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Lexical Broadening Process of English Cosmetics advertisements: A Lexical Pragmatic Study

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Abstract

The advertisements (henceforth ads) have a vital role in the world of commercialization if it is employed in the suitable manner. Cosmetics ads have an integral part of our daily lives since the arrival of internet. Accordingly, there still exists an obvious gap to be filled by approaching these ads from the perspective of lexical pragmatics (henceforth LP). The problem addressed in the current study is simply represented by the sort of uncertainty that may exist over the type of lexical broadening processes employed by the designers of these ads and the strategies they employ to influence their consumers and get them involved into these ads. The present paper aims to investigate the lexical broadening processes employed by the advertisers to construct their intended meanings and messages. This study is based on the hypotheses that the advertisers depend heavily

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on lexical broadening processes to convey their ideas and intended messages. It is also hypothesized that by using various lexical broadening processes, the advertisers express the intended meaning in their ads. The selected cosmetics ads have been analyzed in the light of Wilson and Carston (2007) model. The analysis of the selected ads has shown that the advertisement-markers depend on lexical broadening processes because they are heavily used in the selected ads.

Keywords: Lexical Pragmatic; Lexical Broadening and Cosmetics ads.

عملية توسيع معجمي للإعلانات الإنجليزية عبر الإنترنت: دراسة معجمية براغماتية

هدير شهاب حمدان - طالبة ماجستير

جامعة ديالى _ كلية التربية للعلوم الإنسانية

و

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جامعة ديالى _ كلية التربية للعلوم الإنسانية

المستخلص

تلعب الإعلانات دورًا حيويًا في عالم التسويق إذا تم توظيفها بالطريقة المناسبة. إن إعلانات مستحضرات التجميل جزءًا من حياتنا اليومية منذ وصول الإنترنت. وفقًا لذلك ، لا تزال هناك فجوة واضحة يجب سدها من خلال تحليل هذه الإعلانات من منظور التداولية المعجمية (LP). يتم تمثيل المشكلة التي تم تناولها في الدراسة الحالية ببساطة بنوع عدم اليقين الذي قد يكون موجودًا حول نوع عمليات التوسيع المعجمي التي يستخدمها مصمم هذه الإعلانات والاستراتيجيات التي يستخدمونها للتأثير على المستهلكين وإشراكهم في هذه الإعلانات. تهدف الدراسة إلى التحقق من عمليات التوسيع المعجمي التي يستخدمها المعلنون لتكوين معانيهم ورسائلهم المقصودة. تستند هذه الدراسة إلى الفرضيات ، أن يعتمد المعلنون بشكل كبير على عمليات التوسيع المعجمي لنقل أفكارهم والرسائل المقصودة. من المفترض أيضًا أنه باستخدام عمليات التوسيع المعجمية المختلفة ، يعبر المعلنون عن المعنى المقصود في إعلاناتهم. تم تحليل إعلانات مستحضرات التجميل المختارة في ضوء إنموذج (Wilson and Carston 2007). أظهر تحليل الإعلانات المختارة أن صانعو الإعلان يعتمدون على عمليات التوسيع المعجمية لأنها مستخدمة بكثافة في الإعلانات المختارة.

الكلمات الدالة: المعجمية البراغماتية، التوسيع المعجمي واعلانات مستحضرات التجميل.

1. Introduction

Leech and Short (2007: 206) argue that “Language is a vehicle of communication, whereby one person conveys messages to another for a range of different purposes, e.g., informing, ordering, persuading, reassuring”.

In the field of advertising, the persuasive function of language is particularly important. Although it may encompass other purposes, advertising language can be said to be primarily persuasive or appellative, aiming to persuade the recipient as much as possible to bring about a desired action. To fulfill this function, the advertisers spend a lot of time and allocate budgets to create ads. Part of this is making good use of the resources of the language. That is why the advertising language is carefully planned and chosen and nothing is left to chance to make it more effective, influential and therefore more convincing (Ibid).

