

A descriptive analysis of phonological features of advertising language used in english slogans for food and drink products

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Abstract: *Creating advertising slogans can be called an art of copywriters. Investigation into successful slogans is a good way to discover the effectiveness of exploiting a language to persuade and make impressions on other people especially consumers. Different advertising slogans of many famous food and drink products are analyzed on the phonological level. The result indicated that at least one rhetorical sound device is utilized in more than 60% of 112 advertising slogans for food and drink products. Rhyme becomes the most popular sound device and alliteration is the second most common one whereas assonance and onomatopoeia are not frequently used in food and drink slogans. The investigation hopefully can serve as an informative source for both pedagogical and research purposes and becomes a motivation for other researchers to carry out further studies.*

Keywords: *Advertising slogans, phonological features, advertising language*

1. Statement of the problem

Nowadays, in a developed world, thousands of new products and services are introduced each day, which makes advertising become a real art - the art of informing, persuading customers and deeply embedding into their minds. According to Bovée *et al.* (1995:16-20), advertising has never been as ubiquitous as it is nowadays. Language in advertising is typified by a slogan which is present in every advertisement. Slogans can be considered the heart of advertisements wherever they appear. Angela Goddard in her book “*The language of advertising*” titles these slogans the hooks which she calls “*the initial piece of attention-seeking verbal language used to draw the reader in*” (Goddard, 1998:106).

Slogans are the most important and condensed messages advertisers would like to send to their customers. Sharp and intelligent slogans can help advertisers leave unforgettable impressions on their potential customers’ minds. However, creating a successful slogan is never an easy task. The use of just a few words in a slogan proves to be harder than it is supposed to be. It requires a sophisticated linguistic insight into phonology, lexicology, syntax as well as semantics and pragmatics.

In this study, the researcher chooses to analyze the advertising slogans of some world-famous food and drink products in English for some main reasons. *First of all*, when those products can be called famous, they must be successful in many aspects. They may

have a special secret of creating a great or even unique taste or they may have a long history of building their own prestige and class. *Second*, food and drink products play a very important part in our daily life as an indispensable demand, so they have a wide scope of activities with customers of different ages, backgrounds, religions, beliefs and values. In this way, the slogans of those products, in a current competitive market today, need to be created with a very careful choice of language to persuade their wide variety of demanding customers.

For all the reasons mentioned above and be motivated by previous studies, a study entitled: “*A descriptive analysis of phonological features of advertising language used in English slogans for food and drink products*” is carried out. By conducting this study, the researcher hopes to gain better insight into the most significant phonological features of the advertising language used in English slogans for food and drink products. This study with its results is hoped to be served as an invaluable source of reference for teachers and learners of English as a foreign language, translators, advertisers and those who concern themselves about this subject matter. Moreover, the study also grasps some implications especially in ways of creating an effective slogan for food and drink products in the Vietnamese context to achieve success for the brands.

In brief, the study seeks the answers to this research question:

What are the most significant phonological features of food and drink slogans in English?

2. Methods of the study

Descriptive research was chosen for this study because it can provide measures of frequency of the occurrence of the most typical features of advertising language used in food and drink slogans.

English slogans as samples for this research were downloaded in February, 2022 from only one source which is one of the most famous and reliable advertising slogan websites in the UK - *adslogans.co.uk*. Websites were chosen as the source of slogans because of easy availability and *adslogans.co.uk* was selected for this research due to its enormous database of world-famous slogans in a wide variety of fields such as fashion and style, travel and tourism, household equipment, technology, etc. Moreover, nearly most of all advertising slogans listed in this website were advertised in the UK and the US where English is used as the first language so the choice of language use must be taken into great consideration by advertisers and therefore the analysis of these slogans might reveal some interesting facts of advertising language which was considered the central point of this research. The reason for such a choice of advertising slogans advertised in English-speaking countries especially the UK and the US also depended on the belief that English has become an international language; therefore the fact that it is utilized as a means to translate advertising slogans from other languages into English is obviously natural.

In the website, advertising slogans are classified into different decades ranging from the 40s to this year and in each period of time, all slogans are listed together with their *brand names, products, advertising media* including television, outdoor, print, radio, etc., the *year and location* in which they were advertised. Thanks to this way of categorization, the researcher found it easier to narrow down the scope of the study and select the most appropriate slogans to analyze in the research.

All the advertising slogans chosen for the research in the website were supposed to fulfill the criteria hereafter:

Being an advertising slogan for a *food/drink* product (e.g., cereal, wine, beer, baby food, etc.) belonging to the category of *consumer advertisements* – a sub-type of commercial advertising (see 1.2.2)

Appearing in *print* advertisements (referring to slogans listed under the letter “P” standing for *Print* in the *Media* column)

Being advertised in the *UK* or/and the *US*

Regarding those criteria, 112 food and drink slogans were chosen and they were distributed quite equally between food and drink categories. The detailed description of advertising slogans chosen as research samples are presented in Table 1 below. It can easily be seen that advertising slogans chosen for analysis belonged to a wide variety of food and drink sub – categories, which helped the researcher gather more abundant information.

Table 1: Information on advertising slogans used for research analysis

Categories and Sub-categories	No
Food: including baby foods, biscuits, cereals, chips, salads (or salad dressings), pizzas, cheese, soup, bread, fruit, milk, eggs, pies, chocolates, crisps, sandwiches, snack foods, pickles, beans, sweets, cooking sauces, ice creams and cream	59
Drinks: including alcoholic drinks (beers, wines, coffee) and non-alcoholic beverages (soft drinks, energy / sports drinks, mineral water and tea)	53
Total	112

The procedures of data collection involved 3 following phases.

