

Language Use in Advertising: Creativity and Its Dimensions

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Abstract

21st century has observed a tremendous revolution brought by Media in every sphere of life. The realm of language is no exception. Linguistic Creativity in Media Linguistics is one of the important repercussions of such revolution.

Media Linguistics is one of the most important and dynamic field in applied linguistics, exploring the way language is used in Media. It has broadened the theoretical room for approaching Creativity in general and Linguistic Creativity in particular.

The paper aims at describing and analyzing some of the linguistic techniques that copywriters use to catch the attention of audience. It is concerned with the creative aspects of such language. Main emphasis is put on the intertextuality in advertising. The application of intertextuality in advertising language is an effective technique that most advertisers prefer. It has created a theoretical space for creativity in language of advertising. Apart from intertextuality some common Rhetorical Devices are also taken into consideration to exhibit Linguistic Creativity.

Data in this paper are drawn from both print as well as electronic media advertisements covering both Urdu and English languages.

Keywords: Language use, Advertising, Linguistic creativity, Intertextuality, Copywriter, Discourse, Urdu

Significance of Language

Language is a powerful tool for a human being to communicate with others effectively. It has a strong influence over the people and their behavior. Human language is unique because it has the properties of creativity, productivity, recursiveness and many more. It relies entirely on the

social convention. Its complex structure therefore affords a much wider range of possible expressions and uses it effectively in comparison of any known system of animal communication.

Language of Advertisement

In this day and age, advertising has probably become one of the most powerful communication tools used by marketers to communicate their message to the target audience.

Advertising takes many forms, but in most of them language is of crucial importance (Vestergaard & Schroder 1985). The powerful influence of language over the people and their behavior is also true with the realm of marketing and advertising. The choice of language to convey specific message with the intension of influencing people is vitally important in advertisement. Language used by copywriter in advertisement differs drastically from the conventional language. Leech in his book (Leech 1972: 25) writes, that the language of advertising belongs to so called '**loaded language**'. Leech says that loaded language has the aim to change the will, opinions, or attitudes of its audience. To persuade people to buy the product is the main purpose of the advertising. For achieving the purpose Copywriters create uncommon, surprising, interesting texts with catchy slogans or phrases to lure the audience into buying the products.

Creative Copywriting

The relationship between creativity and advertising is long, rich and textured. Creativity is considered to be an important determinant of advertising effectiveness. In today's highly competitive world, consumers are faced with vast arrays of products and choices. As the concept of brand loyalty diminishes, marketers need to device creative and innovative ways of attracting and retaining customers. Due to the inundation of the market with products with highly competitive prices, consumers are ever willing to try out new things. Companies now more than ever, need to device ways of surviving in the market. Creative and innovative advertising strategies serve as major tools. Even though most contemporary advertisements rely on visual content and design, it is still language that forms the crucial part of advertising. In order to capture our attention, advertisers must usually do a bit more than just convey the message in a straightforward way. This step further may be called *creativity*.

Creativity

According to Wales, creativity is inventiveness in form, the departure of what is expected in language (90). Creativity can be defined as the production of something original and valuable. Creativity involves coming up with new and fresh ideas or plans. It is characterized by the use of the imagination and expression. Research in psychology reveals that creativity arises through the confluence of knowledge, creativity thinking skills and motivation (Adams, 2005). Advertising survives or dies on creative and innovative communication. Creativity is the reason why particular agencies are preferred to others.

Functional and Practical Stylistics of Advertising Language

The point of differentiation between advertising and conventional language can also be traced by taking the functionality into consideration. One has to bear in mind, however, that variation and creativity plays a major role in advertising language in particular. Advertising language has always tried to change styles and to break the conventions. It is also to be noticed that this variation and style is totally different from that of sociolinguistic variations and styles in the following ways:

a) Functionality

The variation and style in advertising are guided by a different function, which comprises of different elements like users (addresser and addressee), goal, setup and channel (medium). The functional requirements result in a functional advertising style, which is determined by the correlation of exophoric determinants such as the fields of application, the relationship between sender and recipient, the modes of communication and the social functions of this text type on the one hand and typical modes of use on the other. Against the background of a discourse of advertising, it becomes obvious that the linguistic features of advertising cannot be described without reference to the situation in which this text type occurs. Thus, the heavy use of the pronoun *you* cannot be seen in isolation from the appellative character of adverts, with the sender trying to present a personal appeal to the recipients in order to Persuade them to ultimately buy their product. The pseudo-personal appeal of pronoun *you* must be considered in conjunction with the media of mass communication, which are the major mode of distributing advertising messages. Although

every recipient knows that *you* actually refers to an audience of many millions people, they are still inclined to believe that they are personally being addressed.

b) Approximation as the ideal

The ultimate goal of the copywriters is to create a ground of familiarity between producer and audience. This results in to lure the consumers in buying their products. Thus, approximation as the ideal is characterized as the hall mark of advertising language.