The main characteristics of ads language were reviewed and identified by Donnell and Todd (1980: 104-111) . They describe it as easy because it is characterized by short sentences and is often characterized by colloquialism and the use of imperative structures. Other distinguishing features include coordination over subordination. Passive words are avoided and the vocabulary is taken from everyday colloquial language. Additionally, negatives tend to be used very rarely, usually appearing in an emphasized position to emphasize a product's particular merits. The past tense is almost avoided, the present is preferred, implying timelessness. In addition, evaluative adjectives are often used. Comparatives and superlatives are used occasionally. Advertising tends to condense meaning. This is often done through a compound adjective like ‘**country fresh**’ and the extensive premodification of nouns. (Ibid.)

By making a brief analysis of ads language, Wellace (1981:269-272) mentioned some of the features e.g. the active is frequently used that means the passive is not favored- as well as there is a tendency to use the informal personal simple style.

2. On Defining Lexical Pragmatics

Many scholars have defined LP from different perspectives. Blutner (1998: 115) argues that LP is a research field that tries to give a systematic and explanatory account of pragmatic phenomena that are connected with the meaning of lexical items. In the same vein, Blutner and Solsted (2001: 1) claim that LP is a particular account of the distribution of work between lexical semantics (henceforth LS) and pragmatics. It accumulates the idea of essential semantics under-specification in the dictionary with a theory of pragmatic strengthening dependent upon conversational implicatures. In this field, linguists, philosophers, cognitive scientists, and relevance theorists have all contributed.

In relevance theory (henceforth RT), LP was first used by Wilson in her 2003 paper “Relevance and Lexical Pragmatics”. Wilson (2003: 273) defines LP as “a branch of linguistics that investigates the process by which linguistically-specified (literal) word meanings are modified in use”. The main idea of this definition is that the contribution of lexical items to utterance interpretation contains more than simply accessing the lexically encoded meaning and putting them in the correct slots in the corresponding semantic representation.

Hall (2017:85) justifies that LP searches the processes by which the meanings of words are pragmatically adjusted in context, bringing about communicated concepts that are different from the concepts coded by the words used. A Popular instance is the verb ‘**drink**’ being used to refer to a narrow meaning such as drink large quantities of alcohol.

Walaszewska (2015: 32) concludes that in the light of these definitions LP examines those aspects, processes or phenomena associated with word meanings as they are modified in use that cannot be accounted for by semantics.

3. Lexical Pragmatics and Word Meaning

Carston (2012:607-608) contends that sentences are used to communicate thoughts (truth-conditional contents) and words are used to communicate concepts, that are constituents of thoughts. It is now quite widely accepted that the meaning that a word used to express or communicate on an occasion of utterance is often distinguished from the meaning it has as an expression type in the system of language, i.e. its standing or encoded meaning. This view is shared by some linguists, by pragmatists and 'contextualist' philosophers of language working within relevance theory cognitive-scientific framework. Carston aims to consider the nature of the context-free word meaning that is the starting point for the pragmatic processes which deliver the occasion-specific meaning (the concept meant or communicatively intended by the speaker).

On the other hand, Saeed (2016: 51) illustrates that the traditional descriptive purposes of the word meaning are **(a) to exemplify the meaning of each word in the language;** and **(b) to show how words meanings in a language are connected.** These purposes are closely related since, the meaning of a word is defined by its relations with other words in the language. We can follow structuralists' thinking and see that a word is related not only to other words in the same sentence, but also to other related but absent words. For instance:

(1) I saw my mother just now.

We know from the sentence above that the speaker saw a woman. There are two ways of viewing this: the first is to say that this knowledge follows from the relationship between the uttered word mother and the related unspoken word woman, which represents links in the vocabulary. The second is to suppose that the word mother contains a semantic element '**woman**' as a part of its meaning. It is easy to state that lexical relationship is necessary to the way speakers and listeners construct meaning. (Ibid).

In the light of this, it is important to consider the relationship between word meaning and LP. The word meaning not only depends on the linguistic knowledge of the speaker and hearer but also on the context of the utterance, the inference purpose of the speaker, knowledge about the case of those involved and so on. Therefore, the meaning is based on the manner, the time, the place, etc. of the utterance. It seems that the meaning of a word is not a set of some events or entails but a set of entities and events which our cognitive system connects in a suitable way (Fischer, 2000:7).

