

## EFFECTIVENESS OF THE LANGUAGE OF FAST FOOD ADVERTISEMENTS

**Marine Yaghubyan\***

*Yerevan State University*

One of the dominant fields in the scope of advertising is Fast Food promotion. Junk food advertisements are viral on the Internet, television, billboards and among other types of advertisements. This has led to many people preferring it to other types of food. Several studies have also investigated the effects of junk food advertisements on people's attitudes and preferences. Firstly, it creates some expectations which raise the desire to buy. Secondly, it associates purchase of these foods with some positive feelings such as satisfaction and happiness. Thirdly, it uses a certain entertaining dimension, thus, implying that purchase will boost a pleasant mood. Finally, people are not always conscious about the persuasive nature of advertising. In this connection, the present article aims to study how some linguistic techniques and devices in Fast Food advertisements call people for certain actions (purchase) and make these advertisements effective. The linguistic analysis of all advertisements carried out in the research mainly focused on defining and characterizing the linguostylistic devices used in fast food advertising, taking into consideration specific language levels such as lexicon, phonology, stylistics and grammar. The analysis demonstrates that nearly every advertisement uses rhetorical figures not depending on the thematic domain they come from.

**Keywords:** *postmodernism, fast food advertisement, language levels, lexicon, phonology, stylistics, grammar.*

### Introduction

Nowadays people are living in a postmodern society. One of the factors that makes a society feel more comfortable in living in a hyper-real world is because of the existence of advertisements. Advertising is one of the major sources of *communication* that takes place between the advertisers and the consumers and customers. People advertise everything (from the most trivial to

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\* [yaghubyan.marina@ysu.am](mailto:yaghubyan.marina@ysu.am)

Received: 21.07.2022

Revised: 30.07.2021

Accepted: 01.10.2022



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mega things). Advertising is allied to visual media and its ability to provide the viewer with a world of glittering media surfaces. These advertisements are omnipresent in people's lives and they use various persuasive techniques to lure common people into consumption.

Advertisements are interesting to study by the postmodern society, because the readers and consumers feel they receive happiness and satisfaction in life from advertisements that deliver a hyper-realistic world, which offers a pretentious happiness. Nigel Watson further explains that consumers do not really become interested in the use of the products advertised, but they are interested in the symbolization it carries or the image and the way it appears to others (Watson, 2001, p. 57). Of similar belief, Jack Solomon regards postmodern consumers to live on advertisements for the symbolic status it brings into mankind's lives (Solomon, 1998, p. 48).

In this article we are going to examine some linguistic techniques and devices in Fast Food advertisements. It is not a surprising fact that language is considered to be one of the most important and characteristic forms of human behaviour. It can be seen as a type of human activity as well as a system interacting with personality and society. To a large extent, advertisements rely on the use of language. Advertisers employ various linguistic devices and techniques in their messages to make people perform the desired action. The language of advertising is not neutral and has a powerful influence on both people and their behaviour. Thus, advertisers choose their diction very carefully so that they can convey their messages with the intention to influence people. It is the very language that helps people to distinguish a product and remember it.

Advertisers manipulate language in order to achieve their goals. It has been argued that they use exaggerations, conversational implicatures and figurative speech. They communicate their messages via stylistic devices such as: verse paragraphing, rhythm and rhyme created through repetition and syntactic parallelism. Due to these devices, messages which are memorable, musical, and appealing are created. The advertisers claim that each word, phrase or sentence that they use evokes the desired effects on the target audience.

The language of advertising is also unique. It is emotive and arouses feelings. It is also connective as it influences the behaviour of the receiver. Advertising must include a restricted range of vocabulary. It should use common words with some emotional and connotative value. Verbs are also used in a peculiar way.

Thus, advertising is a rich and complex system which draws on many other discourses. The first function of advertising is to sell a product or a service. Hence, these products and services must be as desirable as possible to the potential buyer. This desirability is achieved through the use of language and images among other strategies.

Similarly, the intentions of fast food companies is to sell as many products as possible, and not to *make a better world*. Every company strives to be the best, the wealthiest and the most favourite one in the world. However, if it does not have any advertising, no one will know about its existence and no one will buy it. That is the job of advertisers. An interesting and engaging advertising needs to be very creative and thoughtful.

There are several areas of investigation in this respect. In our research we focus mainly on *Phonetic, Lexical, Grammatical* and *Stylistic* levels. All areas include detailed description of observed devices and summary of the main factors.

### Phonetic Level

Different advertisers always choose particular personalities to promote their goods: famous faces are widely known as a kind of prestige to the products they advertise. However, the selection of appealing voices is of utmost importance as well. The tone of the voice can be a key factor here: for example, voices may be perceived as smooth, seductive, friendly, honest, cheerful or authoritative. These plays on sound are not limited to only spoken advertising: written forms also make use of phonetic strategies to grab our attention and make messages memorable.