In fact language use in advertisement offers linguist an excellent opportunity to see for themselves how the characteristics of common language are exploited at its best. These specialized uses of language thus provide a knowledge of dynamic process that a living language undergoes in its artistic use. In this sense the language use in advertisement may be considered as par excellence.

Since Media Linguistics carries a full fledged discourse, it is impossible to cover all the aspect that participate in this realm. For this reason I will analyse the language of advertisement from linguistic specially intertextual and figurative point of view.

Intertextuality: A Space for Creativity

The visual culture has radically changed our conception of the world and has widened the space for creativity. Media text like advertising has contributed a lot to the legitimisation and transformation of social practices. In such process it has become intertextual to varied texts drawn from different fields. The use of intertextuality in advertising is a conscious strategy that keeps viewers busy in the interpretive activity and thus makes ad texts creative, attractive and memorable. To gain the readers' interest positively is certainly the ultimate goal in advertising. This is achieved, as Sillars (1991) explained, through expressing values to the knowledge of, and mostly appreciated by the readers to promote a brand or service. No strategies serving such a goal better than intertextuality. Fairclough (1992), Cook (2001), and many others have illustrated the use of intertextuality in the act of producing and comprehending references within the textual feature of the new text with references to previous texts that share its context and form.

Etymologically the word intertextuality means a text among texts. It is a kind of relationship by which texts are interwoven with each other, that is, every text is an absorption and transformation of other texts.

The intertextual relationship in advertising can arouse people's attention, memory, interest and desire, and then stimulate their purchasing action, as it is natural for people to accept things they are familiar with. Many linguists and scholars show a great interest in intertextuality in advertising and have also done research on the forms and functions of intertextuality in advertising language. Cook (2001: 220) opines that Intertextuality is one of the "common practices" which may contribute in reshaping identities and attitudes. It derives its meaning from shared knowledge between the users and the readers that enable the readers to grasp the covert meaning of the advertisement. Goddard (2002, p. 69) identifies it relevant to "... the way one text can point to or base itself on another". Fairclough (1992), on the other hand, identifies intertextuality relevant to the process of "productivity", in which new texts are generated from transforming prior texts and restructure existing conventions. The new texts share the similarity of content and form with the original sources.

Nowadays, Intertextuality is an integral part in the advertising texts where two or more of the linguistic, visual and aural texts complement each other for a better understanding of the message by the reader. How the previous knowledge shapes our understanding and reveals the creative mind of copywriter can be traced by looking into the ads thoroughly. Advertisements can be considered as intertexts as every advertisement carries some similar features of the advertising texts that existed earlier. Even the advertising texts portraying the same type of products share similar features in construction. Moreover, as advertisements draw their reality from the world, they establish an intertextual relation with the discourses in existence. Here semioticians opine that they all share the same theory of constructing the world. Chandler speaks thus "In order to make sense of many contemporary advertisements (notably cigarette ads such as for Silk Cut) one needs to be familiar with others in the same series. Expectations are established by reference to one's previous experience in looking at related advertisements. Modern visual advertisements make extensive use of intertextuality in this way. ". (2007:202)

While discussing the intertextuality it is also to be noticed that the advertiser does not select the text or discourse of an advertisement haphazardly, rather keeping the character and background of the reader, the sign value of the commodity in mind he selects the texts and discourses that will suitably fit into the context. In Indian scenario advertising texts are found intertextual to socio-cultural contexts, myths, folk songs and tales, movies, popular songs, scientific discourse and so on.