4. The Role of the Context

According to Sperber and Wilson (2007:4), the context is defined as a set of mentally-presented assumptions which are actually used in the interpretation of a given utterance. The assumptions may be derived from the interpretation of the preceding text, or from the observation of the speaker and his or her surroundings. Additionally, the assumptions may be derived from common sense, cultural knowledge, scientific knowledge, or any other shared or specialised information that the hearer has access to at the time of the utterance. For example:

(2) People are drinking.

The meaning of the statement will keep on changing depending on the contextual knowledge of the hearer. The hearer would interpret the word '**drink**' to signify alcohol when the speaker pointed to a bar in a shopping centre. If the utterance is made at home

in a house, the first interpretation comes into the hearer's mind is to drink water. In this case context is crucial in determining the meaning of the word **'drink'**.

The choice of context by the hearer affects how the message is understood. Once a listener is aware of the contextual assumptions that must be made, the intended meanings are easily deduced logically.

(3) Helen treats other people's money as if it were her own.

From the example above, if we assume that Helen treats her own money very carefully, it will make sense that she treats other people's money very carefully. On the other hand; if we assume that she spends her own money the way she likes, then it follows logically that she spends other people's money any way she likes (Ibid:3).

This leads to the conclusion that context selection identifies the hearer's interpretation of implicit meaning of utterances. This is related to the fact that contextual assumptions affect the outcome of the interpretation process, then in order to recognize the intended interpretation of an utterance (the speaker's meaning) the hearer must make use of the intended context (the intended set of contextual assumptions (Khachula,2013:29).

5. Conversational Implicature

Similar to conventional implicatures, conversational implicatures, also referred to as non-natural meaning by Grice (cited in Dascal, 2003:8), are defined by several pragmatists. Conversational implicature is defined by Yule (2000: 35-36) as an indirect or implicit meaning of an utterance stemmed from context that is not present from its conventional use. For example, a listener listening **"hamburger is hamburger"** assumes that the speaker is cooperative and conveying something more than the words imply. This additional meaning is called an implicature. The speaker expects the listener to be able to tell which implicature is meant in this context based on what is already known (Cruse, 2006:36).

6. Lexical Broadening

Walaszewska (Ibid:117) illustrates that broadening involves using a word "to convey a more general sense than the encoded one, with a consequent expansion of the linguistically-specified denotation". It is believed that, unlike narrowing, broadening does not preserve literalness, since one or more of the logical properties of the lexically encoded concept can be omitted and the resulting ad hoc concept goes beyond the bounds of the lexically encoded concept.

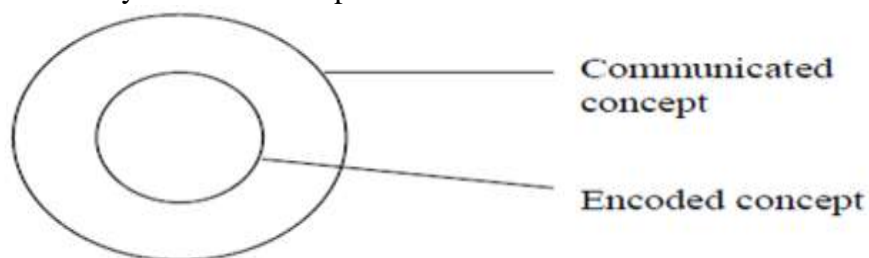


Figure (1) Lexical Broadening, Adopted from Wilson (2007:4, cited in Koeh, 2013:14)

As predicted by the relevance theoretical framework, cases of broadening form a continuum with no sharp dividing points between them. Depending on the extent to which and in what respect the ad hoc term goes beyond the limits of the lexically coded term, four varieties can be distinguished: approximation, category extension, hyperbole and metaphor. These varieties differ primarily in terms of the amount of looseness: if

hyperbole involves a substantial broadening of the lexically encoded concept, the broadening in approximation, may be almost imperceptible.(Ibid).

