

**RESEARCH ARTICLE****ISSN 2321 –3108****STYLO-RHETORICAL DEVICES IN PIDGIN ENGLISH ADVERTISEMENTS IN NIGERIA****SAMUEL AYODELE DADA**

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18/04/2013**ABSTRACT**

The study investigates the stylo-rhetorical devices adopted in some Pidgin English adverts in Nigeria with the intent of arresting the attention of the target audience. The adverts are not cool, reasoned prose, but deeply emotional works that use wrenching language, dramatic exaggeration and figurative speech. Pidgin English advertisers pass across their messages through stylistic devices such as: verse paragraphing, rhyme and rhythm created through repetition and syntactic parallelism. With these devices copywriters create messages that are musical, memorable and appealing. The present study has widened the scope of knowledge in the area of stylistics as well as that of advertising in Nigeria.

**INTRODUCTION**

The practice of advertising is as old as man himself. The urge to advertise, according to Klepper (1979:2), seems to be part of human nature evident since ancient times. Reading critically through the creation story in the Bible, one can rightly assume that the first advertisement on earth happened when the serpent in Genesis 3 advertised the qualities of the forbidden fruit to Eve and thereby aroused her desire for it. In line with the serpent's expectation, Eve, in a very captivating manner re-advertised the fruit to her husband, Adam, who also fell flat for it without any modicum of resistance. Thus, Adam and Eve became the first victims of the overwhelming power of advertisement.

Klepper (1979), states further that the oldest method of advertising used by the craftsmen was town crying. He says further that the Greeks were among those who relied on town criers to chant the arrival of ships with cargoes of wines, spices and metals; often a crier was accompanied by a musician who kept him in the right key. Town criers later became the earliest medium for public announcement in many European countries such as England. It is not known whether Nigeria pre-dates Greece and England in the use of

town criers for advertisement, what is known, however, is that the method is more prevalent in Nigeria today than in Greece and England.

As a society develops, towns and cities also expand and they are usually linked together by transport systems. It becomes evident and very economical to produce goods in one place and sell them to people living elsewhere throughout the world. In order to do this successfully, prospective buyers have to be told that the goods are on sale. This is the job done by advertisement. Without advertisement, people would neither know that goods existed nor where they could be bought.

Advertising, according to Learnthat.com LLC (2004), 'is a paid form of communicating a message by the use of various media. It is persuasive, informative, and designed to influence purchasing behaviour or thought patterns'. It is a process of drawing attention to, notifying or informing somebody of the availability something. It has to do with communicating messages with the aim of informing potential customers about products and services and how to obtain them. Adverts are usually placed anywhere an

audience can easily or frequently access them (Dada, 2010a).

According to Bovee and Arens (1989:13), advertisement is 'a communication process, a marketing process, an economic and social process or an information process, a public relation and persuasion process depending on the point of view'. Advertisement has also been defined by Daramola (1997:145) as 'any paid form of non-personal presentation and promotion of products, services, or ideas by an identifiable individual or organization'. As evident in these definitions, an advertisement in nature is as follows (cf.Dada, 2010b):

- it has an identified author
- it is a non-personal communication
- it is paid for
- it is well planned
- it targets a specific audience
- it is purposeful

Therefore, advertisement is a communicative process that informs and influences the audience. Advertising is a marketing technique useful in introducing a new product into the market. Advertisements make the public to be aware of the existence of a new product in the market and sometimes inform the target audience about the special features of a product. Again, adverts are usually done to persuade potential consumers that a particular product is superior to competing ones. Adverts also help in sustaining the marketing share of an already established product by reinforcing the benefits associated with the continued use of the product especially in the face of new entrants into the business world. A good advertising campaign will increase sales of a good product and also a very good technique of securing sales lead. Adverts build a positive image of the companies selling the products advertised. In sum, the main aim of adverts is to change the view of the audience about a particular product for the better thereby creating avenue for more sales.

