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Punning and other Linguistic Devices
in Advertising Headlines

Marlene Tash

A Thesis

in

The TESL Centre

Presented in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements
for the degree of Master of Arts at
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ABSTRACT

Punning and other Linguistic Devices in Advertising Headlines

Marlene Tash

A detailed analysis is presented of the phenomenon of lexical ambiguity, in particular, punning, as it occurs in the headlines of print advertisements. Ambiguity in headlines is initially examined from the perspective of the literary framework expounded by Geoffrey Leech. Most of the variations within this framework are found to apply to the advertising situation. Several remaining characteristics of lexical ambiguity that are unique to advertising are also described. The study is based upon a corpus of 730 advertisements and also includes a discussion of the terms homonym, homophone, homograph and heteronym, a general survey of other linguistic techniques used in headlines and brief mention of other types of ambiguity.

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CHAPTER ONE

The Style of Advertising Language

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1.1 Introduction

In a print advertisement, the headline plays a crucial role. It must attract the reader's attention to the advertisement and then ensure that, when the reader has read the headline, his interest is sufficiently high for him to look at the advertisement's body copy. Jefkins says that "the headline has attained an importance never known before in the long history of advertising" (1976, p. 71) and Ogilvy calls it "the most important element in most advertisements" (1963, p. 104). Both Ogilvy and Caples, another high-ranking member of an advertising agency, insist that every advertisement have a headline (Ogilvy, 1963, p. 104 and White, 1977, p. 53).

Headlines must be very carefully written. Ogilvy claims that "A change of headline can make a difference of ten to one in sales. I never write fewer than sixteen headlines for a single advertisement" (pp. 104-105). Because of their purpose, certain constraints of the medium, the nature of their intended audience, etc., headlines represent a very special use of language. They require talent and creativity to write and are often amusing little pieces of text. This paper examines the language used in these texts.

Many studies have been done of various forms of word-play in advertising. Ambiguity in the form of puns and grammatical homonymy has been noted, but there has been no

attempt made to:

1. List all the different kinds of lexical ambiguity that occur in advertising, and
2. Compare the kinds of ambiguity that occur in advertising with those that occur in literature.

Leech (1969) has developed a framework for looking at puns in literature. Puns in advertising headlines will be examined from the perspective of Leech's framework, to determine whether his literary variations also occur in advertising. Several remaining characteristics that are unique to advertising will then be described. The subject will be approached from two directions: first, from the perspective of stylistics, and second, from a consideration of the role of advertising in our economy.

1.2 Recent developments in stylistics

There have been two major developments in the field of stylistics in recent years. First, the theory and practice of stylistics has changed as a result of advances made in the field of linguistics. These advances have given stylisticians the tools whereby they can describe their initially subjective impressions and interpretations in more rigorous, concrete terms.

A second important development in the field of stylistics is that it has moved away from an exclusive concern with literature. Many stylisticians now recognize as being within their province any language variety whose

use is related to social factors. Exemplifying the earlier position is Widdowson, who uses the term stylistics to mean "the study of literary discourse from a linguistics orientation" (1975, p. 3). He views stylistics as a link between literary criticism and linguistics, as "an area of mediation between two disciplines" (p. 4). This orientation is shared by Leech (1969), for whom stylistics is "the study of the use of language in literature" (p. 1). Leech's focus is the difference between literature and ordinary language, the "deviations from linguistic or other socially accepted norms" (p. 57). Deviation manifests itself in various kinds of poetic licence, ambiguity, metre and figures of speech. It is an elaboration of the foreground-background dichotomy first proposed by Mukařovsky in a discussion of poetic language: the foreground is the linguistic deviation, the background is "the standard language . . . against which is reflected the esthetically intentional distortion of the linguistic components of the work" (1964, p. 18).

The broader approaches to defining and delimiting stylistics tend to regard it as applicable to many types of context-bound language, not only to literature. The kinds of language examined by Crystal and Davy (1969), for example, include language used in conversation, religion, newspaper reporting and legal documents. They "view the business of stylistics as being the description of the linguistic characteristics of all situationally-restricted uses of language" (p. 90). This is also the position of

Turner (1973) and Chapman (1973). The latter remarks that:

Styles are the product of social situation: of a common relationship between language users. (p. 11)

There is no use of language that is not open to stylistic investigation. (p. 12)

In his 1974 work, Leech moves away from his earlier orientation to literature to encompass a similar, broader spectrum of stylistic meaning. He outlines seven categories of meaning, among which is the area of present concern:

STYLISTIC MEANING is that which a piece of language conveys about the social circumstances of its use. We 'decode' the stylistic meaning of a text through our recognition of different dimensions and levels of usage within the same language. (1974, p. 16)

Thus the mediating function of stylistics has shifted: instead of linking linguistics and literary criticism, it now connects linguistics with sociology. In a literary framework, style was described in terms of language that deviated from the norm. In a linguistic framework, style is more closely identified with register, that is, language which is appropriate to a situation.

It is this context-bound, situationally-restricted view of language that is the most productive approach to a study of advertising language, although as we shall see, the view of style as deviation is also useful in a description of advertising headlines.

1.3 Advertising in a free market economy

Advertising plays an important role in our economy, in the promotion of goods and services. In a free market

economy such as that found in North America there is a large array of products available, many of which are virtually identical to one other. Competition for the consumer dollar is accordingly fierce, and advertising plays a crucial role in the marketing of products.

Advertising has also become a part of our environment, appearing frequently in the media (newspapers and magazines, radio and television) as well as on billboards, on transit vehicles and in direct mail campaigns. It is an important source of employment: in 1982 the top 15 advertising agencies in Canada maintained a total of 58 offices across the country and together employed 3529 people (Phillips, 1983, p. 129).

Advertising is an effective means of persuasion, it is ubiquitous, and it is also expensive. In Canada in 1982, about \$275.1 million was spent by the 10 largest advertisers to buy time and space in the media. The biggest expenditures originated from the Federal Government, which spent \$54.5 million; Proctor & Gamble, \$35.3 million; John Labatt Ltd., \$26.8 million; General Foods, \$25.0 million; and Rothmans of Canada, \$24.7 million (Phillips, 1983, pp. 129-130).

The investment in even a single advertising campaign may be relatively great. To avoid large-scale losses, Ogilvy advises that every aspect of a campaign be carefully tested, including the promise, the media, the size of the advertisement, the frequency, the illustrations and, of

course, the headline (1963, p. 86). This advice is reiterated by Caples, who reminds ad writers that "it is so necessary to test, test, test -- to test copy, to test media, to test season -- to test everything on a small scale before money is spent on a large scale" (Quoted in White, 1977, p. 54). The advertising that we see in our daily newspaper is often the result of a lengthy production and testing process.

1.4 The style of advertising language

The goal of persuasion and the ubiquity of advertisements have influenced the development of advertising as a special use, or style of language. This style is marked partly by devices that are deviant with respect to standard English (for example, spelling modification and neologisms), and partly by devices that, while part of standard English, occur with higher frequency in advertising (for example, the imperative and puns). Both types of device are used to persuade and to attract attention. The term 'device,' then, as used in this paper refers to aspects of advertising language which differentiate it from standard English both in kind and in frequency.

This approach is loosely based on Enkvist (1964), who gives the following definition of the style of a text:

The style of a text is a function of the aggregate of the ratios between the frequencies of its phonological, grammatical and lexical items, and the frequencies of the corresponding items in a contextually related norm.
(p. 28)

Enkvist's definition is based on comparison: the frequency of an item in a text is compared with the frequency of the same item in a contextually related norm. This is done for numerous items at various levels of linguistic analysis. The result is an aggregate of ratios.

The "contextually related norm" may be other writing by the same author, writing on the same subject by different but contemporary authors, writing on the same subject for different audiences, and so on. Mountford (1970/1971), for example, compared a report about the homing behavior of ants, published in a scientific journal, with a summary of this report written for a popular science magazine.

The advantage of Enkvist's definition is that it reduces style, an abstract concept, to linguistic and numerical terms, both of which are quantifiable and easily understood.

1.5 Plan of this paper

In this paper I will do two things. First, I will present a survey of some of the linguistic devices that ad writers use to attract attention. This survey is limited to the headlines in print advertisements. The majority of devices employed there cluster into the traditional levels of linguistic analysis. Because no comprehensive data are

available for contextually related norms, the comparison must be based on my own native ear, or intuitive sense of the relative frequency of corresponding items in standard English. This approach follows the spirit, if not the letter, of Enkvist's definition.

Second, I will examine the language of headlines in detail from the semantic level, and from a very small corner of that level, namely, ambiguity.

