

# Unconventional Advertisement Taglines: A Linguistic Enquiry

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**Abstract:** Technology without language becomes a weak ornamental embellishment for visual graphics only. The systematized rule makes English language a language of communication in which every correct word conveys meaning. An advertiser while writing, producing and directing an advertisement takes into consideration the audience thought process including the age group. Products are specific in accordance with age, gender and occupation. A consumer can either be a small child, teenager, or an adult. They equally pay attention to the advertisement according to their interests and needs. This paper explores how the language of the advertisement influences a consumer in different ways.

**Keywords –** Advertisement, Taglines, Linguistic, Consumer, Code Switching

## I. INTRODUCTION

- We are governed
- Our minds are moulded
- Our taste formed
- Our ideas suggested
- Edward Bernays

An advertiser while scripting, producing and directing an advertisement takes into consideration the mindset of the audience including the age group. Products are age, gender and trade specific. A consumer therefore can be a small child, a teenager, or an adult. They equally pay attention to advertisement according to their interests and needs. An advertisement influences a consumer in manifold ways. It lures consumer for the advertised product and promoting the action of buying it through the use of language. Language therefore has a grand role to play in marketing of products apart from visual effects. Kiefer mentioned Leibniz who asserts that languages are the reflection of mind of human being. It is the only mode to communicate, interact, share or transfer message. Advertisers, therefore, use different languages for instance Hindi, English, Punjabi, distinctive linguistic skills viz. figurative language, rhetorical devices, code-switching and code-mixing to prepare advertisements or the taglines or slogans to make them more felicitating but concise and concrete for the audience to comprehend.

Advertisements have always been a commending factor to catch the audience's attention. People and youngsters accept without questioning the trends set by the advertisers whether the conversation (spoken) aspect or the written. They perceive the unique things in an extremely lay but artistic mode. They observe, chew, digest and express rationally the events happening in public, reality program on TV or radio or any lecture, movie or advertisement and on internet junk. People's curiosity has made them precious and vigilant macho persons, who can classify, judge critically and air the opinion without fear. These days advertisements have caught the eye of many passionate critics who peep into the psyche of the advertisers to know the reason of the level of language being used by them in the slogans, phrases or figurative language in use in the advertisement to catch the attention of the viewers. Advertisements are not made in hollowness.

The producers are absolutely aware of the psyche of the viewers with respect to the age group. Special and focused attention is paid to the genres of advertisements for example, if an advertisement is made for children as per the product, advertisers consider the age and thought process of children to the optimum level to give a positive outlook, effect and language to receive positive feedback. Advertisers have now started using deviations to give a unique impact to the taglines of advertisement to increase the sale of the product. They employ divergent spelling in their attempt to receive attention of the readers (Sternkopf, 223) or either misspell the words, add numerals, use figurative language, rhetorical devices and use short words to enhance the memorability of the product. Nevertheless such kind of deviations put negative impact on the users of English language. Students and people at large have started using the same professionally and personally due to the significance of actual English language which has undergone a tremendous change. The focus on such changes in written aspect of English language has increased in recent years especially with the advancement of computer aided communication. Not only social media but television and print media are giving insights into the emerging linguistic paradigms and deviations which are responsible for the

linguistic change in English language and thereby changing consumer's attitude towards language. This research paper will explore and analyze the presence of diversified elements in the taglines of advertisements.

## II. SURVEY OF EXISTING LITERATURE

In the world of intense competition, advertising plays a climactic role to introduce or inform the consumers about the products pertaining to different companies. With its expansion as a source of communication advertisers try to influence people to get their full-fledged attention. They, in order to lure away the consumers, take up different artifices to produce advertisements and thereby launch their products. They make use of visual effects, jingles, stylistic devices, the adequate use of language in the form of slogans, taglines, headlines and so on. Out of all the styles, language has a dominant role to play in arousing buyers' interest in the products and promoting sales. Advertisers therefore hire copywriters who use the language and linguistic tools to make short catch phrases to get into the heart and mind of the people which gives life to the advertisements.

