

**USING ENGLISH IN ADVERTISING: SOCIOLINGUISTIC CONSIDERATIONS*****Mariana NIȚA, Tamara MATEI****Catedra Limbi Germanice*

În prezentul articol, autorii încearcă să motiveze utilizarea limbii engleze în publicitate din perspectiva sociolingvisticii. Anunțurilor publicitare le este caracteristic limbajul lor propriu, funcția primordială a căruia este de a comunica și de a convinge. Limba engleză este asociată în mintea multor consumatori cu afluența, progresul, calitatea superioară, tehnologiile avansate etc. Anume aceste asociații fac ca limba engleză să fie utilizată în publicitate chiar și în țările în care această limbă nu este vorbită.

Nowadays the language has a great and powerful influence over people and their behaviour. This is especially true in the fields of marketing and advertising. The choice of language to convey specific messages with the intention of influencing people is vitally important.

Today the advertisements are really a reflection of our society. During the last decades they have become an inseparable part of the people's life. As we know, the main reason behind commercial advertising is to increase familiarity and good-will with the name and image of the company.

Advertisements have their own particular language. Their aim is to communicate information about the company and the image they want to create to the audience, or rather the buying public. Words are most often used in advertisements to reaffirm the impression that companies want the audience to feel. Words are frequently used to tie the pictures/images created in advertisements to the product they are trying to sell.

Advertisements are a common and accepted part of daily life, in print in magazines and newspapers, as well as in vision on television and cinema screens, and increasingly on the internet, as well as on radio.

The phenomenon of advertising exists in all market systems. The way it is regulated and thus impacts on the receivers varies from system to system, but it undoubtedly influences society to behave in a certain way. Advertising creates the need for products and services that could be indispensable or, more probably, just to enhance your lifestyle.

Secondary functions include the transmission of information and entertaining. However, advertisements never exist merely to fulfil these functions, the overriding function is to persuade the consumer to do or think something.

Advertising has infiltrated every sphere of society: arts, culture, sport, fashion, politics and even religion, the reason being that no discipline can survive in a competitive market without advertising itself or being used by products/companies as a vehicle to promote itself. It stands to reason that advertisements yield great economic and cultural power and significance in dictating norms, values, lifestyles and consumer trends.

Advertisements have become a mirror of consumer needs and aspirations, but also a generator of higher ideals and wants. Advertisers and marketers thus generate systems of meaning, prestige, and identity by associating their products with certain life-styles, symbolic values, and pleasures.

Advertisements are no longer just transmitters of functional product information but of social symbolic information that contributes to the shaping of cultural tendencies within society. Goods function as communicators and satisfiers – they inform and mediate social relations, telling individuals what they must buy to become fashionable, popular, and successful while inducing them to buy particular products to reach these goals.

English is the current lingua franca of international business, science, technology and aviation, and has replaced French as the lingua franca of diplomacy since World War II. The wide-spread use of English was advanced by the prominent international role played by English-speaking nations. The modern trend to use English outside of English-speaking countries has a number of sources. Ultimately, the use of English in a variety of locations across the globe is a consequence of the reach of the British Empire. But the establishment of English as an international lingua franca after World War II was mostly a result of the spread of English via cultural and technological exports from the United States as well as its embedding in international institutions. English is also regarded by some as an unofficial global lingua franca owing to the economic, cultural, and geopolitical power of most of the developed Western nations in world financial and business

institutions. English is also overwhelmingly dominant in scientific and technological communications, and all of the world's major scientific journals are published in English. Advertising is not an exception from that. We witness the phenomenon of using English more and more frequently in advertisements even in countries in which this language is not always taught as a second language in schools.

The use of English loanwords in various domains is described in a large body of literature. When it comes to developing nations, one of the most common explanations for such a phenomenon is the superiority attributed to what is foreign, especially when business and advertising are involved. People of less affluent nations tend to perceive products of more developed and more affluent nations as superior. Having realized the consumer's attitude towards the products with foreign brand names, the manufacturers tend to use English words in their strategic marketing whether in newspapers, television, signs or posters. The English brand name gives these products credibility and implies superior standards of production. What is more interesting is the fact that languages such as Japanese and Chinese, which are not very perceptive to foreign words, have yielded to influence from English. When it comes to affluent countries such as Japan the use of English in advertising can be explained by the desire for westernization or by the preference for shorter words and a search for precision in the naming of new objects [Bhatia: 198].

Therefore, if one chooses to use a very obscure language that the population of the receiving culture has no access to or no observed attitudes towards, the desired effect will obviously not be achieved. Being a language of wider communication in most parts of the world today, English has become a viable choice in many environments. English seems to be in a unique position at present where it is capable of:

- symbolizing modernity,
- being accessible enough to be intelligible,
- having linguistic properties (such as size of words) which make it attractive,
- providing extra-linguistic material, to quench the creative thirst of advertisers and businesspeople all over the world.