The plan of this thesis is, then, as follows:

- Chapter 1: The style of advertising language
- Chapter 2: Review of the literature of advertising language in general and ambiguity in particular
- Chapters 3-4: General survey of linguistic devices used in advertising headlines
- Chapter 5: Ambiguity
- Chapters 6-7: Lexical ambiguity in advertising headlines
- Chapter 8: Other types of ambiguity in advertising headlines
- Chapter 9: Concluding comments

1.6 Corpus

The question of representativity in natural language is a thorny one. It has been discussed by Quirk & Svartvik (1978), who say that "no individual can be expected to have an adequate command of the whole 'repertoire'" (p. 1). Any

linguistic description must therefore rely on a large corpus of naturally produced material. But how large is the corpus to be? Quirk & Svartvik say that no corpus can ever be sufficiently large for a comprehensive description of language. But as they point out:

It is fairly clear that an optimum scale of corpus can be established such that for common grammatical phenomena saturation has been reached, whereas for rare phenomena there can be no indication that further extension of the corpus would be significantly helpful.
(p. 2)

No claim can therefore be made that the advertising headlines studied in this thesis are representative of advertising headlines in general. Nevertheless, it is hoped that the method for selection, described below, has resulted in a wide-ranging, if not exhaustive, sample of linguistic phenomena from the language of advertising.

The corpus upon which this study is based is a collection of 730 advertisements from a variety of American and Canadian newspapers and magazines. The majority of these advertisements appeared during the period March-July 1982, although a few appeared as early as August 1981 and a few as late as October 1982. An attempt was made to look at a wide variety of magazines, representing both the general interest and the special interest reader. Table 1 contains a list of the publications that were examined. The inclusion of an item in this list means that at least one issue of the publication was looked at. In many cases, however, several issues were examined. This is particularly true in the case of daily newspapers.

Table 1

Magazines and Newspapers From Which
Advertisements Were Taken

Magazines

| | |
|---------------------------------------------|---------------------|
| Business Report | New Woman |
| Canadian Living | New York |
| Canadian Musician | New Yorker |
| Car and Driver | Newsweek |
| Chatelaine | Penthouse |
| Cosmopolitan | People |
| Esquire | Playboy |
| Family Circle | Playgirl |
| Gentlemen's Quarterly | Popular Electronics |
| Good Housekeeping | Psychology Today |
| Homemaker's Magazine | Quest |
| House & Garden | Reader's Digest |
| Inside Sports | Redbook |
| Ladies Home Journal | Saturday Night |
| Los Angeles | Saturday Review |
| Maclean's | Sport |
| Magazine that's all about Small Business | Sports Illustrated |
| Marketing Communication | Stereo Review |
| McCall's | Time |
| McGill News | Us |
| Montreal Calendar Magazine | Vogue |
| Mother Jones | Woman's Day |
| Ms. | |

Newspapers

| | |
|----------------|---------------------|
| Financial Post | New York Times |
| Gazette | Toronto Star |
| Globe and Mail | Wall Street Journal |

The selection of advertisements was made on the basis of linguistic interest, or deviance from standard English. For example, a headline in an advertisement for contact lenses announces:

Soft contact lenses to fit
almost any prescription.

(TV Times, supplement to Gazette; July 10th, 1982)

This was considered to be without any particular linguistic interest. But another advertisement for the same type of product has the headline:

A contact lens
you can wear all weekend.

It's worth looking into.

(Vogue; September 1981)

The play on looking, first as part of the verb look into, meaning 'investigate,' and second as an action that may be performed with the product, makes this second headline a linguistically interesting one. It does not merely give notice of a sale, product, etc. It contains a play-on-words.

There are two basic types of advertising: product (consumer) advertising and institutional (prestige) advertising. Product advertisements attempt to sell a specific product. Institutional advertisements, in contrast, try to develop good will toward a company or industry. Their goal is to improve relations with everyone with whom the company deals: consumers, suppliers, shareholders, and so on (McCarthy & Shapiro, 1979,

pp. 520-521; Leech, 1966, pp. 64-65). Most of the advertisements in this study are product advertisements. A very small minority belong to the category of institutional advertising and a few others belong to neither category. These last are generally run by non-profit institutions such as universities and governments. They may solicit donations, encourage people to stay healthy, etc.

1.7 Components of a print advertisement

A print advertisement has five major components: the heading, the illustration, the copy, the signature line and the standing details. Relatively minor components are the sub-heads and captions. The heading and the signature line are virtually obligatory; the other parts are optional. These components of a print advertisement are described below with illustrations from an advertisement for Wang, a company that sells computer equipment for business uses.

1.7.1 The headline

A heading, or headline, is usually short and written in a telegraphic style. It is designed to attract attention and to lure the reader into reading the remainder of the advertisement. "If the headline doesn't stop people, the copy might as well be written in Greek" (Remark attributed to John Caples in White, 1977, p. 51).

Here is a headline that attempts to stop people:

A seminar
for people
much too
important to
go to one.

(New York Times; May 9th, 1982)

This catches people's attention for several reasons: it is written in large white type on a dark grey background, it has a balanced, easy-to-read layout, and it raises a question in the reader's mind. The question is actually a paradox: What kind of seminar is this, that is held for people who are too important to go to it?

1.7.2 The illustration

The illustration in this advertisement is a large office building, viewed from the ground up. It serves as the background for the headline.

1.7.3 The copy

The copy, sometimes called the body copy, is the text part of the advertisement. (Copy is often used to refer to the entire advertisement -- illustrations and text.) It elaborates the theme of the headline and tries to maintain the interest aroused by it. In this advertisement, the copy addresses corporation executives:

If you're a senior executive at any corporation today, very few subjects are important enough to pull you out of the office for two hours.

But office automation is one of them. And Wang

would like to tell you why in a 2 hour seminar.

The body copy continues, enumerating the advantages of office automation and inviting the executive to attend a free seminar, entitled "What every top executive needs to know about office automation." The body copy thus describes the product, continues the theme of the headline and explains the paradox raised by it.

1.7.4 The signature

The signature is the identifying name of the company, in this case 'Wang.' Signatures are often designed by artists and printed in the same style of type in all of a company's advertising. (A signature may also be called a logotype or logo.) Some companies include a slogan in addition to their signature. Wang's slogan is 'The Office Automation Computer Company.'

1.7.5 Standing details

Coupons for the reader to cut out and mail, the address of the company, etc. appear rather infrequently in advertisements. They are referred to as standing details and usually appear unchanged in several of the company's advertisements (Leéch, 1966).

1.7.6 Sub-heads and captions

In addition to the five major components, an advertisement may contain sub-heads and captions. A

sub-head is a second line that belongs with the headline. Small headings used in the copy are also called sub-heads. A caption is copy written to go under an illustration (Oliver, 1976, p. 55).

1.8 Print advertising compared to television advertising

Press advertising has most of the components described above in common with television advertising. The latter has a large visual component, copy to be spoken (commentary) and copy to be written (supers), a signature line and sometimes also standing details. But television and press advertising differ in at least one important respect. As Leech points out, "The most marked difference between the two media as regards copy and design is the lack of any television equivalent to the headline" (1966, p. 61). Press advertisements must attract the reader's attention. In television, the viewer is already paying attention.

When writing an advertisement for a magazine or newspaper, the copywriter's most important task is to create an advertisement that will be noticed. Then its components must be read and the reader motivated to purchase the product. Attracting attention is an extremely difficult undertaking, since in most cases the advertisement exists in the midst of many others in the same publication.

1.9 Advice in marketing and advertising textbooks

Textbooks about marketing and advertising rarely explain exactly how the copywriter composes a good advertisement. This is no doubt because the only criterion of goodness is effectiveness (that is, an increase of product sales) and it is impossible to determine this in advance. For example, who could have predicted that the Esso slogan, "Put a tiger in your tank," would be successful? It raises visions of hair floating in a gasoline tank and blocking the carburetor. Yet the Esso campaign, translated into many foreign languages, was an immense international success (Mollica, 1979, pp. 692-697).

Instead of attempting to define a good advertisement, marketing and advertising textbooks tend to focus on psychological techniques, different types of advertising, different approaches, etc. All of these are based on other-than-linguistic criteria. Repath (1966), for example, describes certain common techniques that have emerged from research on motivation. These techniques include selling by association, working on fears, creating needs, selling by endorsement, appealing to reason, and so on (pp. 176-179). McCarthy & Shapiro (1979) enumerate different types of product advertising. There is pioneering advertising, which informs customers about a new product category rather than a specific brand; competitive advertising, which sells a specific brand; comparative advertising, which, as the term

suggests, makes comparisons between different brands of the same product, and reminder advertising, used when the product has already established its place on the market (pp. 521-522). Aaker & Myers (1982) present a model of the advertising communication system that includes a perception process and four elements: a source, a message, a communication channel and a receiver. The message can be described in terms of the approach used. Possible approaches are: soft sell versus hard sell, use of humor, use of fear appeals, and use of two-sided communication, where the opposing viewpoint is presented and refuted (pp. 233-234).

Jerry Goodis, who is Canada's greatest Creative Director according to himself (Goodis, 1972, p. 72), emphasizes the importance of remembering who the audience is for a particular product (ibid.) and of appealing to consumers in some way that is different from most contemporary advertising (p. 128). He quotes Howard Gossage, who created a very successful Eagle Shirt campaign in the New Yorker, as having the 'secret' of good advertising: "People don't read ads; they read what interests them and sometimes it is an ad" (p. 107).

