Types of Meaning Exploited in Advert's Textuality:

A semantic approach

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Abstract

Adverts are an artful deviation in the form taken by a statement.   As a genre, adverts enjoy special distinctive features that manipulation of meaning is one of them. Semantics is the wider scope in which deviations are employed on the benefit of text's persuasiveness. A framework is developed for classifying types of meaning exploited in adverts textuality. The model adopted is Leech's (1974) classification of types of meaning. The paper focuses on how conceptual meaning and associative meanings are employed to get a unique, economic, effective, and persuasive advertising text. It is hypothesized that advertisers functionally employ associative meanings to modulate ideas, services, and objects promoted, and manipulate advertisees' attitudes on the benefit of the advertising campaign. Different advertising examples are considered to be analyzed semantically with reference to their psychological persuasive effect on each type of meaning.

Key Words: Semantics, Advertisements, Textuality

المستخلص

الاعلانات هي انحراف فني في الشكل الذي يتخذه تعبير ما. تتمتع الاعلانات بصفتها نمطا قائما بحد ذاته بصفات مميزة مثل توضيف المعنى والذي يعد ابرزها. ويعد علم الدلالة النطاق الاوسع لدراسة توضيف المعنى في الاقناع النصي. طور ليج (1974) اطارا نظريا لتصنيف المعنى. تركز هذه الدراسة على كيفية توضيف المعنى المفاهيمي او الحرفي والمعنى الاقتراني في تكوين نص اعلاني يتميز باقتصديتة واقناعة للمتلقي. تفترض الدراسة ان الاعلانات توضف المعنى الاقتراني لتنظيم الافكار والخدمات والاشياء بحيث تؤثر على توجهات المتلقي كما في الحملات الاعلانية. تحلل الدراسة نماذج اعلانية متنوعة من ناحية توظيف المعنى وما ينتج عن ذلك من اثر اقناعي نفسي.

الكلمات الداله: علم الدلالة، الاعلانات التجارية، النصية

Introduction

This paper addresses itself to the investigation of the types of meaning exploited in advert's textuality. Advertising is a genre which has a distinct, communicative, purposeful, preplanned structure enjoying certain features which identify it as a distinct genre. Advertising, being functionally persuasive, and argumentative texts, employs different types of rhetorical devices in deviated linguistic texts. Such deviations support a unique, memorable, attractive, and economic textuality. Advertisers manipulate the minds of the advertisees by modulating meanings. They exploit conceptual meaning in terms of sense relation and associative meanings in terms of (concept) prime- target relation. They aim to generate layers of meaning and interpretations. This falls on the benefit of matching the advertising text with different attitudes and trends. Advertisers usually try to keep a set of persuasive appeals for granted.

The seven types of meaning, as classified by Leech, are discussed with enough examples to show how advertisers employ

associative meanings to deviate from the norms generating unique textuality. Except conceptual meaning, manipulation of meanings is not of a sense relation but of concepts activated keenly on the hierarchy of associations. This process emulates a set of cognitive processes. However, obscuring the meaning, allows a new understanding to be configured. Targeting layers of meaning is on the benefit of the promoted concept as this provides more chances for the advertisers to match the promoted object with advertisee's attitudes and needs. Advertisers usually would try to keep a set of persuasive appeals; emotional, behavioral and ideational for granted by structuring advertising text in a memorable, attractive, and emotion- arousing representation of perceived experience (Hussein, 2016, a lecture on Semantics)

Advert's accessibility and acceptability depend on many factors. Psychologically, indirect prime- target relation depends in the remoteness of the associations between the two concepts compared, i.e. their position in the hierarchy of associations to the key terms. Concepts of high frequency and acceptability are usually used to lead to other uncommon ones. This is often a more subconscious than conscious "associative recall" (Boyed, 2016). Pragmatically, shared assumptions, and background knowledge help in configuring the meaning targeted. However, associations are tied to the social norms, values, feelings, prestige, mental modes of excitement and relaxation, positive or negative (behavior/ condition) (O' Shaunghnessy, 2004).

Advertisers, deliberately, intend indirectness and vagueness to keep advertises interested in what is beyond the said. Vagueness is an interactional strategy providing a wider space for interpretations. Vagueness is a matter of resemblance degree of meaning. Advert makers control the approximation from the focal targeted meaning (A.H. Jucker et al., 2003).

