

# Advertisement Analysis: Syntactic Devices in English Magazines

Sattar Motaqed \*, Annapurna. M. , PhD\*\*

\*Department of linguistics, Manasagangothri, Mysore University

\*\* Department of studies in Anthropology, Manasagangothri, Mysore University

**Abstract-** This study tried to analyze language of advertising from linguistic point of view and specifies linguistic means used in advertising texts. To this end one hundred and fifty English advertising slogans taken from various magazines were depicted and analyzed based on syntactic linguistic means used. The work brings knowledge about the use of syntactic linguistic devices in print advertising. By analytical method, author found out the type and frequency of syntactic devices used in advertising slogans, even in relation to product specialization. Findings also shows that declarative sentences are the most frequent type of sentence as used in slogans.

**Index Terms-** advertisement analysis, linguistic means, syntactic devices

## I. INTRODUCTION

Advertisements are very important as many commodity providers depend on them to improve their sales. For example, Krista (2004) examines the effects of a good advertisement. She states that a good advertisement does more than explain and inform. It also persuades. It translates your facts and features into customer benefits. Krista's words imply that copywriters of advertising have to be careful to produce effective adverts to best incite and encourage the consumer.

Through observation of advertising, it becomes clear that exploring the linguistic means in advertisements slogans. is of crucial significance without which there can be a problematic issue due to the complexity of advertisement slogans and the difficulty of the discourse. The aforementioned problematic issues may lead advertisements slogans inaccuracies that may cause message distortion. To deal with such problems, analyzing linguistic mean to a great extent can help solve the problem. There are very few works on this topic and unfortunately there is no research conducted directly targeted this topic in English advertisements slogans. Hence this study focuses on the analysis of discourse means in English advertisements slogans.

## II. PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The aim of this research analysis is to determine the use rate of linguistic means used in advertising slogans, even in relation to product specialization. This study examines a sample of 270 advertisements slogans. Concerning on analysis of linguistic means in English advertisements slogans.. The study identifies and categorizes the linguistic means in advertisements.

Specifically, this study focuses on analyzing the advertising slogans. by special concentration on linguistic means.

## III. SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

The significance of this study arises from the scarcity of research on this topic. This study is considered a pioneering step in this field because through research, to the best of the researcher's knowledge, it is noted that just few papers tackle the topic of advertising slogan analysis by concentration on linguistic means. However, there is very few academic published works available that has directly dealt with the linguistic problems of English advertisements slogans. Therefore this study has focused on analyzing advertisements slogans. by concentration on linguistic means.

## IV. QUESTIONS AND HYPOTHESES OF THE STUDY

1. What is the percentage of slogans containing ellipsis?
2. What is the percentage of slogans containing parallelism?
3. On the basis of observation of the research sample, we suppose, that the most widely used sentence type is the imperative sentence type and the second most widely used is the declarative sentence type.

## V. LINGUISTIC MEANS USED IN ADVERTISING LANGUAGE

Leech (1972) writes that the language of advertising belongs to so called 'loaded language'. 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. He is 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. Copywriters create uncommon, surprising, interesting texts with catchy slogans or phrases. The reader or listener must give it some thought and the

result is manipulation with him in order to buy the product. Leech (1972, p. 27) 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. The last principle is crucial. Ogilvy (1985) in his book says: that he does not regard advertising as entertainment or an art form, but as a medium of information. When He writes an advertisement, He doesn't want you to tell me that you find it 'creative'. He wants you to find it so interesting that you *buy the product*.

We may identify the advertising as a type of discourse, because it can tell us a good deal about our own society and our own psychology Discourse is text and context together. We 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, a situation, other advertising and other discourse. Although such analysis would be complete, it would be very difficult to elaborate it in such limited space. For that reason, in this work we will analyze the language of advertising from the linguistic, especially phonological, lexical and morphological, syntactic and semantic point of view. This study has focused on syntactic aspect as a sub category of linguistic means . it also provides examples and describe the syntactic devices as most commonly used linguistic devices and figures of speech in advertising printed text.

