

THE STYLISTICS OF ADVERTISING

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With the development of the technology and the massive diversity of the mass media, advertising influences the daily life of every person. Whatever the forms advertising takes, language is the main carrier of the message. Advertising language is very different from common language. It is a style of immediate impact and quick persuasion. It has its own features in morphology, syntax, and rhetorical devices. For a rhetorical device appeals to the imagination and makes the speech or writing interesting and appealing, advertisers often use various rhetorical devices to persuade the readers to buy different products.

1. Introduction

A *rhetorical figure* is defined as an artful arrangement of words or meanings designed to produce a specific effect on an audience (e.g., metaphor, alliteration). Aristotle defined rhetoric as “the faculty of discovering all the available means of persuasion in any given situation”. [Corbett, 1990:3] This definition suggests the idea that there is a set of formal devices capable of achieving certain effects, and that in any given situation some of these devices will be applicable and others not. Therefore, rhetoric tries to understand what works in the area of persuasive communication.

Rhetorical figures are very common in the headlines of contemporary magazine and newspaper advertising throughout the world. It means that these figures can be found across a variety of audiences, magazines, newspapers, product categories, and message strategies.

Cortland L. Bouvee defines advertising as “the non-personal communication of information usually paid for and usually persuasive in nature about products, services or ideas by identified sponsors through the various media.” [Bovee & Arens 1992:7] Nowadays, with the development of the technology and of the mass media, advertising has influenced people pervasively in their daily life. However, whatever the promotional strategies advertising takes, language is the main carrier of message all along, as *The Language of Advertising*, by Vestergaard & Schroder, says, “Advertising takes many forms, but in most of them language is of crucial importance.” [Vestergaard, Schroder, 1985:140] Advertising language is a style of immediate impact and rapid persuasion. The use of English in advertising is a global phenomenon. As Ingrid Piller points out, “English is the most frequently used language in advertising messages in non-Englishspeaking countries (besides the local language)”. [Piller, 2003:175]

American Marketing Manager’s Handbook points out that an advertisement should have four functions: AIDA, which represent four words - Attention, Interest, Desire, Action.

1. **Attention** - a good advertisement should attract the consumer to direct their attention to the product of it.
2. **Interest** - the introduction and publicity of an advertisement should arouse consumers’ great interest.
3. **Desire** - the publicity of advertising should stimulate consumers’ desire to buy the product, and make them realize that this product is just what they want.
4. **Action** - the advertising makes consumer to response to the advertising information and evoke them to take the action of purchasing.

2. Advertising Language

The wide use of advertising has created a special style of English – **advertising English** whose unique characteristics, simple language and important attraction makes it different from other kinds of languages.

In order to send information, **advertising English must be vivid, usual, emotional, and attractive.** In what follows, we will analyze some features of advertising and the way in which **morphology, syntax and rhetorical devices** are used in English advertisements in order to convey the message to the buyer.

2.1. Morphology in Advertising

The function of advertising is to provide information, attract consumer, and promise quality. Therefore, advertisement must contain **impelling language**, and for this it must use popular and oral language, easy to understand and memorize.

1. Simple and formal language

For example: “I couldn’t believe it, until I tried it!”, “I’m impressed! I’m really impressed!”, “I love it!”, “You’ve gotta try it!”. The former is an advertisement of a microwave oven. The words in it are very simple and oral. It uses the slang “gotta”, which means “got to” in American English, **to give an impression that this advertisement comes from the real life.**

2. Misspelling and Coinage - In some of advertisements, there are some some words misspelled on purpose, or some suffixes or prefixes added to the common words. Although the new words still keep the original meanings, they are quite different from the original words in spelling, which will make the advertisement more interesting and attractive.

e.g. First of all, because now Yoplait is thicker. Second of all, because it’s creamier. Third of all, because it’s still 100% natural and really very good for you. Fourth of all, because to me Yoplait tastes better than all the other *Yoyurts*. And fifth of all, because...well, just because ...” [<http://www.yoplait.com/>]

In addition, some prefixes or suffixes like “super-”, “ex-”, “-er”, “-est” ...etc, are often used to stress the high quality of the product.

3. Loanwords

The most frequently used loanwords are **French and Spanish.**

e.g. Perrier...with added *je ne sais quoi*. [<http://www.perrier.com/EN/index2.asp>]
The meaning of *je ne sais quoi* is “I don’t know what”. The purpose to use this simple French is to show the French flavor of this drink. The loanwords in some advertisement are good methods to express the exoticism of the products.

e.g. **Experience Fiesta** through the eyes of real people. [<http://www.fordvehicles.com/cars/fiesta/>]

The meaning of the word Fiesta is “party”.