The foregoing reveals advertisements as a vital marketing tool as well as a powerful communication force. It is further revealed as an action of calling the attention of people to something, especially by rapid announcement. What is more, it is a message designed to make known what we have to buy or sell, by using various channels of information – radio, television, newspaper, magazines, posters, billboards signboards and the internet.

In view of the foregoing, the various aims of advertisement can only be realised through effective communication. Many adverts are funny or memorable for semantic reasons,

relying on ambiguous words, synonyms, antonyms and various types of figurative language to create humour. Language is therefore manipulated by advertisers in order to achieve their aims. Thus, the main thrust of this paper is to analyze the various ways in which advertisers manipulate this phenomenon called language to achieve their objectives.

Although, language is a veritable tool in advertising, however, for the advertiser's language to be effective, he must take into consideration the demographic features of his audience such as their age, educational, cultural and social, political and religious background. Thus, in advertising there is always a stimulus-response through words, pictures or sounds. The advertiser ensures that each word, phrase or sentence he uses evokes the desired effects on the target audience. In other words, the message must be entertaining, instructive, informative and persuasive. Incidentally, these are the functions of a communicative act. Hence, advertisement is a form of communication which serves a commercial or public purpose.

To buy a whole page in a newspaper and leave it absolutely blank is not to advertise. To have an advertisement means that a message as well as a medium must exist. Again, for an advert to be effective and successful the language must be right and the vocabulary must be appropriate to the consumer it helps to influence. That is, the language of advertising must be translated to the language of the consumer. Wright (1981:240) cited in Igbalajobi (1999), observes that 'a primary problem in advertising is translating information about the product from the language of advertiser into the language of consumer'.

Sapir (1921) claims that man's perception of his environment is built upon the linguistic habit of a community in which he lives. In other words, the structure of the native language of an individual influences how he understands the world around him and therefore determines what he sees, feels and thinks and what he can talk about. To adapt this view to commercial advertisement in Nigeria where English is used as a second language (L2) in a non-native environment means that the Nigerian advertiser is expected to see the world through his first language (L1). Thus, if the first language becomes the instrument which guides him in observing the world, in reacting to it and in expressing his feelings about the world, then Pidgin English comes in handy. Pidgin English is a better option than the mother tongue (MT) or English in Nigeria in terms of its scope of coverage and its communicative value. Today, in Nigeria, Pidgin English is a foremost language of

wider communication (LWC). In fact, Pidgin is closer to the first language of Nigerians than to the English language in its syntax and expression of ideas, concepts and feelings. It emerges from the cultural well springs of the people hence, the originality with which expressions here are viewed by the speakers of the contributing languages. Indeed, the multilingual nature of the Nigeria linguistic environment has conferred on Pidgin English the language of advertisement in Nigeria. Pidgin English is used today in Nigeria to communicate, informally though, with a wide and disparate audience. Thus, a Nigeria multilingual setting naturally calls for a neutral language and Pidgin English has come to fill that gap. The reason behind this is that Nigeria writers including advertisers do not find writing in indigenous languages attractive because of poor readership.

#### **Pidgin English**

According to the *Encyclopaedia Britannica* (Vol. 22:803) pidgin dates back to the 17<sup>th</sup> century when pidgin was termed 'bastard jargon'. About this time, many pidgins based on different languages developed around the continents but among the universally known pidgins are those based on the European Languages such as Pidgin Portuguese, French, Spanish, German, Dutch and English. Thus, Nigerian Pidgin English is a product of the contact between Nigerian indigenous languages and the English language in the Nigerian environment.

The contact of English with indigenous languages of Nigeria led to the development of Pidgin English. The source language is English while Nigerian languages form the substrates which, however, determine its phonological, morphological and semantic features by lending concepts and lexical items to its structural make-up. Thus, Nigerian Pidgin English is a code which exhibits features of Nigerian languages which may be mutually intelligible to only Nigerians living in Nigeria.

