Investigating the Basic features of the Language of Advertisement

ELREBAB HASSAN SAAD ELNOUR
PhD student
Sudan University of Science and Technology
Dr. MAHMOUD ALI AHMED OMER
Supervisor
Professor of English Language and literature

Abstract

This study aims to investigate and discuss the basic features of the language of advertisement. In effect, this study is intended to shed light on the basic features of the language of advertisements and to investigate the role of culture on advertisements. To achieve these goals and in an attempt to answer the study questions, some main subjects, topics and points are presented and discussed.

On the whole, this paper looks at the basic features which are essential and indispensable for the language of advertisement in details.

Keywords: advertisement, basic features, language of advertisement.

1. Introduction:

Advertising is a form of communication, and people find themselves participating in many acts of communication every day. It is important to remember that the almost unconscious act of getting the basic meaning of an advertisement is quite different from further issues of interpreting regarding whether one find an advertisement convincing or not, whether one think that it might influence the behavior or not, or whether one approve of the kind of scene and social values that are apparent in the advertisement.

Advertisements can be studied in terms of appearance, the language used in them, their structure, their meaning, and the

reactions they cause. By studying them in these terms one is able to investigate the advertisements in order to discover how they work, and what makes us buy those products. By answering questions like why do slogans appeal to people, and why do different adverts all use a similar structure, people are able to discover much about what attracts to people as consumers, and investigate how advertising companies manipulate this to their benefit. It would be interesting to discover if all advertisements mean the same things to the same people, if they are truly universal, or if this is just an impression that they want people to believe, and can everyone react to advertisements in the same way, or are people as individuals far more independent than advertisers would have us believe.

In this paper the researcher tries to investigate the basic features of the language of advertisement as they are excellent examples of persuasive advertising texts.

2. The Problem of the Study :

Advertising is an operation used to make consumers buy goods almost they do not need them. The agencies used different language features of advertisement to persuade consumers, it is observed that written advertisements lack audio devices, so, the text depend on the shapes and colors of letters. The basic thing in written advertisement is the culture and the society where the production will be sold. Understanding advertising therefore, requires an understanding of the consumer culture.

3. Objectives of the Study:

The study is carried out to achieve the following objectives:
1. To investigate the basic features of the language of advertisement.
2. To discuss the role of culture on advertisement.

4. Questions of the Study :

The study is intended to answer the following questions:
1. What are the basic features of the language of advertisement?
2. What is the role(s) of culture on advertisement?

5. Hypotheses of the Study:

The following hypotheses are postulated:
1. There are certain features of the language used in advertisement.

2.   Culture plays a great role in advertisements formula.

6.   Definition of Advertisement :

There are many definitions of the term advertisement (the Encyclopedia Britannica 2000)   defined the term advertisement as:

> The techniques and practices used to bring products, services, opinions, or causes to public notice for the purpose of persuading the public to respond in a certain way toward what is advertised. Most advertising involves promoting a good that is for sale, but similar methods are used to encourage people to drive safely, to support various charities, or to vote for political candidates, among many other examples. In many countries advertising is the most important source of income for the media (e.g., newspapers, magazines, or television stations) through which it is conducted.

7.   Language of Advertisements:

Cook (1990:129) argued that the language of advertisement tends to 'focus on the code, upon the language itself' to provide a valuable introduction to literature and its language.

The analysis of language of advertising from linguistic point of view is very important as it helps people to identify the product and remember it. Crystal (2010:212) stated that every bit of the language in an advertisement is very carefully chosen so that it has the right rhetorical effect on the listener or reader. The people who write advertisements can take months before they get the words exactly right.

Crystal (1987:22) pointed out that, as a tool of communication the language is used to deliver specific messages with the intention of influencing, convincing and inferring people.

By studying advertisements themselves, it is possible to investigate and judge the language and structure of advertisements. In order to study advertisements for these reasons, one would have to approach them with either a similar frame of mind in order to fully appreciate them. Or to look at the way in which the audience is manipulated and how the 'hard sell' is conducted. Studying adverts as an isolated text, one is able to discover not only how they work, and which particular features belong only to advertisements, but also why people appreciate them as they do.