Thus, an advertiser should always consider the way his/her advertisement is going to be read or pronounced by a reader, even though the printed advertising is not spoken. In this respect, there are several devices that can be used to impress a customer. These devices are as follows: onomatopoeic words, alliteration, consonance, assonance, elision and rhyme.

Onomatopoeia refers to the phenomenon when words phonetically resemble some sounds of the things they describe. These words represent non-linguistic noise with ordinary speech. In this advertisement **onomatopoeia** is used to resemble sound, such as growling:

*BURRRGERRR KING* (Activitat 5)

The next example is alliterative as the same first consonants of words occur close together and produce **alliteration** in these sentences. This device represents the repetition of consonant sounds across a sequence of words, especially in initial position:

*BUFFALO TOASTED TWISTER* (KFC- Buffalo Toasted Twister)

**Consonance** is the repetition of consonant sounds especially at the ending words which often takes place in quick succession. For example, the words chuckle, fickle, and kick have consonance with one another, due to the existence of common interior consonant sounds (/ck/) (Samuelsen & Pultz, 2013).

The device of consonance is inherently different from that of **assonance** which involves the repetition of similar vowel sounds within a word, phrase or sentence. When it comes to the device of rhyme, consonant sounds can be found at the beginning, middle or end of several successive words rather than mainly at the end of words. Moreover, the device of consonance should not be confused with alliteration which is the use of the same consonant sound at the beginning of the words:

*NEW YORK CLASSIC* (McDonald's New York Classic)

Assonance takes place when two or more words, close to one another repeat the same vowel sound but start with different consonant sounds. Unlike alliteration, which involves the repetition of the same consonant sounds, these words share the same vowel sounds but start with different consonant sounds. The following example of assonance has been found in fast food advertising:

*Fish in wrap – Sarap!* (2011 Summer Offerings from KFC)

**Elision** is a device which represents the removal or the omission of an unstressed syllable, consonants or letters from a word with the purpose of decreasing the number of letters or syllables of words or phrases. The missing letter is replaced by an apostrophe. Generally, the middle or final letter or syllable is eliminated, or sometimes two words are blended, and an apostrophe is inserted.

However, elision should be distinguished from contraction. There is a slight difference between them. Contraction is considered to be a more general term referring to the combination of two words to form a shorter word. For

example, *can't* is a contraction of *can* + *not* and presents a combination of two words. On the other hand, elision is a more specific term. It is encountered when some sounds, syllables or phrases are eliminated and replaced with an apostrophe. For example, *gonna* is an elided form of the phrase *going to*. However, there is one example in McDonald's advertising known all over the world in which we can spot an omitting unstressed syllable:

*I'm lovin' it.* (Amazon)

*Rhyme* is another device that associates words in our mind and makes the messages they convey more memorable. Advertisers are fond of employing rhyme, particularly in the construction of slogans. Rhyme and rhythm are very frequent features of advertisement, because a buyer can effortlessly remember the content of the text:

*WHOLESOME AND THEN SOME...* (WHOLE ~and then~  
SOME)

Thus, it can be stated that fast food advertisers widely use a number of phonetic devices to make their advertising attractive, memorable and interesting.

### Lexical Level

It is not a secret that advertisers continually create and use novel words to promote their products. The problem of all advertisers is the fact that advertisements become humdrum over time. Therefore, they often create new words or forms of words to promote their products. Advertisers especially like to play on words and lexical devices which are used to enhance effectiveness of fast food advertising. These are compounds, derivations, neologisms, collocations and phrases, lexical repetition, nouns and adjectives.

*Compounds* are created from two or more words or stems to make a longer word. For example, there is a new flavour in KFC which consists of chilli and lime. Thus, KFC has created a compound, such as:

CHILILIME CHICKEN (Facebook)

Neologism is a newly-created word used in both writing and speaking. However, not all neologisms are entirely new. There are some that are built from new uses of old words, while others are just combinations of new and old words (Woods, 2006).

McDonald's has created a verb which symbolizes its brand:

*Mac your day* (McDonald's)

It excellently presents McDonald's strategy to transfer their vocabulary into common vocabulary.

*Derivation* is defined as the process of creating a new word from another word, usually by adding a prefix or a suffix. Derivatives are another way to create neologisms. As previously mentioned, there are several examples of McDonald's creativity in terms of its vocabulary. In the following examples the use of derivative Mc- can be clearly seen:

*Sausage McMuffin* (Sausage McMuffin)

*McFloat* (McFloat)

Other aspects that copywriters consider when creating an advertisement are phrases and *collocations* which are series of words that co-occur very frequently. There is a culture specific phrase: Ramadan Kareem, a typical phrase for Muslims used during the month of Ramadan.