Historically, Nigerian Pidgin English served as a language of trade for communication between Europeans and Nigerians living along the Nigerian coast. Pidgin English is considered useful in contemporary advertising in Nigeria today because it could be learnt easily. Its vocabulary is drawn from English while all the other linguistic features are from the Nigerian indigenous languages. To Mafeni (1971:95) Nigerian Pidgin English 'is essentially a product of the process of urbanisation'. The rapidly growing towns and cities of Nigeria have increasingly become the melting pots of the many tribes and races which constitute Nigeria and Pidgin seems to be the lingua franca in these places. Today, many town and city dwellers are at least bilingual in Pidgin English

and an indigenous language. Todd (1974:1) defines Pidgin as a 'marginal language which arises to fulfil certain restricted communication needs among people who have no common language'.

Nigerian Pidgin is central to the lives of many Nigerians and it has become first language for many in Warri and Sapele areas of Delta State of Nigeria. There is the claim that Nigerian Pidgin has creolized in these parts of Nigeria. It is common to hear Pidgin English used when transacting business for instance in the market place and in the barracks across the nation.

Pidgin English is usually regarded as an informal language and thus best suited for informal situations where verbal interactions are incontestable. Informal interaction includes interpersonal communication, trade transactions and sometimes, formal situations like radio/television broadcasts and programmes. Thus, the deliberate and conscious use of an informal language in a formal communication setting entails the use of Pidgin English in advertisement dissemination in Nigeria and this is the very purpose of the present study.

#### **Stylistics**

Stylistics, according to the *Literary Dictionary* cited in Osuala (2009:12), 'is a branch of modern linguistics devoted to the detailed analysis of literary style, or of the linguistic choices made by speakers and writers in non-literary contexts. Osuala (2009:12) herself says that 'it (Stylistics) is the description and analysis of the variability of linguistic forms in actual language use'.

The foregoing agrees with an earlier and popular definition of stylistics by Allan, B. et. al. (1988) as:

A branch of linguistics which studies the characteristics of situationally distinctive uses of languages with reference to literary language, and tries to establish principles capable of accounting for the particular choices made by individuals and social groups in their use of language.

Thus, stylistics in its simplest form studies style. 'A writer's style may be regarded as an individual and creative utilization of the resources of language which his period, his chosen dialect, his genre and his purpose within it offer him (Spencer 1971: xii). Style according to Enkvist, et al (1971:12) should be regarded as:

A shell surrounding a pre-existing core of thought or expression; as the choice between alternative expressions; as a set of individual characteristics; as deviations from a norm; as a set of collective characteristics; and as those relations among

linguistic entities that are storable in terms of wider spans of text than the sentence.

When these six definitions of Enkvist et al are taken along with that of Spencer, it means that there is no 'style-less' language and that a stylistic idiolect exists for everybody. In addition, style, in a way, co-exists with language. Indeed, every utterance/text has a style determined by contextual probabilities.

From the foregoing, the object of stylistics is to study, criticise and expose the 'tangible manifestations of style' through both bare facts (descriptive) and 'interpretive judgements' (Cluett and Kampeas, 1979). We may ask: what are these tangible manifestations of styles? Fowler (1976:11) answers thus:

Focus on 'style' ... entails close attention to the surface structure of literary texts, and an assumption that phonology, syntax, everything which makes up rhetoric, are of paramount importance in determining the identity of the literary work.

Spencer (1971: xi) on his own part says:

To view style in literature against the background of the whole range of norms which a language develops in subserving the needs of the society

He further adds that:

... the English-speaking student, brought up from childhood in an English language environment will have no difficulties in this respect.

synchronically and diachronically, may be seen as one of the tasks awaiting the student of style.