In cases where textbooks become specific about how to compose an advertisement they usually cite the AIDA formula. (See, for example, Oliver, 1976, pp. 50-51; McCarthy & Shapiro, 1979, pp. 468-469 and 532-533; Betancourt, 1982, pp. 20-22; and Aaker & Myers, 1982, p. 111). AIDA is an

acronym for attracting the reader's Attention, holding his Interest, arousing his Desire for a product and precipitating Action.

The first of these, attracting attention, is crucial because if the advertisement does not engage the reader's attention, it will not be read. Lively or interesting illustrations will sometimes attract readers, but the single most important device for gaining a reader's attention is the headline. In fact, many more people will read the headline -- five times as many, according to Ogilvy (1963, p. 104) -- as will read the body copy. This is presumably why so many headlines contain the brand-name. If the reader goes no further, he will at least have seen that.

But even the AIDA formula is rather general. Slightly more concrete is the advice of Oliver:

A good headline offers the reader a benefit or suggests a solution to a problem. Written for busy people, it quickly flashes the news, makes a promise, appeals to curiosity, or gives a command. Sometimes the wording of the headline helps to select those readers who might be interested in the message. (1976, p. 52)

"The wording of the headline" -- that is the area of investigation in this paper. Headlines are composed of words, as trite as it sounds, and ad writers are supremely conscious of this. But which words to use? Betancourt (1982) has some suggestions:

To attract the busy reader who is flipping through a publication, your words must be very compelling. They should reach out and say, in effect, "Stop! Read this, it's important to your well-being."

Here are a few tips to help you when you write a

headline:

1. Start by jotting down all of the headline possibilities you can think of -- even the bad ones (get them out of your system). Write and rewrite the same general idea in many different ways. Don't be concerned about length, but do eliminate needless words. Say what you have to, then stop.
2. When possible, include your company or product name.
3. Avoid negative words; people tend to remember them associated with your product.
4. If the ad is for a special group, such as balding men or overweight people, say so.
5. Don't use advertising cliches, such as "Best in the West," or "It's a hit!" They, and too many more like them, are just too trite to be believed.
6. Write more than one headline. Try several approaches from different angles. (p. 23)

Perhaps the most useful assistance for the headline-writer is Jefkins (1976). He analyzes headlines into 27 categories and illustrates each one with an army of examples (pp. 41-71). The categories are a mélange of the linguistic, the commercial and the psychological. A few of his categories, for example, are the following: declarative, interrogative, testimonial, news, curiosity, bargains, picture and caption, and slogan.

It is the purpose of this paper to look carefully at the words that ad writers use in their headlines. By 'words' I mean specific techniques which can be explained in linguistic terms. But first we will look at some of the non-linguistic techniques used to draw attention to headlines.

1.10 Some non-linguistic techniques of drawing attention to a headline

A number of non-linguistic techniques may be used to draw a reader's attention to a headline. These include writing a headline upside down, reordering the segments of a phrase, replacing a word with a picture, modifying the spelling of a word, using eye rhyme, varying the type size and using cultural allusions. Some of these techniques startle the reader because they are so unexpected.

1.10.1 Writing a headline upside-down

It is a slight shock, as the reader leafs through a magazine, to come upon a text that is upside-down. The reader wonders whether he has encountered a printing error. He is tempted to stop for a moment to study it. The following headline appears upside-down in an advertisement for Esso's Stretch'n Seal plastic wrap:

The true test
of a great food wrap.

(Canadian Living; July 1982)

Under the headline is a bowl of jello with fruit inside, the whole thing covered with clear plastic wrap. The body copy describes various benefits of the product: how well it stretches and seals, how strong it is, etc. The reader peruses the copy in order to discover what the "true test" is, but it is not made clear which attribute of the plastic wrap fulfills this function. However, the search for the

answer does lead to further study of the advertisement.

1.10.2 Reordering of segments of a phrase

Another technique that has a startle effect is to reorder segments of a phrase; for example, by putting the beginning of the headline in the middle and the middle at the beginning. This is apparently what was done in a statement about Tropitone sun deck furniture:

Under the sun; Tropitone...probably the finest

(New Yorker; May 17th, 1982)

A more normal phrase would have been "Tropitone...probably the finest under the sun."

1.10.3 Replacement of a word by a picture

A word in a headline may be replaced by a picture. An advertisement for Kraft Macaroni & Cheese Dinner says:

Kraft macaroni
and

(Good Housekeeping; June 1982)

This headline is about 3.5 cm high at the top of the page. In the next 18.5 cm sits a huge piece of cheddar cheese.

1.10.4 Spelling modification

The spelling of a word in a headline may be modified for several purposes: to make a statement about the product, to include the name of the product or to accommodate the brand name. An example of the first, making a statement

about the product, is seen in an advertisement for Kahlua coffee liqueur, which says:

Kahlua
&
cream

"Frrresh"

(Ms.; August 1982)

Frrresh with three r's is presumably fresher than with one r.

Spelling may also be changed to include the name of the product, as in a French headline for Swakara fur coats:

Vive la diffurence!

(Vogue; September 1981)

The crucial part has been underscored. Since there is a difference of only one letter between diffurence and difference, perhaps it was felt that the largely English-speaking readership of this magazine might not notice the substitution.

In an advertisement for Firestone tires, spelling was changed to accommodate a brand-name:

Give
your K-car
extra
klass.

(Sports Illustrated; June 28th, 1982)

This is some free advertising for Chrysler's K-car.

1.10.5 Eye rhyme

More rare than changing the spelling of a word is to use words that begin or end with the same letter. For

example, the headline in an advertisement for ADS automobile speaker systems says:

ADS Automotive Audio.
Accuracy. Power.

(Car and Driver; June 1982)

The four capital A's do not have the same sound, so this cannot be considered a case of assonance. (See section 3.2.1 for a discussion of assonance in headlines.) But the repetition of initial letters is noticeable, as is the repetition of final letters in this headline for La Ina sherry:

Icy. Dry. Sherry.

(New Yorker; August 23rd, 1982)

This is called eye rhyme, since it depends not on sound but on the spelling of the word.

1.10.6 Variation of type size.

Varying the type size is another technique that may be used to draw attention to an advertisement. An IBM advertisement is particularly ingenious. It takes up a full page and gives a brief history of computers, beginning at the time when they were large, costly and complex, and describing how they, their prices and the knowledge required to use them have all been shrinking. Today they are small enough to fit on a desk blotter, kids can use them and they start at comparatively low prices. As this little history is narrated, the type size slowly decreases from about 2 cm

at the beginning to barely more than one mm at the end.
(New Yorker, May 17th, 1982) The changing form of this rather lengthy headline thus matches its changing content. (The complete text is given in the index. See "There was a time when all computers were big.")

1.10.7 Using cultural allusions

A final non-linguistic technique used in headlines is to play on or allude to something that is part of the culture. That which is alluded to may be a proverb; a sports event; the title of a play, song, film or novel; a nursery rhyme; a quotation from the Bible, etc. If the reader is familiar with the culture, he will recognize the source of the allusion. This is a very popular technique. Here are some examples. (The sources are given below.) First, a British Airways advertisement selling 8:30 a.m. flights from New York to London has as its headline:

The early bird
catches the work.

(New York Times; April 15th, 1982)

In an advertisement for Kraft Marshmallows, a color photograph shows a delicious looking dessert of fresh fruit topped with marshmallows and cream. The headline is:

Four minute smile.

(Reader's Digest; March 1982)

Third, the headline in a Wallachs shoe store advertisement is:

From Bally,
the shoes for all reasons.

(New York Times, April 20th, 1982)

A fourth example is from Einstein Moomjy, the carpet department store. Their advertisement is promoting Dhurrie rugs from India. The picture shows several rugs in a window. The headline asks:

How much
is that
Dhurrie in
the window?

(New York Times; March 4th, 1982)

Fifth, there is an advertisement for weekend vacations at the Sheraton Smithtown hotel. The artwork shows a post with signs pointing in different directions, to places that are accessible from the hotel. The headline suggests that you:

Take
your honey
and run.

(New York Times; June 27th, 1982)

Next, an advertisement for the B. Forman Company, a clothing store, contains a model wearing a long plaid dress. The headline:

Calvin Klein's brave new dress. Plaid wool with
his signature belt and shawl.

(Vogue; September 1981)

The seventh example is for Knox plant food. There are two little plants in the picture: one is flourishing and the other is a scraggly little thing. The headline, placed above the two plants, says:

This little ivy
had Knox.

This little ivy
had none.

(House & Garden; July 1982).

A final example of a culturally bound headline comes from an advertisement for Crown Royal whisky. A bottle of it is tucked inside a Christmas stocking, with enough of the top visible so that the product may be identified. The headline, simple but effective, is:

My sock runneth over.

(Playboy; January 1982)

The sources of these headlines are: first, the proverb, 'The early bird catches the worm;' second, that important breakthrough in the sports world, the four-minute mile; third, the title of the drama, 'A Man for all Seasons;' fourth, the song title, 'How much is that doggie in the window;' fifth, the film title, 'Take the Money and Run;' sixth, the title of the novel, Brave New World, which is itself an allusion to Shakespeare's Tempest (V, i); seventh, the nursery rhyme, 'This little piggy went to the market;' and finally, Psalm 23, verse 5: 'My cup runneth over,' in the King James version of the Bible. All of these are part of the culture. The more familiar a person is with English culture, the more he will recognize in its advertising headlines.