## 5.1 Syntactic aspect

### 5.1. 1 Sentence types

We may distinguish four sentence types: declaratives, interrogatives, imperatives and exclamatives. Following definitions of each of them are quoted from Quirk et al. (1990): Declaratives are sentences in which it is normal for the subject to be present and to precede the verb. Interrogatives are sentences, which are formally marked in one of two ways: yes-no interrogatives (an operator is placed in front of the subject), and *wh*-interrogatives (an interrogative *wh*-element is positioned initially and there is generally subject-operator inversion). Imperatives are sentences, which normally have no overt grammatical subject, and whose verb has the base form. Exclamatives are sentences which have an initial phrase introduced by *what* or *how*, usually with subject-verb order. To these types of sentences are normally associated four discourse functions: statements, questions, directives and exclamations. However, the association between syntactic type and discourse function does not always match, as the following case shows:

“Give me a glass of water.” is an imperative, a directive.

“Could you give me a glass of water?” is an interrogative, but semantically it is a directive, more precisely an indirect command. A statement can also function as an indirect command: “I'm thirsty.”

So can exclamations: “What a fresh cold water!”

Because most advertisements approximate to every-day conversation, there is relatively free selection of sentence types. Leech (1972) offers us the results of the research dealt with the frequency of sentence types in English advertising. He claims that in the television sample, over one in thirty major

independent clauses were interrogative, and over one in four major independent clauses were imperative. Therefore, according to the results of the research, we can say, that the second most widely used sentence type after declarative type are the imperative clauses.

However, this research does not say anything about the frequency of direct and indirect commands. We cannot identify the imperative sentence type with discourse function. Imperative is not the same as directive. We may say that the imperative is always a directive but a directive need not necessarily be an imperative.

Copywriters use imperatives, because it creates a sense of “one person is talking to another because all ads are urging us to some action. Leech establishes certain groups of verbal items, which are especially frequent in imperative clauses:

- Items, which have to do with the acquisition of the product: get, buy, ask for, choose, etc.
- Items, which have to do with the consumption or use of the product: have, try, use, enjoy, etc.
- Items, which act as appeals for notice: look, see, watch, remember, make sure, etc.

Prohibitive warnings are very infrequent. Only about one imperative in fifty is accompanied by a negative form.

Myers (1997) accentuates the absence of ‘please’ in imperative sentences and lack of politeness. One explanation may be that in our culture we cut out the politeness devices if we are asking somebody to do something that benefits the hearer, not the speaker, like in phrase “Take a seat. Why do advertisements use questions? It is for the same reason as why they use commands: it evokes the sense of personal communication in the reader. It causes that the reader cooperates with the text having his own individual situation in mind. Although the copywriters cannot expect the direct answer and feedback (as we have mentioned in section about public communication above), they expect the readers to answer themselves silently. Another reason is the presupposition. Presuppositions are present in any communication and many questions presuppose something. Here comes an example of it: Why do leading beauty experts and models use and recommend Perfectil?

In this case, we can deduce and belief from the content of this advertisement that beauty experts and models use and recommend Perfectil. In advertising language, presupposition is very frequent way of expressing the content. Advertisers rather use presupposition than assertion because it is much easier to deny an assertion than a presupposition:

The statement “Leading beauty experts and models use and recommend Perfectil.” one may oppose: “I don't believe. No way.” But in question mentioned above, the receiver is unconsciously led to believe that the content is truthful and that there are no doubts about the fact that they use and recommend it. Another example of presupposition is following:

“Just the touch of the button gives you voice control of your music, climate control and your Bluetooth hands-free phone.”