*Repetition* is a device that is used to repeat the same word or phrase several times to make our idea more memorable, clearer and attractive. Thus, due to repetition people remember any information in an advertisement. Not surprisingly fast food advertising uses this device quite often:

*the spicy range. Spice it up. 4 spicy delights to try* (Fast Food Restaurants)

Besides the above-mentioned devices fast food advertisers use other lexical items as well to make their message more attractive and to grab their audience's attention. In terms of lexical units, it is worth mentioning that there is an abundance of specific *nouns* and *adjectives* used in fast food advertising where nouns usually name places, products, ingredients, food and indicate positive attitude in connection with food and eating, such as flavour, delights, passion. Common names of places, products and ingredients used in fast food advertisements are as follows:

- **Place:** California, America, New York, Chicago, Vegas, Texas, New Orleans, Miami, Arizona, Louisiana.
- **Name of the product:** Twister, McOz, McMuffin, Whopper, Oreo, Chicken Royale.
- **Ingredients or food:** bacon, chicken, cheese, nacho, burger, chilli, beef, etc...

*Adjectives* name attribute features or qualities to those nouns. The use of a wide range of adjectives can be noticed in fast food advertisements. Moreover, these adjectives are generally characterized as *hyperboles* as they exaggerate characteristic features of fast food:

**REFRESHING BITE** (Refreshing Bites)

**NEW ORLEANS DELUXE** (New Orleans Deluxe)

Thus, it becomes evident that fast food advertising involves a huge number of lexical devices which are used to grab attention, to make the message more attractive, clearer and memorable for the target audience.

### Stylistic Level

When it comes to figurative language it should be stated that there are several devices which improve the style of the texts making it appear more interesting and entertaining. The following stylistic devices are used in fast food advertising: personification, personalization, presupposition, three-part constructions, synecdoche and ellipsis. The use of the literary device of *allusion* which is a reference to something popular (for example, person or historical event) is also rather widely practiced to arouse particular feelings in the target audience.

McOZZIE, OZZIE, OZZIE as an allusion to Australian chants Aussie Aussie Oi, Oi, Oi (Flickr) probably means that McDonald's wants to show its enthusiasm for Australian sport teams.

*Personification* refers to the process of attributing animate or human characteristics to an inanimate object or an abstract entity. These characteristics may include emotions, sensations, physical gestures, desires and even the power of speech. The following example presents the use of personification:

*Delicious starts right here* (Mc Donald's Parung)

In advertising, a primary aim is to reach a large number of people and then to persuade these readers or listeners to buy a product or a service. However, people are more likely to be persuaded and manipulated if they feel that they are being spoken to personally. A very powerful strategy for the advertiser to create an illusion of *personalization* is through the use of the pronoun "you":

*How long can you handle the seduction of a juicy, flame-broiled burger? The longer you lust, the more WHOPPER Sandwiches you get.* (Flickr)

Many messages in an advertisement make the listener infer facts and *propositions* that are not explicitly mentioned in that utterance itself. The deep and hidden nature of a message is extremely important for the advertiser. Consider the following example:

*THE THING YOU WANT WHEN YOU ORDER SALAD* (The thing)

This is an advertisement by McDonald's where the presupposition is used to manipulate people that as they order Salad they must want to eat a burger as well (people think so as the sentence is written on a background image of a burger).

In this connection it is worth mentioning device of the so-called *three-part construction* the essence of which resides in the fact that when a text is constructed in three parts it seems to have an air of completeness: just as people expect a story to have a beginning, a middle and an end, so they tend to expect a list to be constructed in three parts. The examples of fast food advertising with this stylistic device are as follows:

*5 weeks, 5 destinations, 5 tastes* (Word Press.com)

A *synecdoche* is a device which is used when a word or a phrase that refers to a part of something is replaced or substituted to refer to the whole, or vice versa. For example, ASSUE LAMB (Fast Food Items) represents the whole burger.

*Ellipsis* is the omission of a word or a phrase from a speech or writing because the omitted word is superfluous or easy to be understood from the context. Wide use of this device in the fast food advertisements is logical, as it is important to be concise, brief and to the point. Here are several examples of fast food advertisements with the use of respective grammatical/cohesive device:

*(This is the) KFC fish TWISTER. (There is) Fish in a wrap*  
– *(it is) Sarap!* (KFC- Buffalo Toasted Twister)

*(The campaign lasts) FIVE WEEKS. (And it offers) FIVE DIFFERENT TASTES* (McDonald's Unleashes America-Themed Menu in the UK)

From the examples mentioned above it can be clearly seen that fast food advertisers make an abundant use of stylistic devices to make their message more beautifully structured, distinctive and persuasive.

