Stylistic and Linguistic Features of English in Advertisements

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Advertising forms an integral and inevitable part of the business sector, where competitive fight is the hallmark feature. The aim of advertising is to be catchy and easy to remember. Advertisers use language quite distinctively. This involves making bizarre and controversial statements in unusual ways as well as communicating with people using simple, straightforward language. Advertising language has always tried to change styles and to break the conventions. Hence, change is one of the most fundamental stylistic principles of advertising language, also against the background of its function to create new attention and to move with the times. Word-play, manipulating and distorting the normal meanings of words are some of the well-known practices. Writers break the rules of language for effect, use words out of context and even make up new ones. This paper describes the appellative function and descriptive function of advertisements while exploring the usage of figures of speech and other stylistic devices that frequently occur in English in advertisements. The writer intends to explain the role of language advertisements, which is able to affect the readers, the listeners, and the audience.

1. Introduction

Advertisements have the power to persuade consumer’s desire to the product in society through image ideology association. Advertisement build image ideology of product then it also uses sign systems or language which has relationship with moral values. Language has a powerful influence over people and their behaviour. This is especially true in the fields of marketing and advertising. The choice of language to convey specific messages with the intention of influencing people is vitally important. Visual content and design in advertising have a very great impact on the consumer, but it is language that helps people to identify a product and remember it. Bearing in mind that this enormous creative potential is one of the fundamental features of the text type of advertising in general, it can be said, though, that the other basic features, such as the simple syntactic structure, the direct appeal to the recipients, the high rate of repetition etc. remain largely unaffected by the creative variation.
The appellative function is the first and foremost function of advertising language. However, this does not always become clearly obvious, and the function to appeal to the recipients and persuade them to buy is often concealed underneath or accompanied by other functions such as the descriptive, narrative, expressive or poetic and aesthetic function of language.

Descriptive language in advertising is most frequently found in product descriptions. However, the descriptive function of advertising texts is only fulfilled in very few cases. Narrative elements are essential to so-called testimonial ads where pseudo-users report on their experience of using the product. Advertising language takes on an expressive function when the sender of the message, i.e. the company advertising its products or services, makes statements about their history, philosophy and visions.¹

Last but not least, the language of advertising frequently uses figures of speech and other stylistic devices that are considered typical of poetic language, such as puns, metaphors, neologisms, alliteration, assonance or rhyme. This bears witness to the high degree of creativity involved in advertising language and contributes to the secondary function of advertising to entertain the recipients.

Due to its highly appellative character, advertising language is one of the most efficient vehicles of ideology. Leech has called the language of advertising “loaded language”², describing its intention to influence and change the will and the attitude of its recipients. A book on advertising by D. Bolinger even bears the title “Language: The Loaded Weapon”.³ This aim is achieved by using simple language with a relatively weak structure grouped around a simple unit of meaning that can be easily remembered. Hughes has called advertising “linguistic capitalism”, maintaining that “advertising is, from a linguistic point of view, a dubious manifestation of free enterprise in which the language, the common property of the speech community, becomes a natural resource which is exploited by agencies in the sectional interests of their clients’ marketing programmes.”⁴

Leech identifies four major functions of a successful advertisement, each of which has consequences on the language used to achieve those aims⁵:

**Attention Value**: Adverts need to attract attention and arouse curiosity. On the linguistic level, this can be achieved by breaking conventions of language use such as using wrong spelling, neologisms, puns, grammatical solecism, rhymes, semantic deviations and putting language in inappropriate or unorthodox contexts.
Readability: Once the advert has succeeded in catching the reader’s attention, this interest needs to be sustained, always reckoning with the fact that the reader searches for quick and simple information. Therefore, the style of adverts is mostly colloquial, using simple and familiar vocabulary. Leech has called this practice of using informal language associated with private contexts in public or business communication “public colloquialism”. Informal styles suggest an easy-going social relationship between reader and writer, and they are characterised by informal address terms, direct address to the reader, markers. In adverts, even written language shows many features of spoken language. First, advertising language is characterised by a high level of redundancy due to a high degree of repetition and parallelism. Elliptic sentence structures are another sign of spoken communication that are typical of advertising language. Moreover, phrasal verbs, idioms and contractions are characteristic features of advertising language bearing witness to its strong degree of colloquialism.