Biagi and Heilmann describe the psychological effect of allusions on the reader:

The allusion creates a link of complicity among those

who recognize it. When the allusion is of a literary nature it flatters the reader that identifies it because the reader automatically feels promoted as a knowledgeable person. The climate of intellectual complicity is created between producer and buyer, and induces the latter to purchase the product. (Quoted in Mollica, 1979, p. 712)

The copywriter is playing a game with the reader, a game that he, that is, the reader, cannot lose. For if he fails to notice the allusion he will never know of his failure. If he does notice and recognize it, he will experience positive feelings about himself and the product.

The employment of cultural allusions is not, incidentally, limited to the headlines of advertisements. Allusions also appear in the titles of newspaper articles. A recent story in the New York Times, for example, described the state of disrepair of several British historical sites. The title of the article was 'London Bridges, Towers, Relics Are Falling Down.' (July 27th, 1983) This is a play on the name of the children's game, London Bridge is Falling Down.

1.11 A note about the layout and reproduction of headlines

A glance through the headlines cited in this paper will demonstrate that ad writers take great pains with layout, to ensure that their headlines are balanced, pleasing to look at and easy to read. This must be accomplished within the space available and in some cases, especially for newspaper advertisements, the space may be small indeed.

The lineation, or staggering of a headline may affect a

reader's perception of its meaning. For example, an advertisement that encourages people to spend their summer vacations in New York State appeared in two publications with the headline arranged in a slightly different way in each. In the first case the headline read:

New York is all wet...and wonderful.

(New York Times Magazine; June 6th, 1982)

A month later, the headline was arranged this way:

New York is all wet...
and wonderful.

(Esquire; July 1982)

I submit that wet and wonderful are perceived as being on the same level of importance in the first case, but that in the second case wonderful assumes an increased significance. Notice that it needs to be on a line of its own to do this. Separation by a series of dots is not enough.

I have therefore tried, wherever possible, to preserve the original layout of the headlines that are used as examples in this paper. Lines which are diagonal instead of horizontal could not be reproduced, but otherwise the arrangement of the lines has been maintained. Other headlines where lineation is particularly important are "It's hard to believe" (section 3.2.3), "24 hours after you fall in love" (section 4.2.3) and "Barbecued meats" (section 6.4.1).

All the headlines cited are reproduced in lower case letters except where upper case is necessary. Although the

use of upper case is widespread in print advertising, presumably to attract attention, this study is concerned with the linguistic ways in which copywriters attract attention to their headlines. Letter size has therefore been normalized.

CHAPTER TWO

Review of the Literature

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2.1 Introduction

This chapter reviews some of the literature pertaining to advertising language. The major analysis has been done by Leech (1966) and therefore a large section is devoted to a summary of this comprehensive study. Several other analyses of advertising language that have appeared are based on Leech, and these will be only briefly noted.

The chapter is divided into two sections: advertising language in general and lexical ambiguity.

2.2 Advertising language in general

Understanding a specific use of language depends in part on knowing how it is used, that is, who uses it, with whom, when and where, for what purpose, etc. But in large measure it depends on a knowledge of its style markers. Style markers are:

Those linguistic items that only appear, or are most or least frequent in, one group of contexts. In other words, style markers are contextually bound linguistic elements. (Enkvist, 1964, p. 34)

Studies that attempt an inventory of style markers are generally based on the writer's intuition, for example, Leech (1966), although we shall see a more precise, quantitative approach in the analysis by Gibson (1966).

2.2.1 Leech (1966)

Leech (1966) has done the most important analysis,

within a linguistic framework, of advertising language. Over a period of four years he examined a sample of 617 advertisements that had been broadcast on British television from December 1960-May 1961. The result is a description of standard advertising English that pertains not only to television advertising but to many facets of other types of advertising as well.

His study is divided into three parts: 'Advertising English and other Englishes,' 'Standard Advertising English,' and 'Change and Creativity.'

The first part, 'Advertising English and other Englishes,' describes those features of advertising that differentiate it from other language uses and situations. For example, he notes that although advertising is a type of loaded language because "it aims to change the will, opinions or attitudes of its audience," it does differ from other types of loaded language, such as political journalism and religious oratory, in certain important ways. The major difference is that advertising has "a very precise material goal," namely, "buying a particular kind of product." Some other, more general differences that he mentions are that an advertisement is open and honest about its purpose, since there are regulations against camouflaged advertising; the advertiser must pay for the space and time that bring him to the public's attention; the average person's attitude to advertising is bored tolerance, whereas the reaction to other forms of persuasive language ranges from active

support to active hostility; advertising uses a predominantly concrete language, in contrast to the abstractions used by propagandists in other fields; and finally advertising appeals to basic human drives such as gain, emulation, protectiveness and the physical appetites, in contrast to the moral and ethical principles appealed to by other forms of loaded language (Leech, 1966, pp. 25-26).

There are four criteria, according to Leech, which an advertisement must meet in order to be successful (p. 27):

1. It must draw attention to itself. (Attention value)
2. It must sustain the interest it has attracted. (Readability or listenability)
3. It must be remembered, or at any rate recognized as familiar. (Memorability)
4. It must prompt the right kind of action. (Selling power)

These criteria are similar to the AIDA formula that I described in the first chapter. In both cases, getting the reader's attention is the first step. Leech notes that "one way of provoking the customer's attention and curiosity is to present him with something surprising and unexpected, and this can be done as well by the unorthodox use of language as by other means" (p. 27).

The unorthodox use of language is a prime method of drawing attention to a headline. It can also help to ensure that the headline is memorable. Memorability is not a separate goal in the AIDA formula, but it is clearly an underpinning of the entire process. If the advertisement

makes only a momentary impression on a consumer, he will not be persuaded to buy the product. Leech asks:

What makes one piece of language intrinsically more memorable than another? To some extent, the ease with which we remember a thing depends on the impact it first made on us: in this respect, the goal of memorability coincides with that of attention value. But there are other aids to memory, such as the phonological regularities of alliteration, metrical rhythm, and rhyme. (p. 29)

Leech makes a distinction between the language of direct address advertising and indirect address advertising. In the former, the advertiser, through the copywriter and other people who are responsible for the advertisement, addresses the potential consumer. This is the style of most print advertising. The advertiser makes a statement about the merits of his product, makes a suggestion to the consumer, asks the consumer if he has a certain problem, etc. In indirect address advertising, a secondary participant speaks. A secondary participant is someone other than the advertiser or the consumer, usually a person who is pictured in the advertisement. He may engage in a dialogue, speaking to another secondary participant (Leech, 1966, pp. 32-36). This is a useful distinction to make when we describe the advertising situation.

In order to describe the style of advertising language Leech elaborates in chapter 8 four sets of polarities: colloquial-formal, casual-ceremonial, personal-impersonal and simple-complex. Advertising English is clearly at the colloquial end of the first dimension. This is the style associated with private rather than with public discourse.

Some of its characteristics that Leech mentions are the use of quasi-proverbial expressions, for example, "There's no time like the present," and the abundant use of phrasal verbs, for example, find out and come across instead of the single verbs with more specific meaning, discover and encounter. The word get and contractions are also very common.

The second set of polarities, the casual-ceremonial dimension, is relevant only to private discourse. Casual speech may involve the use of slang expressions, while ceremonial speech in its extreme form includes the use of vocatives such as "Yes, Mr. Smith." As Leech notes, the copywriter normally uses language that is neutral, neither too casual nor too ceremonial. One exception is the greater use of casual language in indirect address advertising; that is, in a monologue or dialogue. It is appropriate in these cases and is not likely to offend readers, since copy for monologue and dialogue is generally presented as a quotation from one of the secondary participants.

A second exception to the generally neutral language of advertising is the widespread use of the imperative. Used without a formula of politeness such as please, the imperative may represent an extreme form of familiarity and a certain degree of rudeness. Yet it is not perceived this way in advertising, perhaps because, as Leech suggests, "we are used to receiving exhortations and directives in the imperative mood from all manner of public sources" (p. 80).

Leech gives the example of road signs and government documents, which often give instructions using the imperative form.

His third dimension of style, the personal-impersonal scale, is "marked by free use of first person and second person reference, and sometimes also of forms of language (e.g. imperatives, questions, exclamations) which involve the first and second persons without direct reference" (pp. 80-81). Leech found that the first person plural, we, is common in prestige advertising as a means of referring to the advertiser. The second person, you, has a high frequency in both consumer and prestige advertising. (In consumer advertising the advertiser is usually mentioned by name, that is, in the third person.) In Leech's television sample, "3 per cent of all words were occurrences of the second person pronoun and one in five of all independent clauses were imperative" (p. 82).