Phase 1: The list of advertising slogans was downloaded from the Internet.

Phase 2: All the food and drink slogans falling into the category of *print advertising* were picked out. That is, slogans belonging to other categories such as health and beauty, household appliances, leisure / entertainment, travel and transport etc as well as food and drink slogans listed under the letters including “T” (Television), “R” (Radio), “O” (Outdoor) and “Ot” (Other) were excluded.

Phase 3: 112 food and drink slogans (including 59 food slogans and 53 drink slogans) were chosen for analysis.

After collecting 112 slogans for food and drink products, the researcher made a linguistic analysis of them and determined the linguistic means used in terms of syntactic aspects. All the features of advertising language from this aspect which were studied in the research are called variables including groups, verbless clauses/non-finite clause, simple sentences and multiple sentences.

Findings and discussion

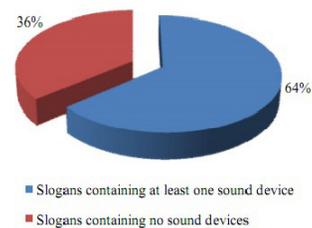


Figure 1 – Popularity of four sound devices in the corpus

As Figure 1 shows, 64% of the whole corpus using sound devices to make the slogans more outstanding, original and memorable. These sound devices prove to be quite more effective due to the fact that they can make slogans sound like poems.

As can be seen from Figure 2, rhyme which appears in 32 slogans (equal to about 29%) becomes the most popular sound device in food and drink slogans. The second most widely used one is alliteration which occurs in 20 slogans of the corpus. According to Leech (1966), rhyme and alliteration share the same characteristic because they both make the slogans and headlines appear striking and easier to remember. Assonance and onomatopoeia are at the third and fourth places respectively and seem to be not popular among food and drink slogans compared with the other two sound devices mentioned earlier.

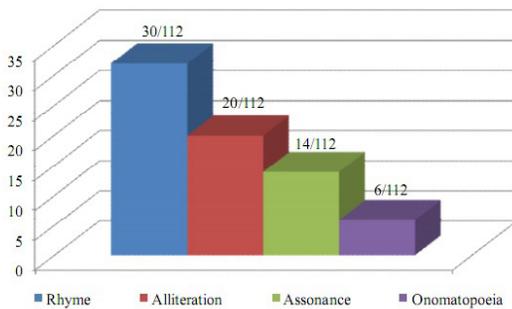


Figure 2 – Occurrence of four sound devices in the corpus

3.1. Use of rhyme

Example 1-6:

*What a difference a **shake** makes* (Yazoo flavoured milk)

*A **pip** of a **chip*** (Jay’s potato chips)

Candy’s dandy** – keep it **handy (Candy sweets)

*Get **chummy** with **Rummy*** (Rummy soft drinks)

*Life is **swell** when you keep **well*** (Bran flakes’ cereal)

Reflection** ...of **perfection (Seagram’s 7 Crown whiskies)

The selected slogans appear to be abundant in the use of rhyme. All the slogans using rhyme clearly prove to be so outstanding and to convey the message more easily as well as enhance the effect of persuasion.

3.2. Use of assonance

Assonance which is the repetition of the vowel sounds in words close together and works only if used in the stressed syllables is utilized in some slogans and some examples of assonance are presented below:

Example 7:

Red Bull gives you wings (Red Bull energy drinks)

repetition of /i/

Example 8:

*Paul Masson will sell no **wine** before its **time*** (Paul Masson wine)

repetition of /ai/

Example 9:

Drinks** never taste **thin** with Gordon’s **gin (Gordon’s gin)

repetition of /i/

Use of alliteration

Alliteration – the poetic device which repeats the opening letter is quite frequently found in 112 food and drink slogans. In some cases, vowel sounds are not so strong and emphatic and that is the reason why alliteration is utilized to add a more subtle effect to the text. Here are some typical examples:

Example 10 & 11:

Erin**, **soup** that **stirs** your **soul (Erin soup)

Begin** with **Ben (Uncle Ben’s cooking sauces)

Use of onomatopoeia

Onomatopoeia – referring to a sound device when a word or a group of words imitate the sound they represent is not commonly found in the corpus although it also helps remember the product better.

Example 12:

Snap!Crackle!Pop! (Kellogg’s Rice Krispies)

Rice Krispies Cereal hit the market in 1928. The cereal is made of rice grains that are cooked, dried and toasted resulting in crisped rice. When milk or cream is added, the thin walls of the rice collapse, making the famous sounds - “Snap!” “Crackle!” and “Pop”. The use of onomatopoeia partly contributes to make this slogan become one of the top 20 slogans of all time listed by some websites.

Example 13:

*You only get an ‘**oooh**’ with Typhoo* (Typhoo tea)

“oooh” - a sound to express surprise or happiness is utilized here in this slogan which helps create a true feeling after drinking a cup of Typhoo tea. Two sound devices including rhyme and onomatopoeia make this slogan become unforgettable.

In general, like the use of other sound devices, onomatopoeia is also fully exploited so as to emphasize on the excellence and uniqueness of the products.

References

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2. Goddard, A. (1998). *The language of advertising: Written Texts*. London: Routledge