It presupposes that the car will certainly have got a button, radio player, air-condition and hands-free set and that everything will be able to be controlled by voice. Goddard (1998) maintains that presupposition is all about reading between lines; since this is, as it suggests, a hidden process, it is very interesting to

advertisers, as we can be taking in all sorts of assumptions without consciously paying attention to them. In advertisements, there are often cases where the question is stated as kind of a 'problem' and then the text offers an answer – 'a solution' for the problem: "Got wedding on the brain?"

Another typical type of question used in advertising is rhetorical question. It assumes only one possible answer:

"What more could anyone ask from a Clarins gift?"

The implied answer to this is "Of course, nothing."

There is one other sentence type plentifully presented in advertisements – exclamation marks. The use of exclamation marks is very liberal and widespread. (We may notice that exclamation marks are more frequently used in exclamations than in imperatives in English; that is why it is called 'exclamation mark' and not 'imperative mark'; while in Slovak the exclamation mark is more often used in imperatives than in English.)

"And, it's already wrapped!"

Exclamations may have the sentence structure as simple statements, but the exclamation mark tells us to read them emphatically.

## 5.1. 2. Sentence structure

In this part of the work, we shall focus our attention on the structure of sentences in advertising language. We will mention the most important structural tendencies used by copywriters.

### 5.1. 2.1. Schematic patterning

The formal schemes can be represented in various ways. Parallelism is one of the forms of schematic patterning. It can be defined as "repetition of formal patterns" Leech (1972). Parallelism means the parallel presentation of two or more than two similar or relevant ideas in similar structural forms. It is a rhetorical device heightening the emotional tone of the message and its importance. We offer here an example of parallelism of clause with the same structural pattern:

"Tips for a good night's sleep: - Drink less caffeine.

- Take warm baths.

- *Arrange your insurance with NFU Mutual.*"

Each clause has the same idea and structure beginning with verb in imperative following by direct object. The typography and layout often contributes to the text; in this case, each clause is printed in separate line. The last clause makes up a semantic and formal parallel to first two clauses. Parallelism is often accompanied by - anaphora – "the repetition of the same word or group of words at the beginning of several consecutive sentences or verses to emphasize an image or a concept".

"Explore the hills. Explore the rivers. Explore the mountains. Explore the sea." - epiphora - "the repetition of the same word or words at the end of successive phrases, clauses or sentences."

"See **new**. Hear **new**. Feel **new**." We suppose that an antimetabole is another form of schematic patterning. It is defined as "the repetition of words in successive clauses, but in reverse grammatical order, e.g. 'I know what I like, and I like what I know'."

"Instead of moving the furniture around, why not move around the furniture?"

Schematic patterning occurs in all levels of language. Anaphora, epiphora, alliteration, assonance and antithesis also belong to techniques of schematic patterning.

### 5.1. 2.2. Ellipsis

- Ellipsis belongs to cohesive devices and it is defined as the omission of part of a structure. (Goddard, 1998). Ellipsis in advertising is used for many purposes:

- For economical reasons; to save space and money because words cost money. Cook (1996) gives following example of anaphoric textual ellipsis:

"When Lisa made a surprise visit, you didn't have time to worry about spotted glasses. Fortunately, you didn't have to. Cascade. Because you don't have time for spots."

The second orthographic sentence contains ellipsis:

Fortunately, you didn't have to Ø Ø Ø Ø = Fortunately, you didn't have to *worry about spotted glasses*.

The ellipted elements correspond to the preceding sentence. Repetition of these elements would be needless. There is ellipsis also in the last two orthographic sentences 'Cascade' (a single word) and 'Because of you don't have time for spots' (a subordinate clause). Cook (1996) suggests: that in the latter case, a main clause seems to have been ellipted in entirety. But the missing elements are by no means clear." The main clause we can only deduce. It may be started with

"You ought to use Cascade..."

"You ought to buy Cascade... ..because you don't have time for spots."

"We recommend Cascade..."