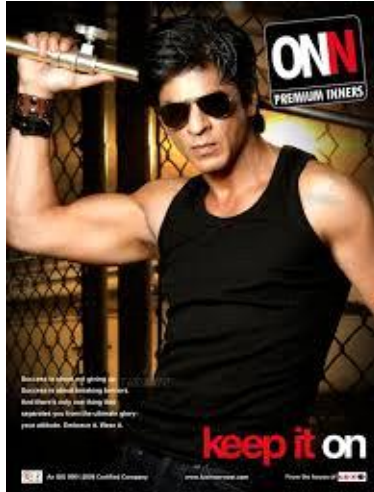
Types of Intertextuality

Writers have divided the intertextuality differently according to its function in the text. Since in a multimodal text, mode is the essential unit of expression it is easier to divide the types of intertextuality available in advertising into intra-modal and inter-modal. The intra-modal intertextuality is further divided into visual, aural and linguistic in accordance to the elements available in an ad text. On the other hand, inter-modal intertextuality may be considered as structural occurrences which in fact are inter-modal translation or allusion to a different mode.

Intra-modal Intertextuality

a. Visual Intertextuality

Advertising texts which need attention from the consumers make use of visual images more and in this digital age they come with all attractive features to lure the consumers. Visual images for their iconic nature attract greater attention. Even an illiterate person is visually literate enough to decode meaning of a visual text. Intertextuality is displayed in ads differently. Parody is one of the common strategies found in Indian advertising. Parody not only brings familiarity to the advertising but also makes them humorous. A very recent example is that of *Lux Onn Innerwear* which parodies the scenes from the movie *Don* with appearance of Shahrukh Khan.



Colgate advertisement, which parodies the scenes from the movie *Dabang* with the appearance of the heroine Sonakshi Sinha. In these advertising, the texts in fact offer a narrative, become intertextual and promote the product. Such intertextualities keep the consumers in suspense and retain the aesthetic and creative quality of the text.

b. Aural Intertextuality

Intertextuality in advertisements just not happens in the codes of linguistic and visual signs but also in the aural signs. Certain types of music which occur again and again in different advertising texts, film texts or other audio-visual texts in course of time by themselves create a code. Many advertising texts use the popular songs from movies to create the context. The popular song being associated with a different visual text creates impact on the viewer’s mind and makes the advertisement memorable. For example, the recent *Kit Kat* ad (youtube.com) uses the popular song ‘*Kate nahi katte...*’ from the movie *Mr. India* to reflect a romantic relationship between two squirrels. The aural intertextuality is significant in ad as it enhances the memorability of the text and heightens its aesthetic value. Apart from the song or music intertextuality, even voice intertextuality also occurs in advertising. In Indian advertising use of the voices of the Bollywood stars like Raj Kumar, Shatrughan ,Sinha, Amitabh Bachchan is very common.

c. Linguistic Intertextuality

Linguistic intertextuality is one of the most important intertextualities which is displayed pervasively in advertisement. Since linguistic signs have two mode of expression as visual

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and aural, linguistic intertextuality in advertising may be considered as visual or aural representation of words, dialogues, proverbs and quotations from other texts. The re-occurrence of popular dialogues from movies is also frequently found in Indian advertising. The recent advertisement of popular Boroplus Antiseptic cream is based on the very famous Bollywood dialogue “*Rishte me to ham tumhare baap hote / lagte hai ,aur naam he shahenshah*” in the parallel way “*Rishte me to ye saare kireem ke baap hote hai aur naam he Boroplus*”. It is to be noticed here the the copy writer has alter the Amitaab’s dialogue wittily to amuse the audience and consequently to lure them in buying the product. Words and phrases are part and parcel of discourse which carries a particular meaning underpinning by context. Sometime copywriter takes a word from a discourse and use sit in advertising language. A n example of such case is the advertisement of Ananda milk which is being advertised by the slogan “Ananda T20 ab naye Avatar mei”. The word *avatar* here bears a holistic and authentic view aligned with the religious connotation. It touches the reader greatly and urges him/her for a quick response. Proverb is a very effective way to realize intertextuality in advertising and help achieve the advertising goal in a concise and appealing way. For example friend in need is a friend indeed. (for Quick Heartache Reliever). This is an advertisement for medicine, Quick Heartache Reliever. The advertiser quotes the proverb “A friend in need is a friend indeed”. By adopting this proverb, the advertisement emphasizes the quality and efficiency of the medicine and also conveys the meaning that this medicine will come to your rescue the moment you are in danger. It is your trustworthy friend. The quotation brings readers kindness and credibility and shortens the distance between the product and its readers.

Inter-modal Intertextuality

Inter-modal intertextuality is frequently found in advertising texts as an attention-seeking device. The following advertisement best illustrates this fact:



(Union Bank, adsoftheworld.com.)