Leech (1972) in "English in Advertising: A Linguistic Study of Advertising in Great Britain" put forward the view that slogan is a short phrase which a company uses in its advertisement to strengthen the brand's identity. According to him slogans are mightier than companies' logos for they are to memorize and delineate. Rein has characterized an advertising slogan as a "unique phrase identified with a company or brand" (Rein, 1982, 49). The scholar asserts that the slogan has to "command attention, be memorable and be brief" for its central task is to introduce the main idea of the advertising campaign (Rein, 1982, 54). Slogans or tagline is decorated with linguistic devices.

Taglines and slogans show company's vision and are used interchangeably when advertisers talk about branding. "Taglines and slogans are catchy and memorable phrases used to conclude and wrap up an ad idea" (Shah:406). "We call them taglines, but you could also say they are slogans, signature lines or theme lines" (Altstiel Grow:165). Swayne said that taglines, slogans and mottoes have been used interchangeably, taglines are concise statements that are aimed at accomplishing goals such as gaining attention, sending message, and prompting consumer to action (Swayne:1519). In words of Shah, slogans should make the statements about a product that can be remembered by the people. Taglines and slogans have been termed differently at different places. According to "Studies in the Linguistic Sciences", the careful examination of slogans through linguistic and cultural context and phonological, morphological, syntactic and semantic pattern empowers people's belief towards language (1973:160). Vestergaard and Schroder (1985) analysed ads in magazines and newspapers, discussing a number of linguistic and technical devices that advertisers use to "lure" the public into purchasing the presented products.

Pavel Skorua, Tajana Duboviciene in their research paper "Linguistic characteristics of commercial and social advertising slogans" explicate that the sound techniques like rhyme and alliteration are often used in slogans to make them memorable. In order to make commercial advertising memorable, simile, pun, metaphor, personification, hyperbole and euphemism is used.

Bc. Adela Pilátová in the diploma thesis on "The Language of Advertising: Analysis of Advertising Slogans in Fast Food Industry" found the linguistic devices in the slogans. She performed the analyses of linguistic devices at phonological, lexical, syntactical, semantic and discourse levels in which she found the vast majority of slogans used finite verb phrases in their present simple form, alliteration and rhyme as phonological devices are less frequent. According to her research, most of the slogans are declarative.

Tomislav Skračić, Petar Kosović in the research paper, "Linguistic Analysis of English Advertising Slogans in Yachting" found that yachting slogans are packed with linguistic technique and figures of speech at phonological, lexical, syntactic and semantic levels. Mnemonic devices like rhyme, alliteration have been identified in slogans. At lexical level nouns are present in abundance. Rhetorical questions, Synaesthesia, personification, pun, symbol, polysemy or paradox are hardly a part of yachting slogans.

Romanenko Elena while analysing the rhetorical devices in slogans in the article entitled "Linguistic Analysis of On-line Advertising in English" described the linguistic devices which are regularly employed in slogans. In her analysis she found that personal pronoun 'you' was heavily used. The devices like ellipsis, alliteration, puns, and personification were prominent. This empirical study clearly displays that the linguistic devices which were used in the advertising are actually confined to the assigned advertisements.

H. Katrandjiev, I. Velinov, K. Radova while directing their research on the rhetorical devices analyzed the rhetorical figures in the following categories: Foodstuffs; Drinks; Automobiles, found Foodstuffs; Drinks; Automobiles, Airlines, Gas stations, and Bus lines; Banks and Insurance companies; Chain stores and Shopping centers; Technology and Communications; Clothing and cosmetics; Other product categories. An important conclusion, derived in the research process, is that nearly 80% of advertising slogans contain some kind of rhetorical figure. It is interesting to point out that the frequency of usage of figures of thought is much higher compared to the usage frequency of figures of speech – the ratio is 293:168 (1,74). Almost 20% of all advertising slogans contain more