### Grammatical Level

This level deals with the analysis of grammatical units and aspects in advertisements such as pronouns, conjunctions, tense, voice, mood and reference.

Pronouns are considered to be the oldest word class which represent a huge group of words with one feature in common – they substitute a noun or a phrase:

*IT'S KFC CHICKEN, CHEESE AND BACON IN A WRAP!*

(Personal pronoun)

(Must Try: KFC Cheesy Bacon Twister)

*Do not eat this wall post* (Demonstrative pronoun)

(Nacho Stacker Box Meal Review)

*How long can you handle (...)?* (Interrogative pronoun)

The most commonly used *conjunction* found in fast food advertising is that of “and” in its different forms of expression (“&”, “n”).

*IT'S KFC CHICKEN, CHEESE AND BACON IN A WRAP!*

(Must Try: KFC Cheesy Bacon Twister)

*Fruit 'n yogurt parfait (...) fruit & maple oatmeal.* (Flickr)

When it comes to *tense* and *voice*, it can clearly be observed that all the advertisements use present tense forms (no past or future) and only active voice. This makes the sentences more dynamic and easier to utter and remember. The most widely used types of *mood* in the observed fast food advertisements are indicative and imperative moods:

*Delicious starts right here* (Indicative mood) (Mc Donald's Parung)

*HAVE IT YOUR WAY* (Imperative mood) (Burger King  
Suriname)

*Reference* presents the relation that exists between a linguistic expression and what it stands for in the world on a particular occasion of utterance. There are situational and textual references. Textual reference is secondary or derived from a reference in situational context. There are specific terms for situational and textual reference. Situational reference is called *exophora* or *exophoric*, whereas textual reference is *endophora*. Endophoric relations are of two types, those which look back in the text for their interpretation (*anaphoric relations*) and those which look forward to the text for their interpretation (*cataphoric relations*) (Yule, 1996). The following examples of fast food advertising have been analyzed in terms of exophoric and endophoric references:

*PRIDE OF THE NATION* (Exophoric reference) (Flickr)

This example indicates already known product.

*California maki Twister...IT'S CALIFORNIA MAKI IN A WRAP!* (Anaphoric reference) (Everything that's happening in the great metro of Manila).

*the spicy range* (Cataphoric reference) (Fast Food Restaurants)

In the above-mentioned examples, the “It” is an endophoric reference of California maki which has an anaphoric position (it refers to earlier mentioned image and name of the twister).

It becomes evident that fast food advertising is teeming with a range of various grammatical devices. These devices make the utterances more attractive, effective and call people for certain actions.

### Conclusion

The linguistic analysis of all advertisements carried out in the research mainly focused on defining and characterizing the linguostylistic devices used in fast food advertising, taking into consideration specific language levels such as lexicon, phonology, stylistics and grammar. The analysis demonstrates that nearly every advertisement uses rhetorical figures not depending on the thematic domain they come from. Finally, it can be claimed that fast food advertising uses all linguistic devices and impresses customers in many ways.

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## ԱՐԱԳ ՄՆՆՂԻ ԳՈՎԱԳՂՆԵՐԻ ԼԵԶՈՒՆ

### Մարինե Յաղուբյան

Գովագրը հասարակության անբաժանելի մասն է, հաղորդակցման այն ձևը, որը ներգործում և ազդում է առանձին անհատների որոշումների և հասարակության բարոյական արժեհամակարգի վրա: Այն սպարանքի գովագրման հիմնական տարրերից է: Մույն հոդվածի նպատակն է ցույց տալ, թե ինչպիսի լեզվաոճական հնարներ կարող են օգտագործվել արագ սննդի գովագրներում և կարգախոսներում՝ հաշվի առնելով լեզվական որոշակի մակարդակներ, ինչպիսիք են բառապաշարը, հնչյունաբանությունը, ոճաբանությունը և քերականությունը: Վերլուծությունը ցույց է տալիս, որ շատ հաճախ նմանօրինակ առանձնահատկություններով կառուցված գովագրը դրդում է սպառողին հավատալ արտադրողին՝ մղելով նրան գնել այս կամ այն սպրանքը: Հետևաբար, կարող ենք հանգել այն եզրակացության, որ արագ սննդի ոլորտում նույնպես, գովագրը, լինելով հաղորդակցության ամբողջական մաս, իր լեզվաոճական առանձնահատկություններով նպաստում է գովագրվող արտադրանքի պահանջարկի բարձրացմանը:

*Բանալի բառեր՝ արագ սննդի գովագր, լեզվի մակարդակներ, բառապաշար, հնչյունաբանություն, ոճաբանություն, քերականություն:*