The above ad tells about the plans which sometimes do not work. The picture is presented as an elaboration of the linguistic syntagma. *All plans do not fit to your need* and reflects a failed plan. The visual text contains the crow throwing pebbles in to the glass. This representation refers to the fable of thirsty crow, who throws pebbles in to the water pot so that the water level will rise and it can drink the water. But here the advertiser has made certain alteration to the original story by placing money in the glass instead of water. So the same plan will not be useful because pebbles cannot lift money. The advertiser wants to emphasise that money cannot be accumulated always by the consumers' own plans and experiences. Consumers may need the advice of other experts and in this case the expert is the advertiser *Union Bank*.

Common Rhetorical Devices in Advertising

Apart from the abovementioned detail of intertextuality as a tool for creativity in advertising there also exist some common rhetorical devices in English as well as Hindi/Urdu advertisement. Figures of speech are powerful tool to convey the message effectively. Figurative language stands for one of the most valuable copywriting tools. By using *rhetorical figures* (also called *figures of speech*), copywriters make their texts more striking and effective. As a result, such messages appeal to the imagination, create connotative meanings and help the content be more memorable. To achieve vividness and humor and to appeal to more readers, various rhetorical devices are employed in advertising. It can be said that the success of English advertisements has much to do with the apt employment of rhetorical devices. Some of the most commonly used

rhetorical devices in English as well as Hindi/Urdu advertising are discussed in the following analysis.

Phonological Level

Mihaela Vasiloaia (2009) claims that advertising language can be compared to poetic texts. Like poems, the so called mnemonic devices (rhyme, rhythm, alliteration, assonance, etc.) are used in slogans. These devices have the mnemonic effect on potential customers of the advertisement. This helps receivers to remember and also later recall the text. The sound techniques which are the most frequently used in English advertising.

a) Rhyme

One of the dominant sound techniques in advertising is rhyme. According to John A. Cuddon, rhyme is “the formalized consonance of syllables” (1999:750), i.e., the correspondence of sound between words of endings of words, especially when these are used at the end of lines of poetry. In Hindi/Urdu ads

Kya aap close up karte hain?

Yah duniya se darte hain?

Aap close up kyun nahin karte hain?

In English ads

Chubby cheeks, dimple chins

Rosy lips, teeth within

Curly hair, very fair

Eyes are blue - lovely too

- *Be a woman for a cause not for applause (Baileys Irish Cream).*
- *Beanz Meanz Heanz.*

(b) **Alliteration** – is “a figure of speech in which consonants, especially at the beginning of words or stressed syllables, are repeated” (Cuddon 22). *Passion for Perfection* - /p/, /f/ (*Russian Standard vodka*).

- *Six simple secrets to keep you look fabulous*
- *Kicks for cash competition*
- *Today, Tomorrow, Toyota*

The vivid example of alliteration that was incorporated into the brand name itself is ‘Coca-Cola’.

(c) Simile

Simile is a comparison between two different things that resemble each other in at least one way. In simile we directly compares two things through some connective, usually "like," "as," "than," or a verb such as "resembles". According to Ding (2003), simile is used to emphasize some positive characteristics of the advertised product/ service and/or highlight and strengthen the emotional representation of a certain aspect in an imaginative way. Shie points out that “in using a simile, copywriters usually highlight the distinctive features of the product through an overt ground” (37). In the advertising world, a simile is an excellent way to communicate symbolic ideas. The advertising taglines witness a comparison between two distinctly different things by the usage of such words as, like, as-so, as if, etc. Copywriters have used this device very generously in the following ads.

- *Product: Kingfisher Airlines*
Tagline: Few things connect India like Kingfisher does.
- *Product: Veet (beauty product)*
Tagline: What beauty feels like.
- *Product: McDonald*
Tagline: Nobody can do it like McDonald's can
- *Product: Thai Airways (service)*
Tagline: Smooth as silk
- *Product: Kiwi shoe polish*
Tagline: When your shoeshine, so do you.
- *Product: Intel*
“A battery that works as hard as you”

The slogan promoting Intel batteries compares a computer user with a battery and declares that no matter how hard they work, the battery will always keep up with them.

