

# Linguistic Analysis of Advertising Communication: Phonological & Graphological Deviations

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An attempt is made to analyse the language of advertisement taking in to account the different levels of linguistic analysis namely phonology, & graphology. Media writers are scornful of standard rules of language use. Their breaking of grammatical rules may give the impression that they do not care about conventional English. But it is not so. Instead of flaunting the rules of English, they are exceptionally aware of language expectations. Right words and phrases are chosen with the greatest care for the right effect. It is to be noted that when business worth crores of rupees depends on the success of a single advertisement, it is obvious that the person writing that advertisement tries to weigh the words as carefully as does any poet. Moreover, an avid observer can easily find out that there is something different about the purposeful way in which advertisers break rules and the accidental way in which ordinary users of language break rules. The rules are violated in carefully controlled ways that bring about interesting effects. Usually, the more careful and the more subtle the deviation, the more effective is the result.

The language used in advertisements shows how exciting a game word–play is and helps in developing an awareness of the difference between playful and incorrect language. As the corpus is as lively and full of energy as some of the best writers can make it, much pleasure can be derived out of it. Advertising language is all around us and is constantly being brought up to date and filled with new campaigns and catchy slogans which are just waiting to be picked up. In many ways, advertisers are like poets as they value the power and the flexibility of the English language as do poets and other literary writers. Though their purpose is different, they employ many of the same literary techniques as do the most skilled literary writers. Just as the poet takes liberties with the language in order to enrich his expression, the copywriter widens and deepens the potentialities of the language in several ways. The linguistic unorthodoxies employed by the ingenious copywriter not only expand his linguistic possibilities but also help to achieve the first aim of an advertisement – to catch the attention of the reader. An advertisement has to inform the consumer, incite curiosity in him to know more about the product, build conviction, create understanding, and develop the urge in him to buy the product. Weir, quoting the words of S.I. Hayakawa, says that all this can only be done by the “poeticizing of consumer goods.”<sup>1</sup>

## Phonological Deviation

Effective advertising does not happen in vacuum but involves a tremendous conscious effort on the part of the copywriter. A lot of ‘copythinking’ has to precede ‘copywriting’. Crawford divides this process into two: “(1) a never ending search for ideas, the ‘what to say’ in the advertisement that provides the brilliant solution to an advertising problem, and (2) a never-ending search for new and different ways to express those ideas – the ‘how to say it’ and ‘how to show it’ techniques of preparing an advertisement that provide the brilliant execution of the idea the copywriter wants to convey.”<sup>5</sup> The copywriter reaches towards this conscious creativity by having recourse to phonological deviations. There are various types of sound repetitions that occur in advertising language like alliteration and rhyme. Alliteration involves ‘Consonance’ and ‘Assonance’. Consonance is the repetition of the same consonant sound. For example, Canon Scanners, speaking of their best technology they offer in print, declare:

- e.g Slim, Stylish, Silver  
(Cano Scan FB Series Scanners)
- eg. Cool  
Cotton  
Couture  
(Dress Materials Ajmal Khan Road,  
Karol Bagh, New Delhi)
- eg. Believe in the Best – BPL

Assonance is the repetition of the same vowel sound, as in Polaroid's Super Shooter Camera', Sir's And Her's (Dress Material), Twirlin 'whirlin' Garden (Fisher Price Baby Toys.)

Advertising men discovered that rhyme can be very effectively used in the slogans. 'Nescafe Instant Coffee,' 'The Hindustan Times' and 'Eno' among others ran a series of advertisements with internal rhymes in the headlines and signature lines:

- e.g. Call it a day with Nescafe.  
Any moment of the day, enjoy your cup of Nescafe.
- e.g. HT City turns three  
And you get  
Diamond rings for free  
presenting  
the spree at Three
- e.g. Eno on.  
Acidity Gone.  
(ENO)

The copywriter makes use of rhyme most often in the main message of the advertisement, i.e., the headline, which has to serve the function of gaining the attention and arousing the interest of the consumer. A few more examples of rhyme are:

- e.g. Mumbo Jumbo (Mother Dairy Ice Cream).
- e.g. Mango Fruity  
Fresh 'n' Juicy.
- e.g. Amul Cheese.  
Yes please.
- e.g. When it's Thirst,  
Limca comes first.
- e.g. Simply made.  
Simply great.  
Monaco.

### Graphological Deviation

The study of a language's writing system is the study of graphetics, or orthography, as seen in the various kinds of handwriting and typography and distinctive uses of punctuation, capitalization, spacing, the organization of utterances into symbolic shapes, etc. Graphological deviations are much more frequent in advertising language than in any other register. Graphological deviation involves the unlimited use of spelling change with pronunciation remaining unchanged in the brand name and in the text of the advertisement. Here again, the idea is to draw attention to a product by giving it a striking brand name or endowing it with qualities which sound like known and accepted words, but at the same time, they seem distinguishingly original. For example, in the advertisement of Mother Dairy Ice creams, the copywriter has exploited the phonological similarity between the name of his product and an accepted word as in the signature line "Deliciously fresh" (on the phonological analogy of "deliciously fresh"). Another advertisement of the same product has the headline "New Sundae Black Currant". The change in the spellings of 'Sundae and Currant', here, has made no difference to their pronunciation while the copywriter has succeeded in introducing a part of the name of the product, into the new adjective. Limca (soft drinks) advertisements have many instances of graphological violations : 'tangi' for 'tangy', 'loudi' for 'loudy', 'veri' for 'very' and 'healthi' for 'healthy'. Similarly, in the brand names 'KRISP' (Cadburys) and 'Kwality' (ice creams), the initial consonant, phonologically and graphologically similar to that of the manufacturer's name, has been changed only for the sake of originality in spelling.

The use of small letters where capitals are normally used is another orthographic device used by many advertisers today.

- e.g. I 

LO
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 My JEEP (Mahindra)

and

TEMP
TATI
ONS

the family Holiday Fungama.

Another less frequently employed device is to write English words, either brand names or the whole text of the advertisement in Roman script in such a way as to make it resemble the Devnagri script or the script of a Dravidian language.

e.g. YEH Dil MAANGE MORE, PEPSI.

e.g. Dagg ? Dhoondhte Rah Jaoge! SURF.

e.g. VERKA CHEESE

KAMAAL KI CHEESE!

e.g. Lehar – Kya Karoon Kantrol Nahin Hota ! Kha Ke Mast !

e.g. Jo Chaho ho Jaaye.

Coca Cola Enjoy.

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- [5]. John W. Crawford, *Advertising* (Boston: Allyn and Bacon, 1965) 173.