- □ as Cook (1996) postulates to avoid drawing attention to features of the message which do not serve the advertiser's interest.
- □ To create a sense of informality. Ellipsis is normally used in spoken language, in face-to-face casual communication. Ellipsis in advertising creates an effect of closeness with the reader and conversational tone; sometimes suggests immediacy.

In advertising, we can find many examples of situational ellipsis of interrogative clauses:

"Expecting guests?"

In this case, we can observe the omission of subject and operator: = "(Are you) expecting guests?"

- □ It creates proximity and intimacy. "...it is indicative of shared knowledge and interests, it suggests a trusting relationship, in which people assume a desire to understand on the part of their interlocutor. Goddard (1998) argues that people who know each other well don't need to be all that explicit about their meanings, because they know the other person will fill in the gap as a result of shared knowledge and shared history.

"Nespresso. What else?"

This is the advertisement headline for a coffee. Everybody may recognize that the person, who asks the question, is a waitress in a café. The whole utterance may be

"*You'll take Nespresso. What else would you like to drink?*" It is clear to everybody that 'What else' means that they can order something more.

The intention to make short dynamic slogans leads to the tendency to use the symbol of colon between two noun phrases: "Summer 2005: True Bronze."

We can complete the expression with deduced words: "In summer 2005, with *Clinique cosmetics* you may take pleasure in true bronze skin."

### 5.1.2.3. Incomplete sentences

In advertising text, one can read whole advertisement without coming across a main verb. There is a widely spread tendency to punctuate phrases. One reason is that the reader of the advertisement turns to the visual layout, which provides him many clues to correct interpretation, so the explicit structure of the sentence is not so important. A L'OREAL advertisement text says:

"Revolutionary lift. Revolutionary results. REVITALIFT DOUBLE LIFTING. Intense Re-Tightening Gel + Anti-Wrinkle Treatment."

It is accompanied not only by the picture, but also by the body copy explaining the phrases above. We can supply more possibilities in the beginning of the phrases, for example:

"If you /For those who want/need a revolutionary lift of your skin and to see revolutionary results, try/buy Revitalift Double Lifting Intense Re-Tightening Gel and Anti-Wrinkle Treatment."

As Myers (1997) argued the effect is to suggest that we already have these desires, that they are completing our own thoughts. We may connect these two incomplete sentences with the linking verb 'are'. In this case, the verb can be clearly deduced from the context and integrated, but there are cases where the tense and aspect are not so definite. Another reason for omitting verbs is that there is no importance to define neither the tense nor the aspect of the verb or it would be cumbersome.

## VI. METHODOLOGY

### 6.1 Research sample

We observed the slogans from 150 random advertisements from the sample of 48 different copies (25 titles) of English-writing magazines from UK, USA and Iran. The sample did not contain newspapers. The magazines were of various types: political, technical, business-oriented, nature-oriented, cooking-oriented, women magazines, tabloids and scientific.

### 6.2 Research methods and process of research

First we wrote out the advertising slogans and collected the research material. Once completed the list of slogans, we made a linguistic analysis of them and determined the linguistic means used in each of them. We made an overall observation and stated questions and hypotheses. Then we produced a table of attributes for exact enumeration of linguistic means. This table was the basis for the measurable evidence. From the table we could make the general statistics and consequently generate graphs and interpret data.

### 6.3 Results of the research

1. 20 % of all slogans contain ellipsis; it means that on average a fifth of slogans uses ellipsis.

2. 9 % of all slogans contains phrasal verb, it means that on average a fifteenth of slogans uses phrasal verb.

3. 12 % of all slogans contain parallelism; it means that on average a ninth of slogans uses parallelism.

4. Our assumption was not correct. The most widely used sentence type is not the imperative one, as we supposed, but the declarative one. The second are imperatives, then interrogatives. There were 98 noun phrases in research sample. Exclamative sentences did not occur in the sample, although exclamations occurred.