(d) Metaphor

Metaphor is one of the most power frequently used rhetorical devices in English advertisement. It is used to create a symbolic representation of the key idea you want to communicate. An insurance company, for example, could picture a man about to step on a banana to represent unexpected risk in life. Metaphor contains an implied comparison in which a word or phrase that is ordinarily or primarily used of one thing is transferred to another without giving a formal acknowledgement that any comparison is made. The use of metaphors in advertising is a common way for copy writers to communicate a point to the consumer. Advertisers frequently use metaphors with words or visually with pictures. As opposed to simile, metaphor usually presents an implicit comparison and contributes to the aesthetics of the message as well as emphasizes the main idea, describing one object in terms of another. Leech maintains that metaphors are valuable in the advertising language as they “suggest the right kind of emotive associations for the product” (Leech 1972: 182). Consider the following examples:

“Open Happiness” (Coca Cola)

“It just feels right to hold the internet in your hands” (Apple iPad)

“Bounty- the taste of paradise” (Bounty candy bar)

“Put a tiger in your tank” (Esso) and

“It gives you wings” (Red Bull).

The Coca Cola slogan associates a bottle of coke with happy and carefree leisure time of a person who consumes this beverage; Esso international trademark’s slogan implies that the fuel that their customers fill their car tanks with give their vehicles extra power and reliability, also the word “tiger” in the slogan incorporates the brand name of the company into it, as the tiger has been the logo and symbol of ExxonMobil (Esso) idea, describing one object in terms of another. Metaphor is considered by many to the most important and most common rhetorical device in English ads. Let’s take the example “*You’d better off under the umbrella*” (Advertising Travelers

Insurance Co). Since safety is the most prior thing, travelers Insurance Co here take a typical psychology of traveler to complete this advertisement. They used “umbrella” to figure their service. Seemingly, though the advertisement is short, but the copywriter has employed an appropriate metaphor to affirm the services of their company. In modern ads visual metaphor is a powerful tool to lure the consumer in buying the product. For example “*Connecting People*”



Nokia used this metaphor to convey the image of connecting people with their mobile phones instead of simply as a means of having a conversation. The message is that not only can you talk to someone who may be hundreds or thousands of miles away, you can also make an emotional connection with the person, which enhances the phone's value.

(e) Pun

Pun is a form of speech play in which a word or phrase unexpectedly and simultaneously combines two unrelated meanings. Pun is one of the most common forms of word play and one of the figures of speech most often used in advertising. It is basically play on word which increases the humor of advertising and make the advertising pregnant with meaning. Appropriate use of pun can attract reader’s attention, makes it memorable and arouses the consumers’ interest and imagination. Puns may be used in different ways:

- 1) By using a word equivocally.
- 2) By using a word more than once in different senses.
- 3) By using words similar in sound but different in meaning.

For example, “Coke refreshes you like no other can” (Coca-Cola). The use of ‘can’ in the above-mentioned sentence bears two meanings. It may be understood as a bottle for drink, and it also can be used as auxiliary verb. The following are some analysis of tag line of ads to exhibit the pun

- *Product “Capri Cigarettes”*

Tagline: He's gone to Capri and she's not coming back.

In this ad the homonymic pun is based on the similarity between a place called Capri (an island in Italy) and the brand of cigarettes called Capri and this presents a false homology (homology is any. One interpretation that can be extracted from this ad is that a man has left his present abode to live in a place called "Capri" and because he likes where he lives now, he has no plans of returning to where she lived before. Another interpretation of the ad is that a woman has changed his cigarette brand to "Capri", and because of his satisfaction with this new brand he has no intention of smoking his old brand again. And the interpretation, which the copywriters would like one to follow, is that Capri is a much more preferable brand of cigarette than the current brand of the viewer, and once the viewer smokes it he will realize this and change.

- *Product: Batiste Shampoo*

Tagline: Give your hair a touch of spring

- *Product: More (cigarette)*

Tagline: Ask for More

are another example of pun in ads.

Conclusion

Language has creative characteristics which enable the advertiser to make exciting appeals in the advertisement. Language meant for advertising is very witty, charming and sometimes mysterious. Its objective is to convert an indifferent customer into a potential purchaser. In fact language use in advertisement offers researcher an excellent opportunity to see for themselves how the characteristics of common language are exploited at its best. These specialized uses of language thus provide a knowledge of dynamic process that a living language undergoes in its artistic use. In this sense the language use in advertisement may be considered as par excellence.

In this paper, we approached advertising as a type of communication between producer and consumer of the product. The paper thoroughly reveals the fact that how and why the language employed in advertising differs from that of conventional language. It also describes various pervasive tools and strategies in advertising language, by which the copywriters lure the audience in buying the products.

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Language in India www.languageinindia.com ISSN 1930-2940 18:2 February 2018

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