In the light of the foregoing, stylistic analysis employs a technical ( or *institutional*) approach to the study of literature. The stylistician uses the analytic tools of the linguist in carrying out his study. Thus, stylistic analysis should be concerned with the minute details of phonological, lexical, syntactic, semantic and graphological distinctive features embedded in a given text. Again, other areas of exploit in stylistics include: wider issues of deviation from the norm, the relationship between the author and his audience, and the relationship between language and character.

Graphological analysis is text level analysis. This is a description of the physical representation of the text – visual devices. In linguistics, the maximum or highest unit of analysis is the sentence whereas, a larger unit, the text, serves as the basis of stylistic analysis. Areas of exploits in graphological analysis include: punctuation marks, shapes of words, orders of types of sentences, nature of verse paragraphs, and foregrounding. Graphological arrangement

of a text simply expresses how the intention of an author determines the form/style of a given work of writing.

#### Aim and Objectives

The main thrust of this paper is to examine the stylo-rhetorical devices advertisers employ to catch the attention of the target audience. Language is a formidable tool for information dissemination. To this end, language use is a major instrument in the advertising industry worthy of investigation.

The specific objectives of the research are to:

- i) To examine the extent to which figurative expressions abound in Pidgin-English Adverts in Nigeria;
- ii) To investigate the impact of these stylistic devices on the quality of the messages of these adverts; and
- iii) To investigate, on a general note, language use in media advertisements in Nigeria.
- iv) It is our hope that the study will help in updating knowledge in the field of advertising.

#### Research Methodology

The present data were obtained from oral versions of these adverts which are available in the electronic styletic study in Nigeria. Three adverts: **Gala**, **First Bank Man Pass Man**, and **Dunlop Elite** were selected without prejudice from a long list available on these media channels. The adverts have been transcribed and will be used as study material. The adverts are subjected to stylistics analysis with a view of providing more intellectual insights into the theory of language variation and variation in usage and also with the intent of expanding the frontiers of stylistic theories.

#### Data Presentation and analysis

##### Text 1 : Gala

Gala oh! My broder  
 Gala oh! My sister  
 Gala im taste na kampakampa  
 Gala na original sausage roll  
 Gala na original sausage roll  
 Beta cow meat inside o!  
 Gala im taste na kampa.  
 Yes o, when hunger nack your belle  
 And time to chop proper food never reach  
 Em. Make you take gala hold di hunger  
 Gala, get beta cow meat, we de make belle jolly jolly  
 And dem wrap am well well  
 So e no go quick spoil  
 Gala sweet and e dey belle full  
 And you fit buy am for everywhere

Gala oh! My broder  
 Gala oh! My sister  
 Gala o, im taste na kampa.  
**Text 2 : Dunlop Elite Na Baba**  
 If you need tyre aah!  
 Wey no dey tear aah!  
 Dem tyre wey dem test!  
 Dem tyre wey dem trust!  
 Dat tyre na Dunlop elite  
 I say, Dunlop elite, na baba o  
 Dunlop elite e strong  
 Dunlop elite na baba o.  
 Dunlop elite de kampe  
 Dunlop elite na baba o  
 Dunlop elite go last tire  
 Dunlop elite na baba o  
 Mn, na im beta for Nigeria roads  
 Dunlop elite na correct tyre  
 Dunlop elite na baba o  
 Dunlop elite, na kampe  
 Dunlop elite na baba o  
 Hm, gidi, gidi power!  
 Dunlop elite na baba o  
 Nigerian number one tyre  
 Dunlop elite na baba o  
 Dunlop elite. tested and trusted !

**Text 3: First Bank, Man Pass Man**

I say, man pass man, bank pass bank o  
 First Bank, na u be our bank  
 For now and for many, many years to come o  
 First Bank na u we go trust  
 First Bank na u be number one  
 First Bank u na well done o  
 De Bank wey balance well for ground gidigba  
 First Bank u na well done o  
 De Bank wey de helep big and small business o  
 First Bank u na well done o  
 Experience dey, people dey, go come no dey dem matter  
 First Bank, go make your moni safe well well  
 First Bank o, u na well done o  
 Na im make we trust First Bank oooh  
 First Bank o, u na well done o.