The last dimension of style elaborated by Leech is that of the simple-complex. He remarks that "advertising material is simpler than news material in the same publication; this is partly because news reporting lends itself to a particular kind of linguistic complexity, and partly because advertising has to cater for a largely indifferent and unco-operative audience" (p. 83). He defines complexity as "the number of elements of structure per grammatical unit" (p. 84). This may be the number of elements (subject, predicator, etc.) per clause, the number

of clauses per sentence, etc. As he points out, a great deal of the complexity of advertising language is found in the structure of the nominal group. There we find that compounding is very common among adjectives, whereas it occurs only rarely in adverbs. There is also a tendency to have a lot of adjectives, whether of the compound variety or not, as a means of giving information about the product.

To summarize, using Leech's four sets of polarities the style of advertising language can be described, first, as predominantly colloquial; second, neutral on the casual-ceremonial dimension except in indirect address, and with respect to the widespread use of the imperative; third, personal, particularly because of the high frequency of the second person pronoun; and lastly, simple in terms of the number of elements per structure, except for the nominal group, which may be fairly complex.

Having thus described the style of discourse, Leech goes on to explore its grammar. He discusses the differences between the discursive grammar of ordinary connected discourse and the disjunctive grammar of advertising. Ordinary discourse consists of complete sentences. But much advertising copy, and especially headlines, consists of units smaller than the sentence; for example, a headline may contain one or more nominal groups (For example, "A seminar for people" in section 1.7.1 and "Calvin Klein's brave new dress" in section 1.10.7); it may contain an adverb and a noun group ("From Bally" in section

1.10.7); or the headline may either lack a predicator ("Investments worth sinking" in section 6.4.5), have only a non-finite verb ("Miniature Victorian rooms" in section 3.2.1), or contain a noun phrase and a dependent clause ("Bremworth carpets" in section 4.3.4). There are of course many other possibilities. The point which Leech makes is that this type of headline should not be considered deficient. It should not be regarded as an 'incomplete sentence' within the framework of discursive grammar but instead should be considered an example of disjunctive grammar, where noun groups, non-finite clauses, etc. are able to function independently. "Instead of measuring disjunctive grammar against 'full' (discursive) grammar and finding it wanting, we have to describe it as it is" (p. 91).

This is important because some instances of disjunctive grammar may not even be translatable into fully discursive grammar without radical change to their form. It is not just a case of filling in a few words here and there. For example, a sign that I have seen just inside the door of restaurants says, "Please wait for hostess to be seated." The simplest interpretation of this text is that the hostess is going to be seated and the reader-customer is asked to wait for that event. But it is clear from the situation, that is, a customer just entering the restaurant and looking for a table, that the non-finite clause, to be seated, refers to the reader-customer, and not to the hostess.

The second part of English in Advertising describes in greater detail the characteristics of 'Standard Advertising English.' The topics that are taken up include: clauses, verbal groups, nominal groups, words and compounds, cohesion and lack of cohesion, vocabulary, verbs and adjectives, and lastly, some questions of semantics. Since the present study is concerned mainly with ambiguity I shall not describe Leech's findings in these areas. Instead I shall describe his observations regarding ambiguity in the second part of this chapter, i.e. in the review of the literature of ambiguity.

2.2.2 Gibson (1966)

A study that is particularly interesting for its methodology is Gibson (1966). Gibson classified a number of prose passages into three groups according to his intuitive impression of their tone, that is according to the kind of stereotyped author he imagined might have written them. His categories, and his conception of the authors, are:

1. Tough Talk: A hard fellow who has been around in a violent world and who pays us very little mind.
2. Sweet Talk: An affable fellow who is explicitly familiar with us and who knows just who we are.
3. Stuffy Talk: A bloodless fellow who often speaks for an organization and not for himself, and who keeps his distance from us. (p. 115)

The Tough Talk category includes passages from A Farewell to

Arms and The Adventures of Augie March as well as an article from the magazine Saturday Review. In Sweet Talk there is another article from the same magazine and a selection of advertisements. Stuffy Talk includes passages from a college catalogue, passages from the Surgeon General's report on smoking and cancer, and a ruling by the Internal Revenue Service.

Gibson developed a 'style machine' consisting of sixteen questions whose function was to distinguish between these three voices. That is, he attempted to establish objective criteria to reinforce the subjectively-noted differences in tone. Some examples of his questions that are particularly interesting with regard to advertisements, together with the results in averages for one thousand words of each style, are given below.

| <u>Examples of Questions</u> | <u>Tough</u> | <u>Sweet</u> | <u>Stuffy</u> |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------|---------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| 1. How many first-person and second-person pronouns does the passage contain? | 13 1st 21 2nd | 12 1st 42 2nd | 2 1st 0 2nd |
| 2. What proportion of verbs are in the passive voice? | 4% | 2% | 26% |
| 3. What proportion of words are true adjectives? | 6% | 11% | 8% |
| 4. How many adjectives are modified by adverbs? | 4 | 13 | 5 |
| 5. How many fragments? How many contractions? | 2 fr 16 cn | 20 fr 24 cn | 0 fr 0 cn |
| 6. How many parentheses, italics, dashes, question marks, exclamation points? | 0 P 0 I 2 D 1 Q 0 E | 4 P 7 I 9 D 8 Q 5 E | 2 P 0 I 0 D 0 Q 0 E |

Sweet Talk, the category that contains advertisements, has the tone of "an affable fellow who is explicitly familiar with us." It is not surprising, then, that it has the highest frequency of second-person pronouns, fragments, contractions, and marks of punctuation such as parentheses, italics, dashes, questions and exclamation points. These are all indicative of an informal, intimate style, as are the low proportion of verbs in the passive voice. Since the objective of advertising is to describe and sell goods, there is also a relatively high number of adjectives and adjectives modified by adverbs. Based on these findings, Gibson established a set of criteria for distinguishing among the three styles. For example:

| <u>Examples of Criteria</u> | <u>Tough</u> | <u>Sweet</u> | <u>Stuffy</u> |
|--------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|----------------------------|-------------------------------|
| 1. 1st and 2nd person pronouns | 1 <u>I</u> or <u>we</u> per 100 words | 2 <u>you</u> per 100 words | no 1st or 2nd person pronouns |
| 2. Passives | less than 1 in 20 verbs | none | more than 1 in 5 verbs |
| 3. True adjectives | under 10% | over 10% | over 8% |
| 4. Adjectives modified | fewer than 1 per 100 words | 1 or more | fewer than 1 |
| 5. Contractions and fragments | 1 or more per 100 words | 2 or more | none |
| 6. Parentheses and other punctuation | none | 2 or more per 100 words | none |

After establishing these criteria, Gibson returned to the passages which had originally been classified as Tough, Sweet or Stuffy on an intuitive basis and put them through his style machine. Each piece of writing scored high for the category in which it had originally been placed. For example, one advertisement had the figures 7, 12 and 4 for the tones Tough, Sweet and Stuffy respectively. The results for a second were 9, 13 and 3, and for a third, 6, 12 and 2. All the advertisements had two-figure scores for Sweetness. Passages originally described as Tough had two-figure scores for Toughness, and those originally described as Stuffy had two-figure scores for Stiffness.

Although there are certain difficulties with the style machine (for example, one advertisement scored almost as

high in Toughness as in Sweetness), it is nevertheless a promising approach to the problem of describing abstractions like tone and style in a concrete manner.

2.3 Ambiguity

The remainder of this chapter is devoted to work that has been done on lexical ambiguity in advertising.

2.3.1 Leech (1966)

Leech (1966) defines ambiguity as "a many-one relationship between levels, whereby different meanings are expressed alike in form (MULTIPLE MEANING), or different formal items have the same spelling or pronunciation (HOMONYMY)" (p. 184). He gives as an example of multiple meaning the adjective thin, which can be an antonym either of thick or of fat. An example of homonymy is stern as an adjective and stern as a noun.

Leech mentions two types of ambiguity, or puns, which are popular in advertising. The first "involves interpreting an item both as part of an idiom and as a lexical item in its own right," and the second is punning on a brand-name. His example of the first is: "When the wind has a bite -- and you feel like a bite -- then bite on a Whole Nut." The first two occurrences of bite involve idioms, the third is bite in its own literal sense. For the second type of ambiguity, punning on a brand-name, he gives the following example:

You'll go nuts for the nuts you get in Nux
It fills you up and gives you lots of go.

Nuts and Nux are nearly homonyms.

2.3.2 Praninskas (1968)

Praninskas (1968) has also noted the punning potential of brand-names. In an extensive study of trade-names she describes puns made on common word sequences, citing as examples "RAIN DEARS, plastic shoe protectors" and "AIR MALE, a very light-weight 'airy' fabric used in men's clothing" (1966, p. 84).

In section 7.3.1 I show how a pun in the headline may be a play on the trade-name (referred to in this paper as the brand-name) of a product. A prerequisite for this phenomenon is that the brand-name, or a part of it, itself be a pun on a common word in the language.

2.3.3 Callary (1970)

In a short paper called 'The literalization of idioms' Callary describes the fusion of the literal and figurative meanings of idioms in advertising and in newspaper headlines. An example is, "'Last year over 4 million people stopped getting pushed around' (advertisement for Renault front-wheel-drive cars)" (1970, p. 303).