Memoability: The message of an advert needs to be remembered by the recipient and recognised as familiar. Repetition is one of the most frequent techniques used in advertising to enhance memorability. From a linguistic point of view, several linguistic devices are highly repetitive by definition and therefore feature fairly frequently in advertising language, such as alliteration (repeating the initial sound), metrical rhythm (repeating the same rhythmic pattern), rhyme (repeating the same ending sounds), grammatical parallelism (repeating the same grammatical structure) as well as semantic and syntactic repetition (i.e. using the same syntactic structure or words from the same word field) and lexical repetition. It has to be noted that repetition and variation often go hand in hand. Semantic repetition, i.e. the repeated use of different words from the same word field, is an incidence of lexical variation which at the same time functions as a repetitive device.

Moreover, the continuous repetition of slogans, brands and product names equally contributes to the memorability of the product and the related advertising messages.

Selling Power: Ultimately, advertisements want to sell. Prompting people to take the right kind of action can be best achieved by clear instructions as what to do next. Imperatives are ideally suited to tell people clearly what kind of action to take and therefore feature very frequently in advertising language. Not without reason are imperatives, one of the most frequently used syntactic forms in advertising language. Due to the tendency to use elliptical
sentence structures and omitting subjects, however, imperatives are often not perceived as open instructions but rather as shortened sentences or fragments of statements.

Moreover, advertising copy strives to be positive and to give its recipients a positive outlook. Prohibitions and negative forms are usually avoided, unless they are used as an element of surprise to create attention value. This approach is also justified from a psychological and cognitive perspective, as negative forms require a longer processing time than positive statements. The strategy of using positive forms also extends to the lexical level. Particularly adjectives with a positive meaning play a major role in advertising language.\textsuperscript{10}Leech quotes the following adjectives to be among the most frequent ones in advertising language: new, good / better / best, sure, delicious, free, fresh, nice.\textsuperscript{11}All of these words have an entirely positive meaning. John Caples advises advertisers to “avoid, when possible, headlines that paint the gloomy or negative side of the picture. Take the cheerful, positive angle.”\textsuperscript{12}

2. Linguistic Features of Advertisements

Advertising language often uses the techniques similar to those in poetic texts. The advantage of so-called mnemonic devices (rhyme, rhythm, alliteration and assonance) is the mnemonic technical effect. It guarantees that the receiver of the advertisement better remembers the text and recalls it at the right moment.

\textbf{Rhyme:} In English versification, standard rhyme consists of the repetition in the rhyming words. There is an echo in a rhyme and so it is a source of aesthetic satisfaction. There is pleasure in the sound itself and in the coincidence of sounds, and this pleasure is associated with the sense of music, of rhythm and beat, the pulse sense which is common to all human beings. Rhyme is a rhythmical device for intensifying the meaning as well as for binding the slogan together. Especially, phrases tied together with rhyme are effectively used in the slogans.

\textbf{Examples:} Sansui: —Bigger, Better, Flatter
\textbf{Park Avenue:} —A quest for the best

The above are short and crisp slogans for an effective impact. Use of a rhyme in the advertisements help to catch the attention of the readers, arouse their interest and create more impact.
Allusion: Allusion is a passing reference, without explicit identification, to a literary or historical place, person or to another literary work or passage. Most allusions serve to illustrate or expand upon or enhance a subject. It is often a kind of appeal to the reader to share some experience with the writer. It may enrich the work by association and assure an established literary tradition, and an ability on the part of audience to pick up the reference. A writer makes use of an allusion with the point of view of expressiveness with economy. The brand name itself is an allusion. These kinds of allusions are used in the language of signboards and advertisements.