**Findings**

The language of advertising in Nigeria usually deviates from the normal usage of English. The primary intention of advertising is to attract customers so as to promote sales. Hence, language use in advertisements is invariably persuasive. Very often persuasion is achieved by means of

exaggerations embellished by colourful words and sound effects. Other methods include certain structural devices such as rhyme and rhythm, repetition, parallelism, and so on. Armed with these tips, we analyse the present data as follows:

**Graphology:** It is observed that all the adverts carry a poetic structure. The stylistic choice of poetry or verse paragraphing with respect to these texts is probably hinged on the fact that poems are ordinarily written to be sung just as adverts are usually written to be sung. Meanwhile, since these texts are meant to be recited like songs, they manifest no special foregrounding features like capitalization of special words, asterism, underscoring, italicization, ellipsis, etc. The graphological arrangements of these texts simply depict the intentions of their authors. However, text 1 and text 2 are written with two stanzas for each while the third text is of one stanza. These variations in structure can be attributed to the choice of the authors, since no other reason seems plausible.

**Paragraph:** As noted already, the texts have been so structured in verse form typical of the kind of arrangement in poetry. This pattern has resulted into creating texts of very high literary quality. Again, this arrangement in verse form has resulted into composing Gala Advert in 18 lines, Dunlop Advert in 23 lines and First Bank Advert in 15 lines. Ordinarily, if these were to be composed in normal prose form, the adverts would have taken fewer lines. The other graphological device to be examined next is punctuation marks.

**Punctuation marks:** Three punctuation marks evident in the text are: comma, exclamation marks and the full stop. The comma takes the lead appearing fourteen times in all. Next to the comma is the exclamation mark which appears nine times in all. In frequency, the full stop appears only three times. These punctuation marks have all been used conventionally. Exclamatory mark ranks very high here because 'thought and emotion are so intimately related that no successful poem expresses one without the other' (Egudu, 1985:15).

**Rhetorical devices:** Rhetorical devices evident in the texts include: parallelism, repetition and alliteration. These are artistically employed to create rhyme and rhythm. According to Egudu (1985: 34);

One major characteristic of rhythm or movement ...is *repetition*. The rising and the falling points occur so repeatedly that a definite pattern is established. It is this repetition or recurrence that makes rhythm a vital factor the organization of the musical beauty of poetry. But repetition

does not imply monotony, for there is also in rhythm that alternation which makes for variety.

Egudu further adds that sometimes the appeal of a statement depends almost entirely on its rhythm. According to Lucas (1998: 277) rhythm is 'the pattern of sound in a speech created by the choice and arrangement of words'. Indeed, rhyme and rhythm are built into these texts through repetition. There are syntactic as well as lexical repetitions here. The syntactic repetitions shall be treated here as parallelism while lexical repetition will be treated simply as repetition.

**Parallelism:** Parallelism is 'the similar arrangement of a pair or series of related words, phrases or sentences' ( Lucas 1998:278). When this general pattern is modified we have : synonymous parallelism, antithetical parallelism, synthetic parallelism i.e. developing the theme of the first line in the second line, and climatic parallelism, i.e. the first member of a couplet is incomplete and the second member partially repeats it so as to complete the thought. Of these four, the commonest type in the data is the synonymous parallelism as in : Text 2: **Dem tyre wey dem test, Dem tyre wey dem trust.** Indeed, **Dunlop na baba o** was repeated eight times in the advert. Meanwhile, the phrase **Dunlop elite** was repeated sixteen times in the advert, that is, virtually in all the lines. Antithetical parallelism is in data as in **Gala oh! My bride, Gala oh! My sister. Gala na original sauge roll** was said twice. In text 3 **First Bank una well done o** was said five times to create synonymous parallelism.