4. Use of verbs - The most frequently used verbs and phrasal verbs are: *try, ask, get, take, let, send for, use, call, make, come on, hurry, see, give, come, remember, discover, serve, introduce, choose, and look for.* It has been noticed that these verbs are particularly used in beauty industry advertisements.

e.g. Our eye shadows, liners, brow products and mascaras will *get* you gorgeous in a glance. [<http://www.maybelline.com/product/eye/index.aspx>,]

e.g. Moisture Wear Make-up. It *gives* life to the look and feel of your skin. Moisturewear Blush. It *brings* radiance to the look of your skin [http://www.covergirl.com/beauty_products/blush/]

Good look and young skin are always the things that a women pursue. The use of the verb *give* will make this product end up with big sale. Similarly, the word *bring* is also very appropriate. Radiance of skin is the thing that almost every woman wants and needs.

5. Use of Adjectives - The purpose of advertising is to publicize products, therefore it is necessary to describe many aspects of the product such as size, color, nature, and quality. During this process, **adjective plays a vital role.** The most frequently used

adjectives are: *new, crisp, good/better/best, fine, free, big, fresh, great, delicious, real, full, sure, pure, easy, bright, clean, extra, safe, special, rich*

e.g. *Light.Crisp.Refreshing.* [<http://www.pepsi.com/>]

e.g. It releases a *fresh* layer of microlight makeup for each application, allowing you to achieve a look of *pure* perfection that's skin brightening, non-drying, and comfortable to wear every time.

[<http://shop.elizabetharden.com/product/index.jsp?productId=3433906&cp=2860507&parentPage=family>]

2.2. Syntax in Advertising

1. Simple sentences- It will get better effect to use simple sentences than compound sentences, because the readers will lose interest in reading complex sentences.

e.g. Maybe she's born with it. Maybe it's Maybelline. [<http://www.maybelline.com/index.html>]

2. Interrogative sentences and imperative sentences - Interrogative sentences are quick and effective to get the readers' response.

e.g. Do you want the good news or the good news? First the good news: use head & shoulders regularly and you can have 100% flake free hair. And the good news? Well, head & shoulders is also a great way to achieve beautiful-looking hair that feels soft, silky and manageable. [<http://www.headandshoulders.com/en-US/justthefacts/dandruff-treatment.aspx>]

The imperative sentences have a meaning of claiming, calling and commanding, similarly the goal of advertising is to persuade consumers to buy a product or service.

e.g. Run with us! or Just do it! [http://nikerunning.nike.com/nikeos/p/nikeplus/en_US?sitesrc=uslp]

e.g. Join us in sharing the simple pleasures in life that motivate and inspire you.

[<http://www.pepsi.com/>]

3. Minor Clause - Minor clause contains simple elements emphasizing the key words. It could not only reduce the length and cost, but also disseminate information more effectively.

e.g. Goodyear. We discover, you explore. [http://eu.goodyear.com/uk_en/index_flash.jsp]

2.3. Rhetorical Devices Used in English Advertising

Rhetorical devices are used to make the thought more striking and effective. A fresh rhetorical device appeals to the imagination, creates mental pictures and makes the speech or writing impressive and interesting. Due to this, **advertisers often use various rhetorical devices to increase the readability and appeal** of an advertisement and to get consumers' interest of buying the product.

1. Personification - Personification is a figure of speech in which a thing or abstraction is represented as a person. The use of personification in advertising will endow the product with human emotion, and will make them amicable to consumers.

e.g. *Kleenex says* bless you. [<http://www2.kleenex.com/USA/history/index.aspx>]

e.g. *Cottonelle. Looking out* for the family. [http://www.cottonelle.com/product_cottonelle.aspx]

2. Simile and Metaphor - Simile is a figure of speech comparing two unlike things, often introduced with the words "like", "as", or "than". [<http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/simile>]

e.g. Lightweight, extra caring formula for dry and damaged hair. Power hold and a soft touch *like Cashmere*. [<http://www.schwarzkopf-consumer.com/index.php?id=585>]

Metaphor is a figure of speech in which a word or phrase literally denoting one kind of object or idea is used in place of another to suggest a similarity or analogy between them.

[<http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/metaphor>] Metaphors can be used visually in the picture or verbally in the headline and/or copy. Since the nature of metaphors involves expressing and experiencing one thing in terms of another unexpected object, consumers exposed to a metaphoric headline or picture in an ad will search and tap into their existing

knowledge and perceptions of the conventions and context of the metaphor so as to comprehend the message.

e.g. **Go for the Gold**

The brightest *star* in electronics. [<http://www.tesoon.com/english/htm/02/5273.htm>]

3. Pun - Pun is a play on words, or the usually humorous use of a word in such a way as to suggest two or more of its meanings or the meaning of another word similar in sound e.g. American *Home* has an *edifice* complex. [<http://www.americanhome.com/currentads.html>]

e.g. **The more we progress, the better you advance.**

[<http://www.michelin.co.uk/michelinuk/index.jsp>]