1. **Types of Meaning Exploited in Advert's Textuality According to Leech's (1974) Classification**

Chafe (1971) as cited in Al-Najjar (1984, p. 52) believes that the textuality of any concept is initiated by conceptions, drives, or stimuli which are formulated into linguistic symbols and structures (forms). Semantics is the base for concept forming up textuality; encoding first step. Then the process of encoding goes through syntactic and phonological representations. Our linguistic utterances are reflections of our mental concepts. Advertising texts, as well, are structured to emulate conceptions of incentives, needs and then stimuli.

Concepts are not just reflected in arbitrary strings of words adhering to meaningful syntactic structures resulting coherent sentences, but also they can manipulate and modulate attitudes of individuals giving different perceptions in their minds. This will affect the way they realize their conceptions processes (Al-Najjar, 1984).

Semantically, a morpheme is a container of meaning; yet the semantic content of lexical items vary depending on the individual's usage embracing seven types of meanings: conceptual (denotative/cognitive), connotative , stylistic , affective, reflected, collective, and thematic.

Moreover, the social status for each lexical item; being colloquial, slang, vulgar, poetic, etc., are exploited in advertising affecting the adverts accessibility and acceptability. Prime-target relation is usually indirect. Selectional relations are fundamental factors in mapping meaning, therefore, advertiser make use of them in making a vague connection between prime and target

such as metaphorical expressions; giving unpredictable yet meaningful selectional relations. (Ibid)

The syntactic component also can affect ambiguous usages in adverts such as violated anaphoric uses, elliptic meaning, passive structures, etc. The pragmatic component of meaning is also an important factor in textuality. Context, assumptions and presuppositions are to determine the ultimate meaning of words. Beliefs, intentions, inferences, social background, religious background, can affect the advertisees' perceptions.

These types of meaning are discussed according to Leech's classification (1974). However, associative meanings are very much employed as means of mapping prime-target indirect relation, especially connotative meaning. Our mind is an association network; we link information with familiar knowledge. Concepts can be represented or suggested by others. This is often a more subconscious than conscious; "associative recall". Human psychology associate ideas, emotions, and objects with the things they read or see. Advertisers are so much interested in how words can evoke certain aspects of associative meaning (Boyd, 2016).

Associations can be used powerfully in adverts. Brand names carry associations which are usually of sense- meaning not for concrete reference. Advertisers intend a unique transferring of the positive meaning form usually derived from cultural icons. Moreover, making a brand familiar by repeated exposure leads to implicitly encouraging its adoption. Hence, associations are tied to the social norms, values, feelings, position and prestige, mental modes of excitement and relaxation, positive or negative (behavior / conditioning) (O' Shaunghnessy, 2004).

According to Leech (1974), there are seven types of meaning:

2.1 Conceptual meaning

It also called denotative (the correspondence between the meaning of a word or phrases with its reference), cognitive, or sense meaning; which is the literal meaning that a sentence can carry; that can be found in dictionaries. It provides any given interpretation of a sentence, a configuration of abstract symbols.

However, it is an inextricable and essential part of what language is. Goatly (2012) calls it the "logical meaning" which covers all basic, essential components of meaning conveyed by literal use. However, Hussein (2016, lecture on semantics) adds that conceptual meaning explains the competent language user's ability of encoding/ decoding meaning; conveying a term's referent with its criterial, stable attributes. Denotation depends on sense which is more basic than the former (Kearns, 2000).

It is exploited in advertising when a direct prime-target relation is needed to satisfy logical appeal and sometimes an affective one. It is usually used to target that stable, widely used and common sense of the word.

(1) we are not the only ones. But the BEST.

(2) Eat & Go (Burger)

2.2 Connotative meaning

Connotation can be defined as the sentimental associations or the emotional and imaginative association surrounding a word that it evokes which is necessary to be similar among two members of the same community (Kriedler, 1998).

It is the most used one in advertising among other associative meanings. It helps obscuring the text calling other targeted concepts indirectly. Boyd (2016) believes that connotations are the connections between abstract and tangible. Every message can have two meanings; a literal one and a suggestive one. The ability to make associations on both a conscious and unconscious levels is a remarkable phenomenon that works with the human imagination.