**Repetition :** According to Lucas (1998:279), repetition is reiteration of the same word or set of words at the beginning or end of successive clauses or sentences. Thus, in text 1: **Gala** is a word constantly repeated at the beginning of many sentences in the text. **Gala oh!** got repeated at the beginning of five lines. Other repeated words include **kampakampa, jolly jolly, well well.** In text 2 **Dunlop elite**, the real message was repeated at the beginning of all the lines. Repeated words/ phrases are: **Dem tyre, gidii gidii, tested trusted.** In text three. The phrase **First Bank** was repeated severally in the text and words such as **many many, well well,** were repeated.

**Rhyme:** Owoeye (2010 :46) says 'Rhyme, alliteration and assonance are ways of creating repetitive patterns of sound. Rhyme consists of identical or similar sounds placed at the end of lines or at predictable location within lines'. Examples are:

Text 1: Broder, Sister in lines 1and 2; 16 and 17

**Alliteration:** According to Lucas (1998:279) this is the 'repetition of the initial consonant sound of close or adjoining words'. Examples include:

Text 2 : d, t and g:

Dat tyre na **Dunlop elite**

Dunlop elite, **tested and trusted**

Dem tyre **gidii gidii**

Text 3: m, p, and b

I say, **man pass man, bank pass bank**

First **bank**, na u **be our bank**

#### Discussion and conclusion

Copywriters, like poets, sometimes seek to exploit the rhythm of language. Reading through the data above, there is little meaning here. However, the advertisers have here enhanced the impact of their words and therefore their ideas by catching up their listeners in an arresting string of sounds. Thus, advertisers create appeal from the combination of sounds they use thereby bequeathing on such texts an almost musical cadence. To emphasize the cadence of these texts, they have been presented as if they were poetry rather than prose. What is more, the basic stylistic devices employed by advertisers to enhance their artistry as revealed in this analysis include: graphology parallelism, repetition and alliteration.

As evident in the foregoing, 'stylistics investigates all the devices which aim at some specific expressive end and this embraces far more than literature or even rhetoric' (Wellek and Warren, 1982:178). Style could be choice or selection, which may equally be lexical as well as grammatical, or even code choice, as in this analysis. Thus, the concept of choice in style means the author's freedom in his choice of code, words and sentences. All these depend on the cultural and social background of the audience he is trying to reach.

Advertisers have realised that to reach a wider audience their adverts must be done in a language that acts across ethnic barriers. The only language that satisfies this criterion in Nigeria is Pidgin English. The use of Pidgin English is now gaining popularity across the country. Even government agencies now use it to run some of their adverts.

In advertising, however, the copywriter has greater freedom of selections of words, which he effectively enjoys. Many different factors pre-dispose him to choose in one way rather than another, such as, the medium for which the advertisement is defined, the type of audience for which it is intended; the very fact that he is writing an advertisement not a political speech and other forms of compression. Granted that the copywriter is steered towards certain choices by the set of conditions for which he is writing, he is

not under any compulsion to write according to a pre-decided formula which leaves no room for originality. Thus, an interesting aspect of the language of advertising is its delicate compromise between following a prescribed path of advertising clichés and exercising the freedom to deviate from it and even from the rules of the adopted language itself. Nigerian Pidgin English in itself suggests unorthodoxy. The language is a deviation from the norms of the English language. This probably explains why Nigerian Pidgin English fits comfortably into the advertising world in Nigeria.

The present data, once again, confirms Pidgin English as the language of the masses in Nigeria because it has no class distinction. The effectiveness of this language in adverts is due to the fact that it caters for all the sections of the society. Moreover, its versatility in expressing indigenous notions tends to strike desired goals in the mind of all its users. Indeed, Pidgin English adverts are enjoyed by all and sundry in Nigeria owing to its dramatic presentation, its humorous nature and twisted syntax. Definitely, it will continue to enjoy a pride of place in the comity of Nigerian languages, Nigerian English inclusive, as far as commercial adverts are concerned.

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