2.3.4 Nilsen (1976)

A special type of advertising pun described in Nilsen

(1976) is based on a pair of homophones. As Nilsen notes, "the writer chooses to use the least likely spelling in order to weight the meaning toward the one the reader might not think of" (p. 31). Two of his examples are:

| <u>Advertisement</u> | <u>Homophones</u> |
|------------------------------------------------|-------------------|
| A reducing salon: "We recycle waists." | waist/waste |
| Massage Parlour: "People who knead people." | knead/need |

Nilsen also mentions grammatical ambiguity, where the functions of particular words are ambiguous. He cites as an example,

A Christmas advertisement for an airline which showed a picture of a 747 with the caption, "Why don't you take one home to mother?" in which case it is difficult to know whether the 747 is meant to be a mode of transportation or a gift. (p. 35)

2.3.5 Jefkins (1976)

One of the few references by a non-linguist to punning as an advertising technique occurs in Jefkins (1976). Jefkins has had practical experience in copywriting and is a lecturer in marketing. He delineates twenty-seven types of headline (see section 1.9 above for some examples). Number 18 is the play-on-words, a "highly imaginative way of writing an impactful headline" (p. 61). Twenty headlines are given as examples in this category but they are not further classified into types of plays-on-words. His headlines contain examples of puns, personification and idioms, although they are not labelled as such.

Jefkins writes of advertising in Britain. He cautions that "the copywriter should not forget the minority markets at home." In-jokes and ambiguous references should be avoided, since they may be meaningless to foreigners and immigrants (pp. 62-63).

2.3.6 Kolin (1977)

Kolin (1977) describes a variety of puns used in advertising. Among these are expressions with two or more meanings, puns based on slang, the literalization of the cliché, substituting an unfamiliar word in a familiar phrase, punning on a brand-name or on a word that is phonologically or morphologically close to a brand-name, distorting spelling, punning based on sexual themes and punning based on pictures. He emphasizes that these categories "overlap in complex ways, reflecting the variety of puns in current advertising" (p. 29). Some of Kolin's variations are described in chapters 6-7.

2.3.7 Pandya (1977)

One of several studies inspired by Leech (1966) is Pandya's examination of English advertising in India (1977). Originally written as a doctoral thesis, Pandya's work is based on an examination of about 350 advertisements from four main product classes: textiles, cosmetics, pharmaceuticals and miscellaneous advertising. Pandya has found both lexical and grammatical ambiguity in English

advertising in India, including the use of words which may be interpreted idiomatically as well as literally. He notes that ambiguity may arise from homonymy and polysemy, but beyond giving examples of these he does not classify or further analyze the puns that he has found.

2.3.8 Kumar (1978)

Another Indian study is Kumar's examination of Hindi radio and press advertisements (1978). Kumar does not deal with ambiguity as a separate topic but his study is interesting for the similarities that he finds between Hindi advertising in India and English advertising in Britain. Kumar notes, for example, the frequent use of minor sentences, imperatives, and nominal groups promoted to the rank of sentence in Hindi advertising. Idioms and the use of proverbs are much less frequent. Kumar's study, like Pandya's, is based on Leech (1966)..

2.3.9 Tash (1979)

Puns are discussed in my paper on semantic deviation in advertising headlines (Tash, 1979). In that paper I also describe the three ways in which idioms are used in headlines: they may be changed slightly, left unchanged and used for either their literal or their idiomatic meaning, or left unchanged and used for both meanings. The third of these is in fact a type of pun. It is discussed in detail in section 7.3.3.1.

CHAPTER THREE

General Survey of Linguistic Devices

Used in Headlines -- Part 1

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3.1 Introduction

In this and the following chapter I present a general survey of the linguistic devices used in headlines. This chapter focuses on phonological, lexical and syntactic devices while chapter 4 examines semantic and other language-related devices.

3.2 Phonology

At the phonological level, headlines may exemplify assonance, alliteration and rhyme.

3.2.1 Assonance

A headline in an advertisement for little pictures of Victorian rooms, which are to be embroidered by the purchaser, is:

Miniature
Victorian
rooms --
to stitch
from kits!

(Good Housekeeping; June 1982)

This type of assonance, the repetition of the /I/ sound, is appropriate in a headline that focuses on the small size of the product. The occurrence of assonance is, however, relatively rare in advertising headlines.

3.2.2 Alliteration

A much more frequent device is alliteration. It gives

headlines a certain 'fun' quality while simultaneously increasing their memorability. In his discussion of the Esso slogan, "Put a tiger in your tank," Mollica notes that:

The Esso research team, according to Ben Ash, had already established that it was "the crispness and alliteration of the slogan which had contributed significantly to the campaign's success in the United States." It was essential that, where possible, these qualities be carried over into the various translations. (Mollica, 1979, p. 695; inside quotation is from Ben Ash, A Tiger in Your Tank, 1969)

The following instance of alliteration is from an advertisement for the Farberware Advantage Collection, a collection of relatively expensive aluminum and stainless steel cookware:

The pleasure to the palate is worth
the price to the purse.

(New York Times Magazine; April 18th, 1982)

In this case the alliteration is in the repetition of the /p/ sound.

Sometimes headlines have partial alliteration, where sounds that are similar but not identical are repeated in close proximity to each other. For example, an advertisement for Bibicure hair remover asks:

Is basic body care a part
of your beauty program?

(Chatelaine; April 1982)

This could be viewed as a mixture of two kinds of alliteration, /b/ and /p/. But since the two sounds differ in only one respect, that is, voicing, it is better regarded as partial alliteration involving five occurrences of two

similar sounds.

Probably the most frequent type of alliteration involves the phoneme /s/. The headline and sub-head in an advertisement for Seagram's Five Star Canadian whisky say:

Five Star quality

Five Star's secret of success: the extra smoothness and quality that is unmistakably Seagram's.

(Starweek, supplement to Toronto Saturday Star;
March 20th, 1982)

This type of alliteration may have been chosen to match the word Star in the product's name. Alliteration with /s/ also often involves certain key words such as sale and save and, at appropriate times of the year and particularly in clothing advertisements, words such as spring, summer and sun. Besides /s/, alliteration with /k/, /m/, /b/ and /p/ are also fairly frequent in headlines.

There is considerable overlap between the phonemes that occur most frequently in English and in Hindi alliterative advertising. Kumar mentions /k/, /s/, /m/ and /n/ as being particularly frequent in alliterative headlines in Hindi advertising for cosmetics and fabrics (1978, p. 41).

Although not the subject of this study, the titles of newspaper articles also frequently contain alliteration. Two examples are: 'Talks Set on China Trade Ties' (New York Times; September 16th, 1980) and 'Oil Boom Brings Cash, and Crime, to Shetland Isles' (ibid.; January 4th, 1982).

3.2.3 Rhyme

Rhyme is a common phonological device in headlines. For example, an advertisement for Fiberglas Canada says:

Before you insulate,
investigate.

(Maclean's; March 29th, 1982)

In addition to the rhyme, the syllabic pattern (6 syllables in the first clause, 4 in the second) helps to fix the message in the reader's mind.

Rhyming words need not be at the end of a clause. In an advertisement for Lily of France lingerie there is no body copy, only a picture of a lady in her underwear and the relatively long headline:

It's hard to believe
that anything
this tiny
and shiny
and sassy
and sexy
could hold you
and mold you
and shape you
and make you
more beautiful
than any bra
you've ever worn.

(Cosmopolitan; March 1982)

The layout, which is that of a poem, makes the rhyming words very obvious. At the ends of lines there are tiny, shiny, sassy and sexy; inside lines we have hold and mold. There is assonance in the vowels of shape and make, and alliteration in, first, sassy and sexy, and second, in beautiful and bra (and possibly also in believe, if the

reader remembers that far back).

The repetition of sounds, whether due to alliteration, assonance, rhyme or a combination of these, seems to have a pleasing effect on the reader and is no doubt of great mnemonic value.

3.3 Lexis

Lexical deviation in headlines includes categories such as repetition of words and morphemes, compounding, neologisms and the use of idioms. Idioms are discussed in detail in sections 4.2.7.1-2 and 3.3.1-2. For now I will only give examples of repetition, compounding and neologisms.

3.3.1 Repetition

Repetition at the lexical level takes the form of repetition of lexical items and repetition of morphemes.

3.3.1.1 Repetition of lexical items

A lexical item may be repeated in the same sense or in a different sense. An example of the first kind is found in a headline for Max Factor's Maxi-Lash mascara:

Not just long.
Not just lasting.
But long lashes
that last
24 hours long.

(Woman's Day; June 15th, 1982)

This little 14-word headline contains three kinds of

repetition: on the phonological level, alliteration of /l/; on the lexical level, repetition of long and last; and on the syntactic level, repetition of the structurally identical adjective phrases, not just long and not just lasting. Some other headlines that repeat lexical items are "If you've got a good copier" (4.2.4) and "Run, Rabbit, run," (3.4.10).

While repetition of words in the same sense is extremely common, an ad writer may also change the sense of the final word in the series. For example, in an advertisement for National Business Employment Weekly, the headline says:

Finding a better job
doesn't have to be
a difficult job.