As an example of broadening stated by Campbell (1998:267) the word ‘dog’ referred to a specific breed of dogs but now it is used to refer to any dog.

6.1 Approximation

According to Walaszewska (2015:29) approximation is defined as a variety of broadening “where the interpretation of a word with a restricted core meaning is extended to a family of related interpretations”.

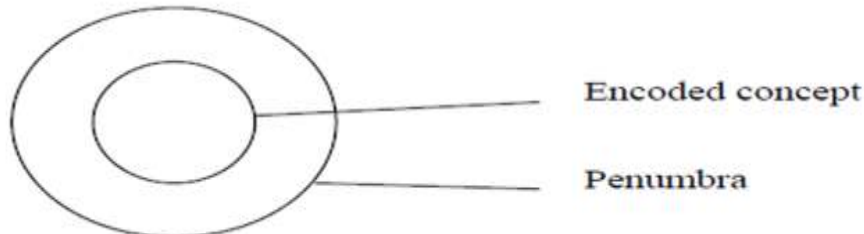


Figure (2) Approximation Adopted from Wilson (2007:4, cited in Koech, 2013:15)

Consider the following example :

(4) The bottle is empty.

In (4) the word ‘empty’ is used to mean ‘nearly empty’ to describe a bottle which may still contain some drops of liquid.

The high context-sensitivity of approximation is indicated by Wilson and Sperber (2002: 596). An expression may be treated as a suitable approximation in one context and not in another . There are different degrees of approximation which depend on context, for example:

(5) My garden is flat.

(6) My country is flat.

Both cannot be comprehended as containing true flatness but in fact there is more flatness in the description of the speaker’s garden than in the case of country (Walaszewska, 2015: 118).

6.2 Hyperbole

Hyperbole is justified by Wilson and Carston (2007:235) as it involves a more substantial broadening of the lexically encoded concept than approximation, “and hence a greater departure from the encoded meaning”.

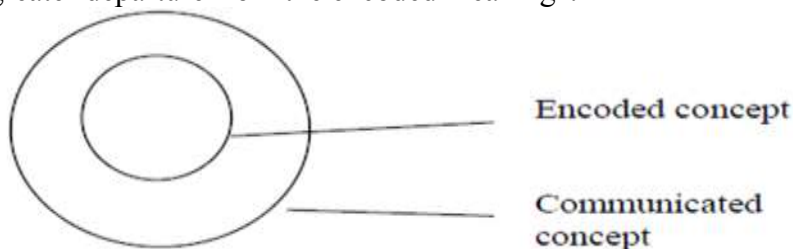


Figure (3) Hyperbole, Adopted from Wilson (2007:5, cited in Koech, 2013:16)

To illustrated, consider the following example:

(7) You are a genius!

In (7) the lexically encoded concept ‘genius’ is broadened to **genius*** not only to denote people with extraordinary intellectual power, but as well those who have proved to be substantially cleverer than expected.(Walaszewska, 2015:121)

6.3 Metaphorical Extension

Metaphorical extension is defined by Blutner (2011:103) as “a type of broadening that extends the space of possible interpretation much more radically than approximation.”

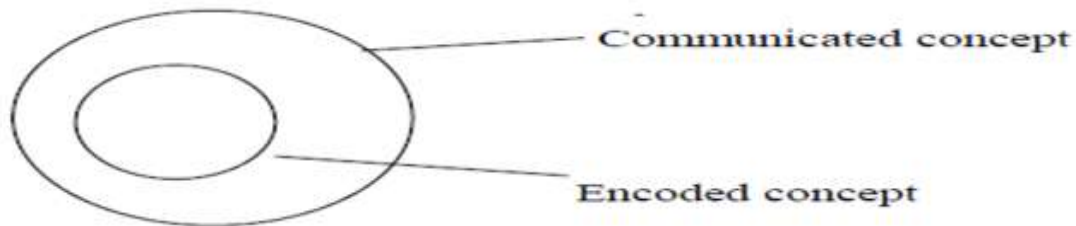


Figure (4) Metaphorical Extension, Adopted from: Wilson (2007:5, cited in Koech, 2013: 17)

It is also regarded as “a still more radical variety of broadening than hyperbole, involving a greater departure from the encoded meaning” What distinguishes it from category extension is that metaphorical broadening is typically based on relatively peripheral, or at least contingent properties.