than one rhetorical figure. The most popular figures of thought in Bulgarian advertising slogans are: metaphor (31.00%), exclamation (14.65%), antithesis (8.07%), hyperbole (5.94%), and aposiopesis (4.25%). On the other hand the most frequently used figures of speech are: appeal (16.35%), epithet (11.46%), and anaphora (5.10%). Finally, the usage of rhetorical figures were analyzed across product categories. From the perspective of the usage of figures of thought a significant diversity is manifest. In the advertising slogans of Banks and Insurance Companies, relatively less diversity of rhetorical figures of thought (accumulation, exclamation, and metaphor) were found. A great variety of figures of thought was revealed in the advertisement slogans emanating from the following categories: Chain stores and shopping centres, Tourism, Clothing and cosmetics. Therefore, the Tourism is among the first three categories from the point of view of assortment of figures of thought. Regarding the usage of figures of speech across product categories, it is pertinent to mention that smallest diversity of figures of speech was detected in the advertisement slogans of Banks and Insurance companies. On the opposite side is the category of Automobiles, gas stations, and bus lines, where the greatest diversity of figures of speech was found. Considerable diversity of figures of speech was also observed in the categories of Chain stores and shopping centers, Tourism, Foodstuffs, and Drinks.

Asst. Prof. Abbas Lutfi Husseinsays advertising slogans exhibit various types of stylistic features, with the aim of affecting readers' impression and attracting their attention towards taking an action. 2- The majority of advertising slogans utilize one rhetorical figure, mostly ellipsis. 3- Both schemes and tropes were commonly used but with different degrees in the 20th century. Yet, only tropes were popular in the slogans of 19th century. 4- In the last two decades, the use of tropes became more dominant than that of schemes. 5- Assonance, Chime, consonance, respectively were the most popular used schemes from 1990 to 2010; whereas rhyme, alliteration, parallelism, anaphora, antithesis, parison, respectively were the least popular schemes used from 1990 to 2010. 6- Ellipsis, metonymy and pun, respectively were the most commonly used rhetorical devices in advertising slogans from 1990 to 2010. 7- In comparison, metaphor, personification, simile and hyperbole, respectively were the least used rhetorical devices in advertising slogans through the last two decades.

### III. SCOPE AND OBJECTIVES

Language has a predominant function and vital part to perform in one's personal life as well as professional career whether the person plays a role of a businessman, businesswoman, trader, a CEO, a Director or a job seeker. Adequate knowledge of what to speak and how to speak improves intercultural communication as well as professional bonding. These days just because of the advent of social media the status of English language, which has become a language of international brotherhood, and lingua franca of the whole world, has undergone a vast change. In advertisement copywriters make use of incorrect English to attract consumers to product. They omit verbs, subjects, use incorrect and inverse spellings to grab consumers' attention and in fact consumers are actually attracted towards the advertisement and thereby towards the product. No doubt the purpose of marketer gets solved but in the process the unaccepted forms of English language make room in the consumers and observers mind. Copywriters have been using rhetorical and figurative devices and various foregrounding techniques to defamiliarize technique to become one with consumers through products. In the present era orientation of grammatically challenged forms of English language has been used. The present study was, therefore, conducted to analyse the language variation and thereby erroneous forms used by copywriters.

The research questions are:

- (1) To identify the language deviations produced by copywriters.
- (2) To find out the frequency of change at grammatical level.

Hypothesis

Grammatical deviation exists in Taglines of TV and Internet advertisements.

### IV. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The present study was conducted to explore deviations at grammatical level in the advertisements as it has become the leading source of entertainment, knowledge, education, propaganda and marketing. Therefore, 250 taglines were collected by watching TV in different shifts - morning and evening for three months consecutively and from different websites through internet. The different sectors from which taglines are collected are Automobile and Fast Moving Consumer Goods. After the preparation of list, content analysis of taglines was done. Grammatical deviation was found out and frequency was measured.