(Wall Street Journal; March 3rd, 1982)

In the first instance, job is used in the sense of 'employment,' while in the second it means 'task.' Another headline that repeats words in different senses is "Discover a world the world hasn't discovered" (section 3.4.9). A world is used in the sense of 'a place' and then the world is used to mean 'people.'

3.3.1.2 Repetition of morphemes

Morphemes may also be repeated, as in the following two headlines:

Outfoxes,
outbusts,
outscouts
every radar
detector
in its class.

(Car and Driver; June 1982)

The untold story
of the unsung
unsalted peanut.

(Redbook; July 1982)

The first headline is for a Whistler speed radar detector. The second is for Planters unsalted peanuts. The triple repetition of the morphemes out- and un- impart a sense of rhythm to these headlines.

It is more difficult to repeat a morpheme in a different sense than to repeat a lexical item this way, but notice the repetition of un- in this advertisement for Office Mates 5 (an employment agency):

Unappreciated?
Uninspired?
Underpaid?

You've settled for less...
for too long!

(New Woman; April 1982)

The three occurrences of the syllable un- lend rhythm to the opening questions, but only the first two are independent morphemes; the third is in fact part of the morpheme under. Ordinarily, the reader would probably not notice this type of change in the function of a syllable, from morpheme to non-morpheme status. However, in this case the morpheme means 'not' and it is clear that the first two letters of

underpaid do not have this meaning.

3.3.2 Compounding

Compounds are fairly frequent in advertising language. These are groups of words that function as single adjectives or adverbs.

3.3.2.1 Compound adjectives

As Leech noted in his study of television advertising, there is an abundance of adjectival compounds in advertising language (1966, ch. 15). For example, in

The not-just-for-anyone gift:
Psychology Today

(Psychology Today; May 1982)

the group not-just-for-anyone operates as a single pre-modifier of the noun gift.

A compound adjective need not have hyphens between its parts. A Bloomingdale advertisement for shaving foam invites the reader:

Come, have a Chanel for men shave on us
and experience their new shaving foam

(New York Times; June 27th, 1982)

The nominal group, a Chanel for men shave on us, has as its head the noun shave. It is pre-modified by a compound adjective, a chanel for men. There are no hyphens in this unusual structure but we would not be surprised if there were.

3.3.2.2 Compound adverbs

Compound adverbs, unlike adjectives, occur very infrequently. I found only one in my sample, in an advertisement for trial membership in the Doubleday Book Club. The headline says:

Try us risk-free

(Playgirl; October 1982)

The group risk-free functions as a single word modifying try, and can therefore be considered an adverb.

3.3.3 Neologisms

Related to compounding is the neologism, the invention of a new lexical item. Some neologisms are quite plausible, as in:

Bounce keeps clothes
smelling fresh from
washday to wearday.

(Woman's Day; June 15th, 1982)

Wearday is acceptable because it is analogous to the preceding washday and because of the context; that is, it occurs in an advertisement for a fabric softener. But in the following headline for Carolans, an Irish cream liqueur, the adjective Irishest does not appear quite as acceptable:

The richest, freshest
creamiest, Irishest
taste in all the world.

(Ms.; August 1982)

Although we are prepared for it by the three superlatives that precede it, Irishest seems an unlikely word. It

violates the rules of superlative formation. We would expect the most Irish, not the Irishest.

3.4 Syntax

Deviation at the syntactic level includes the following: comparative and superlative structures, unusual word order, introductory for- phrases, if- clauses, the imperative, questions, parallelism, the use of a lexical item in an unfamiliar syntactic role, changing the order of words, and the vocative.

The subject of grammatical ambiguity is taken up in chapter 8.

3.4.1 Comparative and superlative structures

Since each product is trying to outdo its competitors, we find many comparative and superlative structures in advertising copy. The following headlines, which are discussed elsewhere, contain comparative structures:

It's hard to believe . . . (3.2.3)
Academic excellence . . . (4.2.5)
Montreal. It's four times better. (4.3.6)
Why should we . . . (7.3.4)

Superlative structures appear in these headlines:

Under the sun . . . (1.10.2)
The richest, freshest . . . (3.3.3)
The raciest show . . . (7.3.4)

3.4.2 Unusual word order

Although not very frequent, unusual word order is

strikingly noticeable when it occurs. We see this in a headline for Dior Jewelry:

Enviably is your Dior.

(Vogue; September 1981)

The order here is complement + verb + subject, instead of the reverse.

In an advertisement for South Seas Plantation, a tourist resort, the headline is:

Quietly,
we've become the
most complete
resort on Florida's
West Coast.

(New Yorker; March 1st, 1982)

We can imagine a context for sentences beginning this way, e.g. in the middle of a story: "Quietly, he opened the door." This headline attracts attention precisely because it is not in the middle of a context, but at the beginning.

3.4.3 Introductory for- phrase

One way of specifying the audience for whom a product is intended is to begin the advertisement with a phrase of the form, "For the person who . . ." We see this in the following headlines, which are discussed elsewhere:

For people who have a thing about golf. (4.2.7.2)
For the executive who's going places . . . (7.3.3.2)

3.4.4 If- clause

Another way to specify the intended audience is with an introductory if- clause. An advertisement for Herbitol

weight loss system begins:

If you think it would take
a miracle for you to
lose weight, you're right.

(People; May 17th, 1982)

Similarly, the headline in an advertisement for Fortune, the
business magazine, is:

If your taxes are whopping,
try swapping.

(New York Times; November 17th, 1981)

These headlines are addressed to people with specific
concerns, namely, losing weight and reducing taxes, and will
probably induce them to examine the unusually extensive copy
that is placed below the headline. (The copy in the
Herbitol advertisement is about 220 words, in the Fortune
advertisement over 500 words.)

Introductory for- phrases and if- clauses do not
represent deviant language; that is, they do not involve
linguistic aberrations. However, they (and other structures
like them) are included here because they appear with
relatively high frequency in headlines. (A distinction was
made in section 1.4 between devices that are actually
deviant and devices that occur with higher frequency in
advertising language.)

3.4.5 Imperative

The imperative is very common in advertising headlines.
Leech notes that of all the independent clauses in his

television sample, one in five is imperative (section 2.2.1 above).

The imperative has a high frequency in my own study of press advertising; it occurred in about 20 per cent of all the headlines studied. Its use, however, was not confined to giving instructions. In fact, that was not even its major role. The imperative seems to serve almost every language function, from conveying information to issuing an invitation. Mollica (1979, p. 697) names eleven ideas which the imperative mood may convey: order, advice, wish, concession, exhortation, admonishment, prohibition, request, entreaty, suggestion and invitation. For example, an advertisement for lightweight, portable cassette recorders and radios has the headline:

Look where
Panasonic Stereo-to-Go
is going now.

(Sport; April 1982)

The illustration shows several people, each one using his own machine, hanging on to the straps in a bus. The headline seems to be saying not so much 'Look' in the literal sense as 'Notice what we can do. Our machines are so small they can go anywhere.' It is conveying information, informing the reader, rather than telling him what to do.

The imperative is often used to express wishes, as in an advertisement by Kleinsleep for its bouncy mattresses:

Have a good spring

(New York Times; May 13th, 1982)

It can make promises too. A book called Personal Financial Planning is advertised with the headline:

Achieve
financial independence
tomorrow...

without
going
broke
today!

(Wall Street Journal; March 9th, 1982)

This promise serves as a lure to people with financial concerns, a group that includes almost everyone.

The imperative may also be used to give a friendly warning. An advertisement for electronic security equipment (to turn lamps and appliances on and off when a person is away from home) begins:

Don't let a burglar have
a good time on your vacation.

(New York Times; July 25th, 1982)

Advice or suggestions may be given with the imperative, as in an advertisement for DeBeeers diamonds:

Let her know romance is not a dead language.

(Vogue; September, 1981)

The imperative can even express a challenge. The headline in an advertisement for Minolta copiers says:

Call the competition and
ask about our copy quality

(New York Times; March 23rd, 1982)

Finally, the imperative may be used to issue an

invitation. We saw an example of this in the headline "Come, have a Chanel for men shave on us," in section 3.3.2.1.

These headlines are acceptable because, although they use the imperative form, they are not giving orders. In addition, it is clear that, whatever the function, whether it is conveying information, expressing a wish or a challenge, issuing an invitation, etc., it is all for the reader's benefit. The game being played in an advertisement is, 'This is for your benefit, dear reader. This is what we can do for you.'

3.4.6 Questions

Advertising headlines often take the form of questions. Because a question asks for a response, it is an effective means of engaging the reader's attention. However, as Jefkins cautions, "the copywriter must be careful that his headline is capable of producing only one -- the desired! -- response" (1976, p. 44).

Some questions are grammatically complete and either ask for an answer, are rhetorical or are riddles. Others have a shorter form, compared to questions in standard written English, and some take the form of a statement.

3.4.6.1 Complete question -- asks for an answer

The Radiator Specialty Company asks readers:

Has your car
had a physical
lately?...