(8) She is a chameleon.

The lexically encoded concept ‘**chameleon**’ in (8) is expanded to **chameleon*** to denote not only lizards with the ability to change their appearance (by changing their skin color), but also humans who share this encyclopedic trait in some way with real ones Chameleons share, namely are people who change their appearance (changing their hair color and clothing) frequently and easily. The ability to change their appearance is not a defining characteristic of chameleons.(Wałaszewska, 2015: 122).

6.4 Category Extension

Sperber and Wilson (2008:91) define category extension as “extending a word with a relatively precise sense to a range of items that clearly fall outside its linguistically specified denotation, but that share some contextually relevant properties with items inside the denotation”.

Category extension may be illustrated through the use of salient brand names such as Kleenex for a tissue of any brand or Xerox for any photocopier, and similar uses of personal names and common nouns. (Ibid:94).

(9) I don’t believe it – they’ve appointed another Chomsky.

‘**Chomsky**’ could be understood as conveying an ad hoc concept **Chomsky*** representing a broader category of persuasive proponents of a particular linguistic approach.(Wilson and Carston, 2007:12)

7. Advertisements

Advertisement is defined by Vestergaard and Schrøder (1985: 13-4) as “Verbal / non- verbal public ,one way communication”. In most ads verbal and non-verbal communications usually take place. Nonverbal communication is mediated through gestures and poses. Advertising is a type of public communication that is only aimed at an anonymous audience. One-way communication means that a speaker/writer addresses an anonymous audience that cannot reply him (Ibid.).

A marketing-oriented definition clarifies some aspects of advertising that are also relevant for the communicative perspective. Sally and et al.,(1991:400) use a more complex formula to describe the meaning of advertising. “Advertising is a paid form of non-personal communication about an organization and its products that is transmitted to a target audience through a mass medium such as television, radio, newspapers, magazines, direct mail, public transport, outdoor displays or catalogues”. The two new relevant components to be included in this definition are non-personal communication

and mass medium. Both are closely related. Mass media obviously serve mass communication. For the current purpose, mass communication is characterized by three aspects. Firstly, it is aimed at a large audience from a single source, i.e., there is, for example, a printed for many readers. Second, mass media follow the principle of one-way communication, i.e., there is only one direction for the message to flow, from the advertiser to a large audience. In principle, no feedback is intended and there is no exchange between the communication partners. Third, it is consequently impersonal. Not the individual in the crowd is addressed personally, but the entire target group.(Ibid).

Cook (2001:14-16) classifies ads by product, technology, and consumer in addition to the medium criterion. Pilatova (2015:8) states that ads can be classified in terms of geographic area to include local, national and international, or global, again in terms of medium used to include printed or electronic, and finally in terms of their purpose , commercial or non-commercial.

Throughout the present paper, the concentration will be on the kind of ads that are cosmetics ones.

8. Methodology

8.1 Data Collection

In this paper the selected (4) cosmetics ads have been gathered randomly from the internet. In the following distribution (1) from facebook and (3) from different Websites on google.

8.2 The Adopted Model

The current study is based on Wilson and Carston (2007) model due to its suitability to the nature of the present paper and its aims A qualitative-quantitative method of analysis is adopted in this study. Below is a diagram which summarizes the elements of the adopted model.