4. Repetition

In some advertisements, repetition is used to stress certain information.

e.g. *Designed* to test limits, *designed* to be noticed – Bulova
[<http://www.bulova.com/brands/adfinder.aspx>]

5. Rhyming- One of the best techniques for bringing in the brand name is to make the slogan rhyme with it. An ad slogan is better if it reflects the brand's personality. By this kind of rhyming, the brand name is highlighted.

e.g. **The flavour of a Quaver is never known to waver.**

[<http://www.adslogans.co.uk/ans/creslo02.html>]

e.g. It's the Viakal *fizz* that does the *bizz*! [*Idem, ibid.*]

6. Alliteration - Alliteration can help the slogans achieve the strong beating rhythm needed to make it a repeatable sentence.

e.g. **Fila: Functional... Fashionable... Formidable...** [*Idem, ibid.*]

3. Advertising Headlines

A complete written advertisement (newspaper, magazine) is usually made up of **headline, body copy, slogan, illustrations and colors, trademark, and brand name.** These elements are named **visual elements.** Another kind of elements - audio elements - are advertising commentary, advertising music and advertising sounds. In these elements, headline, body copy and slogan are the most important elements in an advertisement. In this paper, we are going to tackle only the concept of *headline*.

3.1. Headline. Definition and Concept

Headline is the theme and centre of advertisement. It is usually in the most conspicuous position of advertisement to attract the attention of consumers. A headline functions as the main title of the text, often written in a larger font than the rest of the text. According to Collins Cobuild Advanced Learner's English Dictionary, a subheading can be defined as a secondary title usually placed under the headline which gives additional information on both the headline and the accompanying text. [Cf. Collins Cobuild Advanced Learner's English Dictionary, 2006] Leigh states that a headline's importance in a text (in his case, print advertisements) is based on their function as a slogan to the entire text and as an attraction to the reader. [Cf. Leigh, 2008:17]

Headlines are used in various sorts of texts, ranging from newspaper articles to essays, academic theses, advertisements and even pictures. The position of the headline, according to Iarovici et al. is usually in front of the text, and its emphasis is often done by large and visible fonts, [Iarovici, Amel, 1989:441] therefore making it the window to the following text and thus important. Iarovici et al. argue that a headline cannot stand alone, and would not even work by itself, but always needs to be attached to a text. [*Idem, ibid.*] As Leigh argues, headlines can be analysed from very different points of view. [Leigh, 2008:17] According to Iarovici et al., a headline has two functions, a *semantic function* and a *pragmatic function*. [Iarovici et al., 1989:442] The former means that a headline tells the reader

something about the following text, and the latter that the task of a headline is to form a connection between the author and the reader. The semantic function is made visible through the associations to the subject in the headline and the pragmatic function through rhetoric means and thus the linguistic features of the headline.[*Idem*, p.445.]The author shows his appreciation of the reader's capacity to understand and notice linguistic features by using different linguistic methods to enhance the effect of the headline, and this forms the notion of shared knowledge, as Iarovici et al. state [*Idem*, p.444.] Lennon states that headlines in newspapers and magazines are not usually written by the author of the accompanying text, but instead most publications have a copy editor who is in charge of the headlines in particular. Lennon also argues that this can mean that as the responsibility of selling the texts to the audience is on one person, the quality and inventiveness of the headlines might be in jeopardy.[Lennon, 2004:80]

3.1.2. Stylistic Features of Headlines

1. Conciseness – The ideal headline is considered to be formed of **five to eight words**. Due to the fact that an entire idea or thought must be conveyed in those few words, headlines are often elliptical or violate grammatical rules.

2. Direct address – A headline must be **customer specific**.

3. Nominal or block style - If a headline contains 5 to 10 words and it is supposed to express a valid idea with these limited resources, the writers have to be economical. According to Sternkopf, "function words are an unnecessary burden, because they are semantically empty. The only frequently used function words are the pronouns *you* and *I*." [Sternkopf, 2005:237] A headline should contain verbs expressing actions and nouns conveying properties, ideas, content.

4. Active and positive approach – Headlines should contain active constructions. Passive and negations should be avoided because they are often misinterpreted. The recipient perceives the active, the positive, the first semantic level of the meaning of a word.

4. Conclusions

Advertisement as a means of representation has been so frequently used that we can see it from the range of TV to the newspaper. As an important part of advertisements, advertising English is increasingly becoming the object studied by some linguists and psychologists. Advertising language as a special kind of language is very different from common language. It has its own features in morphology, syntax, and rhetorical devices. Advertisement should have the function to persuade and attract consumers so that people are interested in the product which is propagated in the advertisement. Therefore, in order to successfully promote the sales of their products, the advertisement makers spare no efforts to work hard on the content and do their best to draw the attention of consumers through syntactic and rhetoric.

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