Leech (1974, p. 15) defines connotative meaning as " the communicative value an expression has by virtue of what it refers to, over and above its purely conceptual content." Additional, non- criterial properties are used in connotations where real world experience can be associated with an expression. However, connotative meaning is not specific to written word, but is shared by other communicative systems such as visual art and music; which are all employed excessively in advertising. Hervey and Higgin (2002, p. 147) believe that " connotative meanings are reminders that extra- textual factors- part of the situation in which the text is produced and read or hear- are crucial to the existence and communicative power of the text".

However, Leech (1974, p. 15) continues saying that " The overlap between linguistic and visual connotations is particularly noticeable in advertising, where words are often the lesser partner's illustrations in the task of conferring on a product a halo of favorable associations."

Besides, Leech (1981, p. 12-13) adds that connotative meaning is peripheral, not stable. This can be the influence of

culture, historical period etc. It is characterized by being " indeterminate and open-ended in a sense".

    (3) " Cool down quickly" (air-conditioner advert)

    (4) Plump Feel Jolly. AB slim fit capsules.

    ("fat" is avoided as it gives much more negative meaning)

Connotations can have positive and negative meanings. Adverts usually promote the positive connotation of the word, (e.g), "house" refers to the place where we live in, but '"home" contains the same meaning with additional suggestions (i.e) it proposes warmth as well as security. Therefore, "home" has the positive connotation which is used widely in adverts.

    (5) Feel Home. Turkish Airlines.

2.3 Stylistic Meaning

We decode the stylistic meaning of a text through our recognition of different dimensions and levels of usage. It is the use of certain words; dialectal, colloquial, slang. Crystal and Davy (1969, p. 14-15) assert that one language can have different styles. It is hardly to find two words with the exactly the same conceptual and stylistic meaning. That is why true synonymy does not exist. "social meaning also deals with the illocutionary force of an utterance so as to interpret it as an assertion, request, apology,…etc.". It is used widely in advertising by targeting, stylistically, familiar common used words to strength their association with new advertised concepts, services, ideas, and products.

    (6) We Wonna' Please YOU.

    (7) Eighty six cash. Now Get your Credit Card.

The first example used the spoken colloquial abbreviation of "want to" usually used in informal American speech. The second example used the expression "eight six" which is a slang means to refuse a service, or to eject someone.

2.4 Affective meaning

It is also used in advertising reflecting personal feelings of the advert-maker, his attitude to the advertisee or to something he wants to promote. Yet, it is usually conveyed through conceptual or connotative content of words (Leech, 1974).

It is the use of expressions which reflects the speaker's attitude, emotion and feeling, positively or negatively such as "Wow!", "Yippee" , "Ouch", "Yuck", etc.

(8) Yippee! It is King Burger.
The word "yippee" expresses emotion; a shout of joy and delight.

2.5 Reflected meaning

Nordquist (2016) defines reflected meaning as the case whereby a single word is associated with more than one sense or meaning. Also it is known as coloring and contagion. However, it is first coined by Leech (1974, p. 18) who defines it as" the meaning which arises in cases of multiple conceptual meaning, when one sense of a word forms part of our response to another sense". It is the dominance and suggestivity power of one of the senses of a word through frequency and familiarity. Punning and play word are examples of manipulating textuality through targeting different conceptual meanings for the same lexical entity.

(9) Tobacco blend: Tear it with no Tear!

(10) "what food these morsels be!" slogan of Heinz pickles, (1938)

(11) " When it pours, it reigns." (Slogan of Michelin tires)

(12) " When it rains, it Pours" (slogan of Morton salt since 1911)

2.6 Collocative meaning

It is another type of meaning which is used by advertisers as a strategy for calling associations. Sometimes, associations a word acquires on account of the meanings of words which tend to occur in its environment. (Ibid)

Nordquist (2016) supports that saying it is the familiar grouping of words which habitually occur together, conveying meaning by association. It is first coined by Firth (1890-1960) who famously observed "You shall know a word by the company it keeps".

(13) Possess " An Iron Will and Nerves of Steel"

(14) Two peas in a pod.

2.7 Thematic Meaning

Exploiting different types of meaning, targeting persuasive appeals, would result in a thematic meaning which is carefully and cautiously structured in advertising. Loyns (1995, p. 154) says that it is called thematic because " it is determined by the way the speakers present what they are talking about (the theme of the utterance) in relation to particular contextual presupposition". Factors like stress intonation, and the speaker and the receiver's ability to interpret such differences are also in the corona of the thematic meaning.