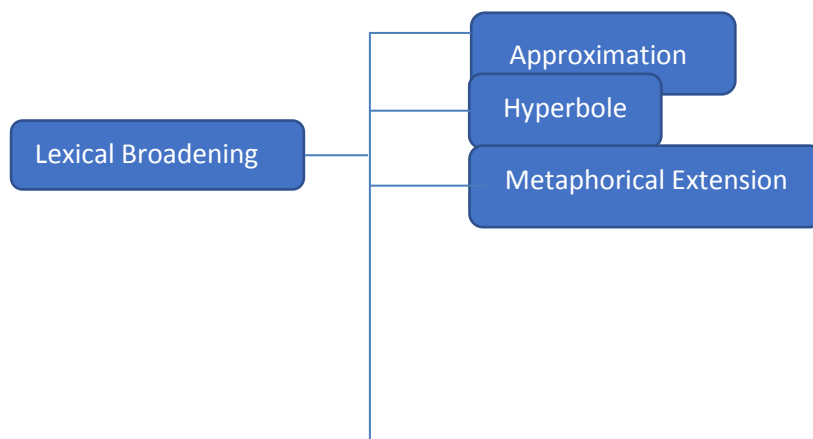


Figure (5) The Adopted Model (Wilson and Carston 2007)

9. Data Analysis

9.1 Advertisement (1)

9.1.1 Advertisement (1)



Figure (6) Ad (1)

A. On the advertisement

The seller of this product, for the purpose of attracting consumers' attention, uses many expressions. These are; 'contact', 'perfect companion', 'favorite contact', 'breathable contact', 'contact lenses', 'comfort', 'companion', 'free', 'breathable', and 'air optic'.

B. Lexical Broadening

1. Approximation

The term 'free' is considered an approximation, which means that it is approximately free from optics .

2. Hyperbole

When it is literally interpreted, the word 'breathable' means 'breathing', but here it is hyperbolically interpreted as the eye breathing through the lens.

3. Category Extension

The lexical item used to represent a broader category is 'air optic' which refers to any sub-type of this brand, so one usually uses the main name of the brand in lenses to refer to any of its sub-types.

9.1.2 Advertisement (2)



Figure (7) Ad (2)

A. On the advertisement

The producer of this ad aims to attract the people’s attention accordingly. Many words and signs are implied, such as ‘confirm’, ‘color’, ‘skin’, ‘skin color’, ‘energy level’, ‘lamp type’, ‘flash’, ‘button’, ‘300,000 flashes’, ‘sensor’, and ‘lamp’.

B. Lexical Broadening.

1.Approximation

The expression ‘300,000 flashes’ can be regarded as an approximation, which means that the blinks of this device are about 300,000.

2. Hyperbole

Hyperbolically the item ‘sensor’ indicates that by using this device, skin is sensed automatically, so it helps to promote the right skin.

3. Metaphorical Extension

The lexical vocabulary ‘lamp’ does not mean bulb but it is used metaphorically to indicate part of the laser.

9.1.3 Advertisement (3)



Figure (8) Ad (3)

A. On the advertisement

Many lexical terms and signs are utilized in the current ad in order to include the hidden meaning. These terms are ‘waste’, ‘right’, ‘dose’, ‘hypnotic poison’, ‘right dose’, ‘ultra-light’, ‘screwed cap’, ‘tip’, ‘silky’, ‘poison’, ‘formula’, and ‘Dior’.

B. Lexical Broadening

1.Hyperbole

When it is utilized, the word ‘silky’ is interpreted as hyperbole; it means that the composition of the perfume is soft as silk.

2. Metaphorical Extension

The lexical term ‘poison’ metaphorically indicates that the color of the bottle refers to the poisonous red apple, i.e., it does not refer to the poison. Lexically, the word ‘formula’ means mode, but when it is used in this context, its denotation is broadened to mean, metaphorically, the composition of the fragrance.

3. Category Extension

The term ‘Dior’ is a personal name which is used to convey a broader category, therefore, it is used as a brand name for luxury goods such as perfumes, bags, shoes and so on.

9.1.4 Advertisement (4)



Figure (9) Ad (4)

A. On the advertisement

There are many words used in this image. The viewer can deduce what this ad means relying on these expressions: ‘heat’, ‘hair’, ‘dryer’, ‘special edition’, ‘Smooth blowouts’, ‘less heat’, ‘related damage’, ‘shiny results’, ‘oval design’, ‘mixed bristles’, ‘smooth volume’, ‘hair dryer’, ‘drying power’, ‘fan’, ‘oval’, ‘over 7000’, ‘blowouts’, ‘boar’, and ‘Revlon’.

