

## Lecture 8: Language of Advertising

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Advertisers use language, playfully, bizarrely and controversially to attract attention and to get people to take an interest in their products. Here we look at some of the features of the language they use. Importantly they must do this without lying. Under Trade Descriptions Act (1968) it is an offence to offer services under descriptions that are not accurate. Words like 'miraculous' or 'magic' can no longer be used. But as we will see this does not really provide any serious restrictions.

### **Lowered modalities and hedging:**

There are a number of techniques to simply avoid promises that are false. We have already dealt with these in previous lectures.

- Scientific evidence proves this may help reduce...
- Experts agree that continued use can bring about...

We can guess which one of these might be the more likely slogan;

- Painaway will stop your pain
- Painaway will help stop your pain
- Most people who use Painaway get immediate pain relief
- People who use Painaway can get immediate soothing pain relief
- Research shows that pain can be reduced immediately with Painaway

Geis, M. L. (1982) *The Language of Television Advertising*. London: Academic Press.  
Gregory

- The new Renault is 80% more reliable
- Washed 60% cleaner
- Now with reduced fat
- Painaway will reduce you pain

**Direct address:** you are not asked politely but told or ordered. This conveys a sense of confidence in the product and also a sense of energy.

- Buy one get one free.
- Experience WonderYou (Wonderbra)
- Drive a Nissan
- Impress in an instant (Nivea)
- Make contact – men will melt (perfume)
- Sensitive skin? Don't let it rule your life (Nivea)
- Choose your style at Specsavers.
- Switch to Powergen

This is called the imperative mood. We can imagine the same slogans with the interrogative mood:

- Would you like to get one free?
- Could you drive a Nissan?

An interrogative sentence would be

- Can women live by diamonds alone

Indicative mood would be

- Women cannot live by diamonds alone

Imperative would be

- Don't live by diamonds alone
- Live by diamonds alone

Myers, G. (1997) 'You in the Shocking Pink Shell-Suit: Pronouns and Address' in *Words in Ads*, London: Arnold

Machin, D. and Van Leeuwen, T. (2005) 'Language Style and Lifestyle: the case of a global magazine', *Media, Culture and Society* 27(4): 577-600

**Connotation:** words don't only denote objects and places but bring with them associations

- Natural Wonder makeup
- Skin Dew soap
- Clinique makeup
- Brut aftershave
- Jaguar cars
- Clio car

Dyer, G. (1982) *Advertising as Communication*, London, Routledge

**Connotations of market** – words can therefore also connote markets

- A tantalising taste and delicately scented (Earl Grey Tea)
- 'M' (perfume) is for moments you'll never forget. For days marvellous with flowers and laughter. For nights magical with moons and old promises.

**Adjectives:** add to sensuous nature of product and experience (Dyer, 1982). The most common adjectives in advertising new, good, better, best, free, fresh, delicious, full, sure, clean, wonderful, fine, real, easy, rich, golden.

- That's the Remington shave – closer, smoother, longer-lasting
- Dramatic, passion-inspiring purple is the season's hottest hue.
- Flaunt a killer kiss this season with some high-shine gloss.

**Embedded compounds:** give simplicity and combine product with qualities. Their importance lies in the way they function as a single adjective or noun and are understood as designating a single quality.

- Make undreamed-of savings
- Space-saving designs

- High-quality materials
- Economy-sized packets
- Full flavoured fruit juice
- Farmhouse fresh

Leech, G.N (1966) 'Language and Motive', in *English in Advertising*, London: Longman.

**Poetic devices:** These are used for the practical use of recall, and also of playfulness

#### *Alliterations*

- Built better
- Golden goodness
- Carefree cruising
- Pampered to perfection
- Dazzling discount deals
- Dramatically different
- Fuller flavour
- Silken-soft

Simpson, P. (2001) 'Reason and Tickle as Pragmatic Constructs in the Discourse of Advertising', *Journal of Pragmatics*, 33, 4, , pp. 589-607.

McQuarrie, E. F. and Mick, D.G (1996) 'Figures of Rhetoric in Advertising Language', *Journal of Consumer Research*, 22, pp. 424-38.

Crystal, D. (1998) *Language Play*, Harmondsworth, Penguin

#### *Rhyming*

- Go to town with Crown (paint)
- Once you pop you cant stop (crisps)
- Twice as nice, not the price (furniture)
- Its not only coughs and sneezes that spreads diseases (toothbrush cleaner)

#### *Figurative language*

- Eat a bowl of sunshine
- Taste the sizzle
- Visit the flavour (Marlboro cigarettes)
- The first bra to understand the facts of life
- Drink a masterpiece
- The shampoo that holds in health, holds out dirt

#### **Indeterminate meanings**

- Easyjet: get around the [www.orld](http://www.orld) for a quid
- Yellow pages: Don't search, just yell.com

Cook, G. (2001) 'Words and Phrases', in *The Discourse of Advertising*, London,

Routledge

**Undermine literal meaning**

- Secs machine (for Accurist watch)
- Get rich quick (for Kenco Coffee)

**Use of pronouns** ('I', 'you', 'he', 'she', 'we') - help to personalise products and producers and their relationship with the consumer

- 'we agree with your wife. You can afford a new house' (mortgages)
- 'At McDonalds we do it all for you'
- 'Its not everyone's choice but its mine' (of a car)
- 'Does she or doesn't she, only her hairdresser knows for sure'

**Simple sentence structure:** It is important to avoid unnecessary wording

- Fresh to the last slice
- Our product is fresh to the last slice in the packet