Adverts are made to appeal to society's needs, both social and material, in the hunt for warmth, food, friendship and love. Through

investigation of advertisements it is possible to discover other 'needs' of society, and what is seen as important, a comparison of adverts would show the difference in society from commercialism, and a 'bigger is better' attitude, to a more tearing and sharing', environmentally friendly perspective.

The Text

Advertisements make it easier for learners to understand the language.Davis(1997:14) mentioned that by providing a visual context, in television commercials, words are often repeated in the audio and visual channels, thus providing further support. Copywriters love to play with the material form of language, with the shape, typeface, and layout of letters, words, and sentences.

Advertisements have complex sets of addressers and addressees; there may be one voice in the advertisement sending a message to a single group of people, or several different voices, more than one message and a number of different audience groups. To refer to this Cook (1992:65)used the term 'paralanguage'. It can range from using an inverted R to suggest Russianness, to replacing words with icons (as in the slogan 'I love NY', in which 'love' is represented by a red heart), to laying a text out in such a way that it resembles a text of another genre. So-called advertorials, for example, are advertisement disguised to look like real newspaper or magazine articles.

In order to capture attention, convey the message and persuade the consumer, advertising texts use a range of manipulative language devices. Moreover, different cultures may have different expectations with regard to stylistic choices, language use and other preferences in the same genre. The text was carefully crafted to create a consistent message about the advertisement. If there is a headline, how does it grab put attention? What does the main text tell us about the product or service? Does it directly refer to the product or the service's benefits and factual attributes? Or does the advertisement prefer to sell the reader on the product's lifestyle benefits instead. How does the text relate to the images? This is what called coherence.

Advertising texts are of great value for the analyses from linguistic point of view. Linguists are interested in language of advertising because they want to know how particular language works in this type of discourse, which linguistic means are used here and how advertising language is changing in the course time.

English advertising exploits from the high adaptability of the English language. English enables the creators of advertisements to use word puns, figurative language, and to mix individual styles and types of texts. Advertising unifies (united) language, pictures, music; it contains information, invokes emotions and imaginations, it can capture all five senses and, besides it, it has social and practical.

Text is a structured unit consisting of smaller units Quirl et al (1985:434) mentioned that, it is "a stretch of language which makes coherent sense in the context of its units. It may be spoken or written; it may be as long as a book or as short as a cry for help."

Advertising is a type of text. One can find advertising texts in printed materials or, in spoken form, broadcasted by radio or TV. In printed advertising, the text serves only for catching the reader's attention, provide information about the product or serve (the link between the image and its context; some guidance to the reader) for the image. Goddard (1998:3) argued that, although advertisements are ephemeral in that each one is short-lived, their effects are longstanding and cumulative, they leave traces of themselves, behind, which combine to form a body of messages about culture that produced them.

Graphological Devices

Graphological devices are features associated with visual aspects of text; space is as important a consideration as verbal and non-verbal language. Empty spaces are as meaningful as fill ones as explained by Goddard (1998:38) where one expect language to occur, its non-occurrence is in itself an attention-seeking device.

Space

According to Goddard (1998:23) the space is drawing attention to what should be present. But space can refer to 'what should be present' in other ways, too. Because one knows that advertising costs a lot of money, we expect adverts to use their allotted space in order to value get of money. If they do not take this opportunity, we can perceive them to be self-effecting not wishing to introduce upon our time and attention. In the case, text can be get attention by appearing to deny their own impact, and spaces can be read as polite refused to bully the reader.

Cohesion

Cohesion is a term from the work on textual structure by given to the logical linkage between textual units, as indicated by overt formal markers of the relations between texts. In English, cohesion is most simply marked by connectives such as: *and*, *but*, or *so*. Each piece of text must be cohesive with the adjacent ones for a successful communication. However, readers are very creative interpreters, and formal properties of cohesion are typically not marked overtly.

Coherence

The notion of coherence as a way of talking about the relations between texts which may or may not be indicated by formal markers of cohesion. Advertising language tends not to use clear markers of cohesion, but is interpreted as being coherent.

