than monolingual native-language advertisements would”. Thomas (2013) empirically confirmed the attention-grabbing of FLs more than the native language. By employing an eye-tracking approach, the German participants dwelled more time in the English version of the print ads than the German ones. Based on the RHM, this can be probably be attributed to the aforementioned RHM as the comprehension latency of the FL demands more cognitive workout in the consumers’ minds in order to comprehend the marketing messages. In a marketing perspective, both CFM and RHM are theories-based word-association methodologies which are utilized to find out whether FLs influence consumers’ interpretations of marketing messages (Luna and Peracchio 2002, p. 458). The Curiosity Theory is a consumers’ memory theory on the attention advantage of FLs but not necessarily on recall (Hornikx et al. (2015).

These psycholinguistic theories in consumer research are relevant as they help to study the processing of FLs in consumers’ minds. By understanding these mind theories of consumer behavior, marketers can properly utilize FLs to understand consumers’ mind processes of FLs whose “translation- equivalent words in their first language and foreign languages will always partly differ in the concepts they are linked to in the mind” (Hornikx et al., 2023, p. 5).

## MATERIALS AND METHODS

In our meticulous search for a condensed framework for the relevant linguistic theories on the study of foreign languages (FLs) in advertising and product packaging, we retrieved the required articles through the electronic databases of “Taylor & Francis Online”, “Elsevier” and “Ebsco” which provide access to journals spanning Marketing, Linguistics, Psychology, Social Sciences etc. After extraction of the relevant papers (54) and taking cue from Hornikx et al. (2023) excellent three clusters’ linguistic theories, we proceeded by further reducing the clusters to two due to the mostly inconsequentiality of the third in western emerging market, especially in the Balkan countries. The linguistic theory of Language as Means of Accommodation is the process of language and communication adjustment by minority groups in majority groups such as Hispanics in the U.S. and deemed mostly non-applicable in western emerging countries. The context of this review, the Balkan countries like Romania and Albania, are largely homogenous populations respectively and largely mired in historical minority issues (Polyvyanny, 2005). The review starts with a general overview on the early research on foreign languages in advertising and then gives a focused present-day research review on multilingual product packaging in western and non-western markets Next, the two remaining linguistic clusters are distilled and exemplified with representative studies from influential researchers, whose studies serve as concrete examples of the theories and succinctly illustrate the presented

concepts and respective research designs. Lastly, possible research avenues are discussed so as to further the research discussion and possible implications.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The aim of this literature was twofold: to give a synthesized review of the seminal research of FLs in advertising conducted in its infancy, including present-day research on multilingual product packaging; and to provide possible research avenues based on the socio- and psycholinguistic clusters. Based on the research review, we can only agree with Hornikx and van Meurs (2015) about the expansive nature of FLs into other disciplines such as international marketing, international advertising, business communication, applied linguistics, sociolinguistics, and psycholinguistics.

The repertoire of linguistic theories mentioned in this article can help in further investigating the full-fledged manifestation of FLs in advertising in developed countries with a strong presence of European languages such as Italian, French, German etc. A case in point would be Romania where these languages are quite prevalent. To the best of our knowledge, one empirical evidence exists for the Romanian consumers by Micu and Coulter (2010) on the influence of ads in English and Romanian. In their study, they evaluated a beer ad for an existing local or global brand, containing the label in either English or Romanian. The results showed that the ads in English rather than in Romanian evoked a more positive approach for the products from the international companies. Based on aforementioned cluster theories of FLs as symbols and ethnocultural associations and drawing specifically from the Markedness Model, Micu and Coulter (2010, 77) theorize that: "this effect occurs because of English being less expected (marked) than Romanian in advertisements, which triggers the positive associations that are related to English, such as globalness, prestige, and being cosmopolitan". This aligns with the aforementioned dimensions of globalness associations with English in advertising (Haarmann, 1984, 1989; Kelly-Holmes, 2005; Krishna and Ahluwalia (2008); Piller (2001); Hornikx et al. 200). It would be interesting to replicate their study by including other languages such as French and Italian which trigger a stronger country-of-origin effect and trigger diverse ethnocultural associations.