Hence, Leech (1974) identifies it as the organization of the linguistic components around a central theme(s). It is the way the message is organized in terms of ordering, focus, and emphasis giving different communicative values.

(15) Accuracy, is our excellence. (Swatch Watches)
Here, the emphasis is structurally achieved on the first word to suggest its importance.

Moreover, the semantic context is a very fundamental factor of interpreting meaning. Different semantic contexts result in different meanings to understand what the speaker means in the sense of an utterance is to understand with relevance to its context. Words are invested with meaning in accordance with the "totality of context".

Hence, ambiguity and vagueness are developed. Accordingly, Leech (1974, p. 221) draws a distinction between 'ambiguity' and ' vagueness'. The former comes from a variety of specific rules violation whereas the latter results when the general rules invite the "reading-in of indefinitely variable specific information". The senses of words are not vague, but their contexts are so; when they suggest different readings.

To sum up, manipulating associative meanings would reflect the aims, needs, and wishes of the advert- maker which are formulated as symbolic entities, letters, figures, etc. Being affected by the attitude of the advertisees, their emotion, ideation or behavior, the advertisers formulate the text in a way that enhances suspense, vagueness, ambiguity; or modifies the attitude of the advertisees. Associative meanings, thus, are very useful and

purposeful to be exploited to achieve various persuasive goals which help in modulating advertisees' attitudes and behavior. All is meant for psychological effect such as stimulating plausible associations or even establishing new ones with the assistance of familiar knowledge. Semantics provides a wide scope to state an indirect, vague prime- target relations developing purposeful, communicative, and highly effective advertising texts. (Hussein, 2016, Semantics)

2. Discussion

To show the intentional deviations meant in adverts texts, a semantic approach for the analysis of types of meanings employed in adverts' textuality is adopted. The model used is Leech's (1974) classification of meaning. Advertisers skillfully and cautiously manipulate meanings beyond the text to modulate the advertisees' attitudes and tendencies on their benefit. Vagueness and fogginess of expressions used can support unique textuality. Precise expressions and wording are not always communicative effectively.

Conceptual meaning is manipulated in adverts usually in terms of sense relation such as the use of puns and conceptual metaphors.

(16) Tobboco Blends. Dragon's Tear.

(Tear) here is meant to be undetermined between two senses of the word. The relation between the two concepts (Tobboco) and (Dragon's Tear) is not a direct one. The sense, that is to be nominated as suitable to the contexts, is left to the advertisees. However, the correspondence between the two compared ideas is of a psychological intent of persuasion.

Moreover, direct usages of conceptual meaning are also common in advertising such as:

(17) Eat & Go Restaurant Burger.

Associative meanings are employed much more flexibly in terms of concepts' relation and activated associations. One concept is defined in terms of another. Psychologically, this can extend the high frequency of the well- known concept to the new one being promoted. However, such manipulation is not random. It is done for a purpose; of a more communicative value (Scovel, 1998).

Connotative meaning is the most fertile type of associative meanings that can be manipulated flexibly to generate multi possible interpretations. Connotations are changeable with time and cultural differences. They are much tied to cultural issues and values. (Leech 1974)

(18) Plump feel Jolly. AB slim fit capsules.

Here, the word "fat" is avoided for its negative connotation. "Plump" is used instead for stimulating better reactions.

(19) Feel Home. Turkish Airlines.

The word "home" is intended here instead of house as it carries the connotations of feeling safe etc. Suggestivity of expression gives it uniqueness and attractiveness that are needed in advertising.

(20) Yippee! It is King Burger.

(21) YumYum Restaurant

The words "yippee" and " YumYum" express emotion, and feelings. This stimulates different positive reaction in the mind of the advertisee; that it is a delicious food etc.

3. Conclusion

The principle aim of the paper is to highlight, semantically, the types of meaning's manipulation in adverts textuality. As a persuasive text, advertising genre is an artful deviation from the norms. Semantics is the wider scope where extension and expansion of meaning are employed effectively. It is concluded that:

1. Advertisers promote their ideas, services, and objects in unpredictable yet meaningful advertising texts.
2. Semantics is the wider scope where manipulation of meaning is flexible and possible.
3. Conceptual meaning is usually manipulated in terms of sense relation while associative meanings are employed in terms of concepts; psycholinguistically indirect prime- target relation.
4. Obscurity, ambiguity and vagueness of advertising texts are prominent features of advertising genre; skillfully and intentionally made for more persuasive effect.

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