### V. DATA INTERPRETATION

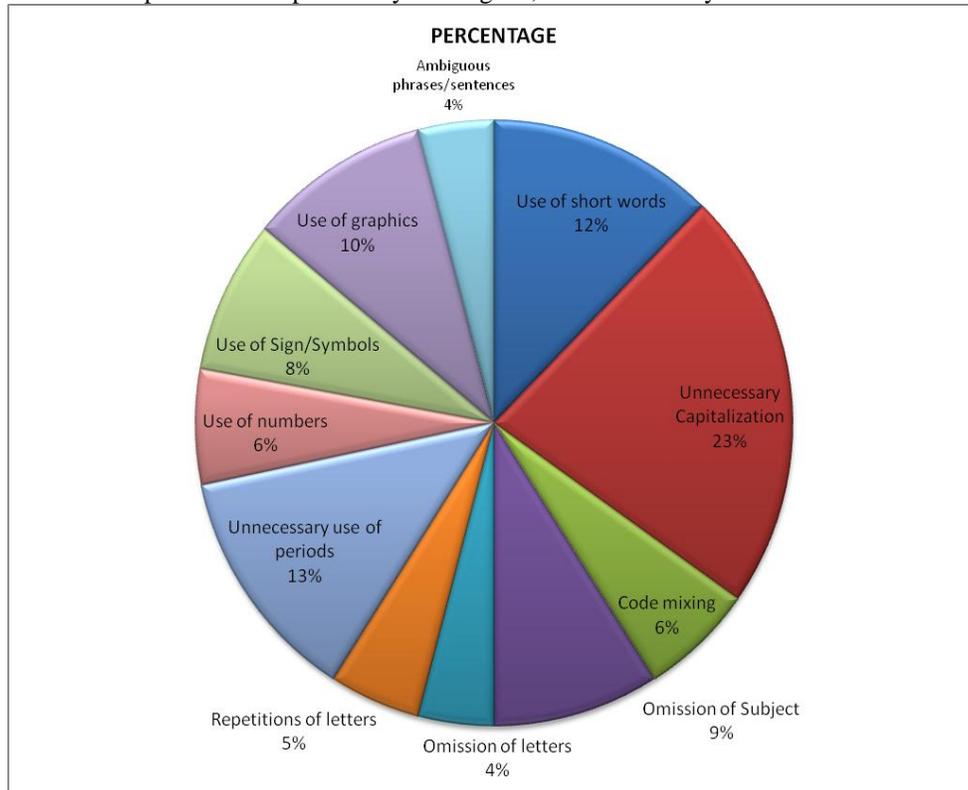
The present study was conducted to know the existence of language deviations occurring in the taglines of advertisements. Advertisers in the process of alluring consumers to buy the products play with words linguistically.

They use deviations like incorrect spellings, omissions of articles and code switching to make the taglines appear more attractive to the consumer. The analysis shows that the frequency of use of short words is 12% and unnecessary capitalization 22.54%. In the taglines percentage of omissions of letters is about 4% and subject is 9.02%. 15% code switching was used in the taglines. 4% letters were repeated while numbers and signs used were 6.15% and 8.20% respectively. Full stops were used unnecessarily where they are not required and the percentage of usage is 12.70%. Apart from these grammatical as well as linguistic elements 9.84% graphics accrue. The percentage of ambiguous taglines was 4.10%.

Table – 1

SN	Variables	Frequency	Percentage
1	Use of Short Words	30	12.30
2	Unnecessary Capitalization	55	22.54
3	Code Mixing	15	6.15
4	Omission of Subject	22	9.02
5	Omission of letters	10	4.10
6	Repetitions of letters	12	4.92
7	Unnecessary use of Periods	31	12.70
8	Use of Numbers	15	6.15
9	Use of Sign/Symbols	20	8.20
10	Use of Graphics	24	9.84
11	Ambiguous Phrases/Sentences	10	4.10
	Total	244	100%

Out of 250 taglines deviations were found in 244 taglines of advertisements. 6 taglines were simple phrases. The result of the above data in Table – 1 shows that appearance of deviation is meant to attract readers but such kind of diverse language put negative influence on consumers as readers imitate the same in their formal writing. The pie chart clearly shows the most dominant deviation is punctuation error i.e. the use of unnecessary capitalization. Though at present the percentage of periods is low but the existence of 12% unnecessary use of full stop also mark the beginning of violation of rules of grammar which only leads to ambiguity and in many cases makes the tagline meaningless from the deep structure as pointed by the linguist, Noam Chomsky.



## VI. CONCLUSION

Innovative technological development may have ruled the world but without language even technology becomes a weak ornamental embellishment for visual graphics. Advertising has, therefore, framed its own language however, a complex central processing unit cannot compete with the processing of human brain. It is a systematized rule that makes English language a language of communication in which every correct word conveys meaning. The fate of the standard form of English language at the behest of advertisers and consumers using ultra modern technology remains intriguing.

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