Based on the linguistic theories in this article we recommend as an avenue of research the influence of FLs in consumer packaged-food (CPF). Being the lesser researched medium of FLs in advertising, it would be interesting to investigate how the theory of foreign-language display (FLD) holds in other countries, e.g. western/non-western developing ones where generally people prefer products from developed countries to domestic products due to their presumably higher quality (Sharma, 2011). Such study would provide insights and extend the literature on COO theory by including not just the socio-demographic variable but also dispositional factors such as consumer ethnocentrism or quality consciousness.

As a second avenue, future research could also expand on the network of associations that are evoked by the use of foreign languages, and on how this relates to people's appreciation for the advertisement or product. Based on theory of symbolic association of foreign languages with the country of origin, more studies could explore if these associations depend on the product type (hedonic vs utilitarian); personal cultural orientation (individualism vs collectivism), consumption context (private vs public); and product involvement (low vs high).

## CONCLUSION AND ECONOMIC IMPLICATIONS

As marketing is increasingly focusing on the consumer as a human being in its entirety, with material, emotional and spiritual needs (Kotler et al. 2010), understanding the implicit strategies that brands employ to influence consumer behavior has become more urgent than ever. This review has shed light on various aspects of foreign languages by providing important theoretical underpinnings in a concise manner. By elucidating the mechanism and the underlying socio- and psycholinguistic perspectives of foreign languages, a better understanding can be gained into how consumers perceive the employment of foreign language display in advertising and packaging. Supported by the theory of foreign-language display and implicit country-of-origin effect (Aichner, 2014; Hornikx & van Meurs, 2017), this review cautiously concludes that employing foreign languages could be an innovative way to signal COO, and act as cues of product quality in both advertising and product packaging. The latter has been demonstrated to communicate both a mediated and lived experience (Underwood, 2003), and in a hedonic product category, it may be more susceptible to foreign language labels.

Consequently, the theoretical implications of foreign languages in advertising and product packaging would be of interest to local and multinational brands advertising in developing European countries, especially in the Balkan such as Romania, Albania, Montenegro, Serbia, Macedonia, Romania etc. where English and other European languages generate more positive attitude by triggering positive associations due to foreign brands being perceived as high quality and social status symbols (Batra et al., 2000). In line with the sociolinguistic perspective that a foreign language is an ethnocultural symbol, local brands can take advantage of this perception by congruently employing foreign languages that match the advertised/package product in terms of product-country fit (Usunier & Cestre, 2007). According to a recent Eurostat survey (2019), an overwhelming majority of young Balkans aspire



to learn one or more foreign languages and it this target audience that operators should focus on by employing multilingual advertising/packaging.

In the context of Romania, the food market is expected to grow annually by 5.08% (Statista, 2023) and both foreign and local brands may find it effective to tap into multilingual packaging and not to localize their packaging as studies have shown that it may incur manufacturing, logistics and marketing cost savings (Khan et al., 2015; Khan & Lee, (2020).

In conclusion, we believe that foreign languages in advertising is a fascinating and quite promising field of interest for researchers from international business, marketing, and linguistics. Moreover, it is of interest also to consumers as it sheds light on the complex role of language on consumer behavior.

**Author Contributions:** E.S. conceived the topic, accumulated the necessary literature review and synthesized the main theoretical framework of the review. M.M. & E.S. wrote the paper, including the tables and figures and added valuable suggestions to the article.

**Funding Source:** This research did not receive any specific grant from funding agencies in the public, commercial, or not-for-profit sectors.

### Acknowledgments

This research did not receive any specific grant from funding agencies in the public, commercial, or not-for-profit sectors.

### Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare that they do not have any conflict of interest.

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