Lexical Broadening

1. Approximation

The word ‘oval’ is used in this ad to describe the design of this dryer as approximately oval. Another expression which is ‘over 7000’ is regarded as approximation, i.e., to mean that fan favorite approximately over 7000 of reviews.

2. Hyperbole

The word ‘blowouts’ is seen to encode the concept of ‘blowouts’. By looking at this utterance, one understands that the advertiser claims that this device dries hair smoothly.

3. Metaphorical Extension

While the word ‘boar’ refers to a boar literally in this context, it metaphorically means that the bristles of this dryer are mixed with boar bristles.

4. Category Extension

The term ‘Revlon’ is a salient brand name which was first used for nail polish, and then the name is widely used to refer to cosmetics, skin care, fragrance, and personal care.

10. The Findings

Ad. No.	Lexical Broadening			
	Approximation	Hyperbole	Metaphorical Extension	Category Extension
1	✓	✓	—	✓
2	✓	✓	✓	—
3	—	✓	✓	✓
4	✓	✓	✓	✓
Total	3	3	3	3
%	75%	100%	75%	75 %

Table (1) The Frequency and Percentage of Lexical Broadening Process

To achieve the desired goals of advertisements-makers and attract the viewers’ attention to their goods, there are many ways and strategies employed by the designers of the ads. These strategies are represented by using many lexical broadening processes. According to the results of the data analysis and the frequency and percentage of lexical broadening processes, table (1) shows the frequencies and percentages of these processes. Hyperbole process occurs (4) times, forming (100%), Category Extension, Metaphorical extension and Approximation, each process occurs (3)times, recording (75%). The employment of these four strategies heavily indicates the intention of the advertiser-maker to attract the attention of people to promote his products.

4.2 Discussion

The producers of ads try to employ many words and expressions in order to improve the sale of their products and attract the attention of consumers. Without a doubt the meanings of these expressions are fine-tuned when they are used in specific context.

When the advertisers use the lexical broadening processes, the meanings of these words are triggered. When the meanings of these lexical items are adjusted through interpretation processes, it constructs the concept which refers to occasion- specific sense related to particular context.

To achieve the marketers’ aim, they employ many strategies. These strategies consist of commercial language, selected specific vocabularies, and contextual information in addition to the employment of lexical broadening processes which certainly contribute to connect their hidden meaning.

By using the lexical broadening processes, the advertisers try to draw the attention of people towards specific ideas and broaden their thinking and interpretation through adding information related to context. Also, they describe the product in a specific way.

Conclusion

The findings of the study lead to the following conclusions:

1. In LP, the concept communicated by the use of the word often differs from the concept encoded. As an example stated in the analysis, The term ‘Dior’ is a personal name which is used to convey a broader category, therefore, it is used as a brand name for luxury goods such as perfumes, bags, shoes and so on.

2. The intended meaning of ads is not immediately or simply accessible. In order to be understood it requires the interaction of encoded concept on the one hand, and contextual information and pragmatic expectation on the other hand.
3. The context has a vital role in shifting the lexical meaning of commercial ads, so that Marketers often try to use words and phrases in very specific ways and specific context to achieve their goals.
4. The meanings of the lexical items are adjusted or fine-tuned through interpretation processes, therefore it constructs the concept that is differ from the encoded one.
5. Lexical items are employed pragmatically and used in a specific language to make the product more available, more desirable and shed light on it. This was proven during an analysis that the word 'breathable' When it is literally interpreted, means 'breathing', but here it is hyperbolically interpreted as the eye breathing through the lens.
6. The Advertisements-makers employ many strategies in their ad design such as "metaphor" and "hyperbole". These strategies are employed to persuade and attract the viewer's attention. Lexically, the word 'formula' means mode, but when it is used in this context, its denotation is broadened to mean, metaphorically, the composition of the fragrance.

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