## VII. CONCLUSION

In the theoretical part, we approached advertising as a type of communication between producer and consumer of the product. We analyzed and described basic principles of advertising printed texts. The theoretical part of the study provided an analysis of language of advertising and served as a basis for the research part. To be able to make analysis of slogans in such extent, we had to include all the aspects of language – from phonological to semantic aspect.

The results of the research confirmed the correctness of 6 in 8 hypotheses and disproved the correctness of 2 in 8. We shall briefly offer the results of the research:

- ✓  On average, every fifth slogan contains ellipsis.
- ✓ On average, every ninth slogan contains parallelism.
- ✓  The most widely sentence type is declarative (53 %).

We observed that the informal style of advertising language predominates over the formal style. We found the formal style of writing only in scientific and business types of magazines. In scientific magazines, there occurred advertisements for a specific group of people – scientists, doctors, physicists; the vocabulary was technical and incomprehensible for common people. The linguistic means were the same in all types of magazines. We hope that this study will contribute to the present knowledge about advertising language and will introduce new facts, findings and observations on such creative and extremely interesting discourse. We believe that it will be useful and contributing for all who are interested in English language and its multiplicity

## REFERENCES

- [1] ANSKÁ . J.(2006). *The Language of Advertising with the Concentration on the Linguistic Means and the Analysis of Advertising Slogans* . Unpublished master's thesis. Univerzita Komenskéh Bratislave Pedagogická Fakulta Katedra Anglického Jazyka A Literatúry.
- [2] Cook, G. (1996). *The Discourse of Advertising*. London: Routledge
- [3] Cowie, A. P. (1991). *Oxford Dictionary of Current Idiomatic English*. Vol. 2 English Idioms. Oxford: Oxford University Press
- [4] Hornby, A. S. (2001). *Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary*. The 6th edition. Oxford: Oxford University Press
- [5] Krista., P. (2004). *Benefits of Brochures – How to Create an Effective Brochure*. Available October 14, 2010, from <<http://www.morningstarmultimedia.com>>
- [6] Kvetko, P.( 2001). *Essentials of Modern English Lexicology*. Bratislava
- [7] Lakoff, G, Johnson, M. (1980). *Metaphors We Live By*. Chicago: The University of Chicago.
- [9] Leech, G. N. (1972). *English in Advertising: A Linguistic Study of Advertising in Great Britain (English Language Series)*. London: Longman
- [10] Myers, G. (1997). *Words in Ads*. London: Hodder Arnold

- [11] Ogilvy, D. (1985). *Ogilvy on Advertising*. Vancouver: Vintage
- [12] Pavlík, R. (2000). *Phonetics and Phonology of English. A Theoretical Introduction*. Bratislava: Pedagogická fakulta Univerzity Komenského
- [13] Pickett, J. P. (2000). *The American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language*. The 4th edition. Boston: Houghton Mifflin
- [14] Presson, L., LAPICK, J. (1997). *A Dictionary of Homophones*. New York: Barron's
- [15] Quirk, R., Greenbaum, S. (1990). *A Student's Grammar of the English Language*. Harlow: Pearson Education Ltd.
- [16] Soanes, C., Stevenson, A. (2004). *Concise Oxford English Dictionary*. The 11<sup>th</sup> edition. Oxford: Oxford University Press
- [17] Trup, L. (1999). *panielska lexikológia*. Banská Bystrica: Univerzita Mateja Bela, Filologická fakulta
- [18] Vestergaard, T., Schroder, K. (1985). *The Language of Advertising*. New York: Basil Blackwell Inc.
- [19] Widdowson, H.G. (2000). *Linguistics*. Oxford: Oxford University Press
- [20] Table 1 descriptive statistics of the data

#### AUTHORS

**First Author** – Sattar Motaqed, Department of linguistics, Manasagangothri, Mysore University, smutaqid@yahoo.com  
**Second Author** – Annapurna. M. , PhD, Department of studies in Anthropology, Manasagangothri, Mysore University, Annapurna iyar@gmail.com