In print advertising, the use of tropes (metaphor) provides viewers with incomplete information or vague and implied messages that do not mean exactly what they say or say exactly what they mean. To arrive at a particular meaning of an advertisement, a reader will then make interpretations based on what is mutually known or the cultural conventions that exist to assign meaning to it. All figurative language is conveyed by comparisons between similar entities, although it is not presented in precisely the same way and it is this diversity that adds to their appeal in advertising. Metaphors and puns are the most frequently used figures of speech in advertisement and through this usage advertisers are able to control the manner in which a message is communicated. In addition the possible meanings that are conveyed to a given audience through such usage will be explored. Nonetheless, the use of figurative language is not always clear or precise and as Verschueren (1995:128) pointed out, "in no case is it possible for a language to say everything that the speaker wishes to say."

In terms of figurative meaning, the general assumption is that people understand figurative language by first analyzing the literal meaning of a sentence before they infer the intended figurative meaning by deriving an interpretation that makes the utterance adhere to the principle of cooperative communication.

Metaphor

Metaphor was traditionally viewed as a figure of speech characteristic of language alone. It has defined as a cognitive system that structures our thoughts and behavior rather than merely a language phenomenon. Thompson (1996:165) mentioned that, metaphor is more than just a literary device –it plays a fundamental part in the way people represent social reality. The use of metaphor is central in the way it positions what is described and the reader's relationship to this.

Conceptual metaphor plays an important role in advertising, part of selling power of an advertisement depends on how selected well-chosen the conceptual metaphor is that the picture and/or the words used in advertisement attempt to evoke in people. An appropriately selected metaphor work wonders in promoting the sale of an item.

Puns in Advertising

As Langholz- Leymore (1987:324) explained that the use of rhetorical figures has been a strategy employed within advertising and as this usage has become more and more pervasive, advertisers are under increasing pressure to make their products stand out from the clutter of other advertisements. Leigh (1994:17) explained that the primary function of rhetorical figures in advertising is to "get across key selling points to desired prospects in a manner that attracts attention and stimulates them to give serious consideration to the product".

Compared with explicit language, the use of puns has a significant effect on the cognitive processing, attitude and memory and as such will be processed more deeply. This extra processing helps to sustain the audience's attention for longer and makes the advertisements that more memorable.

8. Linguistic Features

The language of advertising belongs to so called 'loaded language Leech (1972:25). Wikipedia defines it as "the writing or speech, which implies an accusation of demagoguery or of pandering to the audience." Leech says that loaded language has the aim to change the will, opinions, or attitudes of its audience. He claims that advertising differs from other types of loaded language (such as political journalism and religious oratory) in having a very precise material goal – changing the mental disposition to reach the desired kind of behavior – buying a particular kind of product.

To persuade people to buy the product is the main purpose of the advertising.

Among such great competition, the producer wants to demonstrate the uniqueness of his product. He wants to differentiate it from the rest by trying to find new techniques of advertisement. Also, the advertisement texts must be more attractive and more unexpected. They must catch the attention of the audience and then identify the product. The reader or listener must give it some thought and the result is manipulation with him in order to buy the product. Leech sets following principles of advertising texts: Attention value, Readability (by means of simple, personal, and colloquial style), Memorability (most important in the process of advertising is to remember the name of the product) and Selling power Cook(1996:2)explained that one could analyze the whole discourse of advertising, it means "the interaction of all elements that participate in advertising discourse: participants, function, substance, pictures, music, a society, paralanguage, language, and a situation, other advertising and other discourse."

Phonological Aspect

Phonology is sound system of language also plays its part in the creation of meaning, sound symbolism where one associate sounds with particular ideas in advertisement. Goddard(1998:83) argued that 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 technical effect. It guarantees that the receiver of the advertisement better remembers the text and recalls it at the right moment.

Rhyme

Concise Oxford English Dictionary (2004) defined rhyme as a pattern of "identity of sound between words or verse-lines extending from the end to the last fully accented vowel and not further." Rhyme refers to sounds, not spelling. It is commonly found in jingles, slogans and headlines, e.g. "Eukanuba gives their teeth the strength they need."

Rhythm

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. Even the scientists cannot explain why has rhythm and repetition so powerful attraction on human mind. Copywriters often use language with rhythmical arrangement the aim of advertising is to be catchy and easy to remember.

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.)".

Alliteration

Alliteration can be defined as literary technique, in which successive words (more strictly, stressed syllables) begin with the same consonant sound or letter." It is widely used in advertising slogans. There are 20 consonant sounds in English, but those that are made by stopping the air-stream completely (p, b, m, n, t, d, k and g) are according to Myers(1997:34) most used, because stand out more than others.