Example: Hotel Taj
Hotel Ashoka
The name evokes all the splendor, grandeur and luxury of the royal courts.

Rhythm: The aim of advertising is to be catchy and easy to remember. One of the devices how copywriters can reach it is to use prosodic features – intonation, rhythm and lexical stress - because they have a great emotional and mnemonic effect. Copywriters often use language with rhythmical arrangement. The listener or reader need not notice it and he perceives it only subconsciously. The result is that the text is memorable and linguistically neat. If the rhythm has some regularity, it is called metre. “Metre is a pattern composed of rhythm groups (feet) consisting of similar or identical patterns of stressed and unstressed syllables. (…) Metrical scheme may easily pass unnoticed.”

3. Alliteration

Alliteration can help the slogans achieve the strong beating, rhythm needed to make it a repeatable sentence. By doing so, the sentences are more slogan style. They can be easily remembered by the viewers. Alliteration can also achieve an emphatic effect of the meaning. It is a phonological feature that brings together the words which begin with the same consonant or vowel sound. The use of alliteration plays a vital role in creating the sound effects in the stylistic features of advertising language.

Example: Fila: Functional, Fashionable, Formidable

4. Parallelism

This refers to a very common device consisting of phrases or sentences of similar
construction and meaning placed side by side, balancing each other. By use of parallelism, language is organized in a regular pattern. In rhyme and alliteration, there is a phonological parallelism, where there is repetition of sound patterns. In syntactic parallelism, there is a repetition of sound structures which makes language neatly organized. Parallelism is a technique to enhance the memorability of the speaker. Parallelism may be either syntactic repetition of structure or verbal repetition. A syntactic parallelism may establish a relationship of similarity or of contrast (anti-thesis).

Examples
1. Go green, Go Ford (Ford Icon)
2. Always the real thing, always Coca-Cola (Coca-Cola)
3. Take a big holiday on a small budget (Air India) (Contrasting parallelism)

Advertisers in full measure are now using the preserve of imaginative literature. The great diversity of the communication potential of language is really remarkable in the language of advertising.

5. Assonance

Assonance is a linguistic device, in which the same vowel in successive stressed syllables creates a vowel harmony. It is not so obvious type of scheme as alliteration. e.g. “How much reality can you handle?”

6. Graphic Aspect of The Text

The graphic aspect of the text deals only with graphic elaboration of the text. Almost all printed advertisements exploit from the fact of being printed. Copywriters have to decide how to make the layout. The selection of script, its color, type and size is the inevitable part of making a good advertisement. However, not only this may contribute to the final effect. The other possibilities are:
- Unpredictable spelling of words (“BeanzMeanz Heinz”, “4ever”, “Bar B Q”, “süper”, etc.)
- Higher frequency of low-frequent letters that produce outstanding sounds (“X” is very popular: “Xerox”, “Botox” and use of palato-alveolar consonants /ʃ/, /ʒ/, /dʒ/).
- Unexpected print of letters - whether the size or their shape is similar to some object and this object replaces the letter.
• Acronyms and initialisms with graphic exploitation – the letters of abbreviation create the first letters of words. The effect is highlighted by means of colour, size or layout:

• e.g. “XTROVERT. XPLOSIVE. LOVE THE COLOUR. COLOR XXL”

7. Transliteration

Transliteration is the transformation of foreign words into English. Usually the spelling of the foreign word is different but the pronunciation in these special cases is the same as English: e.g. “BE COINTREAUVERSIAL.” (COINTREAU is the name of French alcoholic drink)

The language of advertising is neither a variety nor a register. Rather, the language of advertising takes on any form that is required for communicating its message, thus covering and utilising the entire linguistic continuum. After all, speaking the language of the recipient is one of the major prerequisites of successful sales talk. It has to be noted that the description of the linguistic features of advertising language does not represent a comprehensive overview, but rather an operational selection with regard to which of the numerous linguistic features and details can actually be operationalized for serving the marketing-relevant functions of advertising.

8. References