In the Romanian-speaking environment more often successfully are those untranslatable slogans which contain words from the minimal vocabulary of foreign words of the ordinary pupil of high school. This factor in many cases explains successful introduction in the market of such foreign untranslatable slogans, as:

*Nike - Just do it.*

*Sony - It's a Sony*

*Panasonic. Ideas for life.*

*Orange. The future is bright.*

*McDonald's. I'm loving it.*

The existence of foreign advertising slogan in the original language in the Romanian -speaking environment has the right to existence. Practice of translation of advertising shows that English slogans in the Romanian - speaking environment call for the certain conditions.

*The first condition* undertakes target audience to know English.

*The second* is that the presence of the English text in a slogan is justified, as it emphasizes its foreign origin.

*The third condition:* the slogan should be extremely laconic to be well perceived and remembered by the consumer, for which this language even known, nevertheless is not native.

In many advertisements English is used together with the native language of a country. Headings, slogans and logos are always in English. The less important information is in the language of the receivers. The product is of American origin and thus always associated with the country, its culture and people. Presenting the advertisements in English creates a natural connotation with these aspects. Young people in Europe view English as exotic, different and hip. Their own languages and cultures do not provide the same level of desirability as English or American English, for that matter.

Most languages take vocabulary pertaining to new technology such as computer terminology directly from English. Very few own terms are created in another language, the reason being that English is a world language, and the language of media and film. Young people especially relate to film, media and technology and are thus familiar with English terminology. Thus when an advertiser wants to address the youth, English words and expressions would be used in advertisements to attract their attention. The perception also exists that English is young, hip and exotic, as opposed to the familiar own culture and language.

The advertising campaigns for multinational companies and their products such as *Coca-Cola* are created in the USA. Few or no adaptations or cultural changes are made to suit the local culture.

English provides linguistic tools that individuals can use in personal and highly creative ways, making it possible for the creator of advertisements to catch the audience's attention by using language in an innovative manner that motivates the use of loanwords.

Two major groups of borrowings can be identified. The first group demonstrates a more sophisticated use of English which relies on conscious choice and puns on words, such as naming a pet shop *Hotdog*. The second group consists of names (many of which result from clipping) that sound like, or are indeed English, but do not intuitively fit the business or brand they represent. This category produces the most bizarre example, such as a fashion store called *Stroke*.

In the majority of cases English naming is mainly a resource to attract every person rather than the international community. The average individual is attracted to and has fallen into the habit of accepting and even hoping for English brand names. Thus, habit can be considered as another motivation for English business-naming and use in advertising. The usage of English, especially not in very affluent countries, is identified as part of the shared experience between the Western world and developing countries. As such, the use of English in advertising becomes part of the local culture and is not even perceived as an extraordinary event by the ordinary people.

A particular lexical item expected to be found among English borrowings is the word *centre*. While its incorporation cannot be explained by a gap in any language, a preference for shorter words, an initial association with prestige seems to account for its frequency in business and brand-naming. The association of English and prestige can be what first introduces the lexical item in the language, but what keeps it there is its fast incorporation to the local lexicon.

Part of literature on borrowings has relied on a hypothesis of lexical gap to explain why borrowings occur. Evidence against the lexical gap hypothesis can be obtained through some contrastive examples of Romance languages. While most of these languages have found an alternative to *computer mouse* (*șoricel*) and *shopping centre* (*centrul comercial*), these objects are still referred to with respective English terms. Although they have equivalents in most languages, these terms are true borrowings in the sense that they have been totally assimilated phonologically and morphologically. Likewise, *light*, *diet*, *delivery* could be easily replaced by native words, but they are not. Thus, in advertising *Coca Cola light* or *Coca Cola diet* are common and understood by every individual.

This phenomenon can be explained by the apparent neutrality of English (especially when it comes to multilingual contexts) and a perception that English is an effective code of communication [4, p.140].

The historical connection between English and advertising is undeniable. Crystal observes that in the 1950s the amount of money spent in advertising in the USA was far greater than in any other country [2, p.136]. Knowing that there is such a close history between the development of advertising and the use of the English language as the medium of communication with customers makes the current phenomenon of English use in advertising throughout the world more intricate than a deterministic theory such as linguistic imperialism can account for. Apart from that, a large majority of advertisement agencies are subsidiaries of American and British agencies and the perfect environment for the use of English is set. Such foreign and mainly American dominance makes the use of English in advertising explicable.

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