"**P**erformance **P**restige **P**assion for Innovation"

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. "How much re**a**lity c**a**n you h**a**ndle?"

Homophones

In English, there are many words that sound the same but are spelled differently. Linguists call them homophones. Copywriters use homophony to create puns in advertising language. This kind of play works best in print. As the fantastic example we show following example:

"Sainsbury's have discovered that the finest whisky is kept under loch and quay." Myers (1997:43) argued that "The spelling and pictures make us think of the relevant Scottish meanings first, but we must also recall the idiomatic phrase that fits in the sentence, lock and key. Each of two interpretations – as spelling or as sound – has some support."

9. Advertising and Culture

Davis (1997:134) argued that, advertisement are valuable sources of information about a culture, both for what they show (paralanguage; slices of everyday life), and for the cultural values that they reflect. The subject matter of advertisement also ties in well with many common topics in language teaching, such as sports, transport, food, clothing, and environmental issues.

Advertisers assume that people can make connections between advertisements and others texts that are well known in their culture. Such connections fall under the heading of 'intertextuality', a concept that Cook has refined by distinguishing between the intro-discoursal relationship of advertisement 'containing the voices of another example of the same discourse type' and the inter-discoursal.

Even when advertisements are not exploiting other texts, they may well be exploiting a culture in other ways, especially the values that are shared by members of a community. In some cases the advertisement will simply reflect a community's values, but Fairclough(1989:207) has argued that it goes further than this, and that advertising has actually provided 'models for consumer needs, values, tastes and behavior'.

Advertising is part of the changing social, economic, and cultural environment, and its visuals might have been created in a way that could reflect those changes that people would want to adjust themselves to. Another way of linking advertising and its visuals to society and culture is the cultural approach to advertising. Cultural historians argue that advertising is an important window through which different aspects of society and culture can be explained. But also, the advertising itself can be explained to determine how it might have been shaped by society. This approach recognizes advertising not only as a window to culture but also a mirror that reflects the culture, or the cultures.

Nixon (2004:68) stated that in order to understand advertising in particular, and commercial applications of creativity in what are increasingly termed the 'creative industries', there is a need to understand the workplace cultures of people engaged in creative advertising.

Goddard (1998:79) mentioned that, for readers to understand the references that are being made, they have to have some knowledge of the textual systems in their culture which called cultural knowledge.

In that different cultures have different categories texts and different rules about how they operate. As well as having different structural rules about how the text works different cultures bring different attitudes and values to the reading of any text. If advertisers do not take account of these differences, they need to expect difficulty.

The good example for cultural varieties was the Volvo Trucks Company, when they used same advertisement to all of Europe countries, they failed have consumers. But when they check back the methods depended on Europeans culture they have response. That it is to say, according to Swiss culture, they prefer the safety in cars and trucks, French audience look for status, Swedish prefer economy and German like its performance.

Conclusions

From all mentioned discussion in this paper, it can be said that the language of advertisement has certain features that distinguishes it from the language used in other texts and it is closely related to culture.

Bibliography:

1. Bakanauskas, A.(2004). Marketingo komunikacija Kaunas:VDU leifykla.
2. Cohen, R.(1987). The Ad Game: Recreating Creativity. Toronto. CCH Canadian Limited.
3. Cook, G.(1992). The Discourse of Advertising: New York: Routledge.
4. Dyer, G.(1982). Advertising as Communication. London: Routledge.
5. Foster, T.(2001. The ART and Science of Advertising Slogan. United Kingdom.
6. Goddard, A.(2003). The Language of Advertising: New York: Routledge.
7. Goddard, A.(2003). The Language of Advertising London: Routledge.
8. Huber, R.& A.Snider.(2005).Influencing Through Argument. Amsterdam: International Debate Education.
9. Leech, Geoffrey, N.(1996). English in Advertising: A Linguistic study of Advertising in Great Britain London: Longmans.
10. Mahadi, T.(2014). The Language of Advertisement and its Features and Characteristics: Investigating the Issue from a Deeper View, Universiti Sains Malaysia, Malaysia.
11. Shortis, T.(2001). The Language of ICT, London, Routledge.
12. Concise Oxford English Dictionary 2004