(Sport; April 1982)

The reader is intended to think about this question and to focus his attention on the products that this company sells for automotive maintenance.

3.4.6.2 Complete question -- rhetorical

Some questions are not intended to be answered by the reader. When Alcan asks:

Whatever happened to that little
aluminum plant from Shawinigan?

(Maclean's; April 26th, 1982)

the reader is not expected to know. The answer is supplied by the advertiser, in the body copy. (The answer: it grew from a little smelter with a staff of 15 to the world's largest exporter of aluminum, employing nearly 50,000 Canadians.)

Occasionally the answer to a rhetorical question is given in the headline itself:

Why do women need the American Express Card?
For the same reasons men do.

(Ms.; August 1982)

The reasons (what the American Express Card can do for you) are elaborated in the copy.

3.4.6.3 Complete question -- riddle

A few headlines are in fact riddles. A National Trust

advertisement says:

Okay.

What pays off like a term deposit,
handles like a savings account,
and makes you smile?

National's new
term investment account.

(Gazette; June 9th, 1982)

Between the question and the answer is something not often seen in advertisements: a large pair of smiling lips. Ogilvy cautions ad writers not to "show enlarged close-ups of the human face; they seem to repel readers" (1963, p. 120).

If the answer to a riddle is too long, it will be relegated to the copy. An advertisement by Oppenheimer Company asks:

When is swapping
municipals
for the
tax advantage
a disadvantage?

(New York Times; June 6th, 1982)

The copy discusses the merits of trading municipal bonds and the effect that this will have on a person's investment portfolio. Riddles are enticing and the answer to them always involves the product.

Modern riddles are very similar to ancient ones. According to Encyclopaedia Britannica, "a schoolbook of ancient Babylon, with the earliest riddles known, asks: 'What becomes fat without eating, What becomes pregnant without conceiving?' [Answer: a rain cloud.]" (15th ed.,

1977, vol. 19, p. 926) The modern riddle has developed with virtually no change in its form.

3.4.6.4 Question -- short form

Headline questions are often shortened to omit the subject, auxiliary or both. In an advertisement for Garden Way Carts, for example, the headline asks:

"Want to know
what's really
odd about those
'odd jobs' around
your place?"

(New Yorker; May 17th, 1982)

An advertisement for Anbesol anesthetic asks, simply:

Baby teething?

(Starweek, supplement to the Toronto Saturday Star;
March 20th, 1982)

The headline in an advertisement for Veloutine gravy and sauce thickeners suggests a problem and a promise:

Lumps in your gravy?
Never again!

(Gazette; June 9th, 1982)

The shortened question abounds in advertising. It occurs in a number of headlines which are discussed elsewhere under different headings; for example,

Unappreciated? Uninspired? . . . (3.3.1.2)
Rado Suisse. Unconventional? Highly . . . (3.4.7)
Exclusive, extravagant? . . . (4.2.8.2)
Want to see freight costs . . . (7.2.1)
Know beans about terminals? . . . (7.2.3)
Unwanted hair problem? (8.2)

In some cases, the only way the reader knows that the

headline is a question is by the interrogation mark at the end.

A headline with a shortened question resembles the introductory for- phrase (3.4.3) and the if- clause (3.4.4) in its ability to focus on a specific problem. It identifies potential consumers immediately.

3.4.6.5 Question -- statement form

A final variety of headline question is one that is really a statement with a question mark at the end:

All you need
is a good job?

All you need is
the New York
Times!

(New York Times; June 27th, 1982)

Between the two sections of the headline, the copy describes the many jobs available through the Help Wanted section in the Times' Classified pages.

3.4.7 Parallelism

Parallel structures are very common in headlines. They may involve the repetition of noun phrases, as in:

Grand opening
of furnished models

beautiful homes,
great location
and tall, tall trees.

(Toronto Star; March 20th, 1982)

This is from an advertisement by Laurelwood Properties,

which sells new homes. Parallelism may also involve the repetition of clause structure, as in this advertisement for Charles of the Ritz nail care products:

If they're weak,
they split. If they're
hard, they crack.
And maybe they
simply won't grow.
What can you do
about your nails?

(Cosmopolitan; March 1982)

The repetition of noun phrases with an almost identical adjective-noun structure in the first headline (beautiful homes, great location and tall, tall trees) and the repetition of clause and sentence structure in the second headline (If they're weak, they split and If they're hard, they crack) catches the attention of the reader and appears to have a pleasant, satisfying effect on him.

Often the parallel series will include two or three items and then the next one will contain a change in the structure. In this advertisement by the EAF Charter Company, two adverbs are followed by a prepositional phrase:

Fly anywhere,
anytime
on schedule

(Wall Street Journal; March 9th, 1982)

An advertisement for Correctol laxatives contains three noun phrases followed by a gerundial phrase:

Diet...lack of exercise...stress...
or just being a woman...

(Canadian Living; July 1982)

And a Macy's advertisement for Rado Suisse watches repeats a

question-answer pattern in the form of adjective-adverb and then changes the adjective to a prepositional phrase:

Rado Swiss.

Unconventional? Highly. Prestigious? Very. Durable? Extraordinarily. For Father's Day? Absolutely.

(New York Times; June 17th, 1982)

Headlines like these combine the satisfying effect of parallel structure with the attention-getting value of a change in the structure.

3.4.8 Use of a lexical item in an unfamiliar syntactic role

Another attention-getting device is to use a lexical item in an unfamiliar syntactic role. An advertisement for Mudd Super Cleansing Treatment says:

15 minutes of ugly

for a whole week of pretty

(Cosmopolitan; August 1982)

A picture of someone's face, covered by the cleanser, is under the first line. The same face appears following the second line, without the cleanser and looking pretty. The words ugly and pretty are adjectives; they do not normally function as nouns.

This kind of layout, where one or more pictures are interposed between parts of the headline, is called a 'split headline' (Jefkins, 1976, p. 69). It has an interesting visual effect.

3.4.9 Changing the order of words

The order of words may be changed to create new meaning. A headline from an advertisement by the BWIA Company, which flies to Trinidad and Tobago, is:

Discover a world the world hasn't discovered.

(New Yorker; May 24th, 1982)

Here the words in a verb + object sequence, discover a world, have been transposed to form a post-modifier of the object, namely, the world hasn't discovered.

A similar technique is behind this headline in an advertisement for the magazine Financial World:

Financial World
doesn't
have millions
of readers.
It has readers
worth millions.

(New York Times; April 15th, 1982)

The words in the noun phrase, millions of readers, have been changed to form a new noun phrase, readers worth millions. There is a sense of playfulness in headlines like these.

3.4.10 Vocative

The vocative is sometimes used to address the specific group of consumers that an advertisement is targeted at. For example, Little, Brown and Company, in an advertisement selling a book about baseball, declares:

Baseball fans,
this is your life!

(Sports Illustrated; June 28th, 1982)

In addition to addressing the reader, the vocative may be used to address a person in the picture of an advertisement, or even to address the product. An instance of the latter occurs in a Honda advertisement. It claims that Hondas are better automobiles than Volkswagens because they have gas, not diesel engines. The headline is a simple one. It says:

Run Rabbit, run.

(Gazette; March 1st, 1982)

Honda is addressing its competition, the Volkswagen Rabbit.

CHAPTER FOUR

General Survey of Linguistic Devices

Used in Headlines -- Part 2

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4.1 Introduction

In the last chapter I considered deviation in the headline from phonological, lexical and syntactic perspectives. Here I take up deviation at the semantic level. Also discussed in this chapter are other techniques of drawing attention to headlines, techniques that do not fall neatly into any of the traditional levels of linguistic analysis but that are nonetheless language-related.

4.2 Semantics

Leech refers to semantics as "the least understood of the levels of language" (1966, p. 9). The reason for this is that semantics deals not with the observable and easily verifiable form of language, but with its meaning. It makes reference to things outside itself, to objects and events in the world. But the study of meaning is a fascinating one and the deviations that ad writers create in advertisements, while amusing or interesting in themselves, also provide insight into the more standard workings of the language. Categories that fall within the semantic level of analysis include anomalous collocations, contrast, definition, logic, question-provoking statements, idioms, register and puns, or ambiguity:

4.2.1 Anomalous collocation

An anomalous collocation is the result of using

together words that do not normally function together in a clause. This usage violates certain selection restrictions that words have. Leech describes this phenomenon when he refers to "the general principle that meaning seems to 'overflow sideways' from one part of a sentence to another: that certain features of meaning are predictable from environment, and that any contradiction of such features will result in an unacceptable utterance" (1974, p. 141). For example, an advertisement for Sennheiser earphones has a headline with the suggestion:

Wear a Concert.

(Stereo Review, May 1982)

In normal usage this would not be acceptable; a concert cannot be worn. A similar headline is Kellogg's Rice Krispies' "Listen to breakfast," which according to Jefkins "has been going strong for twenty-five years" (1976, p. 54).

A Medhurst Company advertisement that desires to provide career services to mature business executives has the headline:

Wanted

Slightly used
executives

(Toronto Star; March 20th, 1982)

This strikes the reader as incongruous on two counts. First, it is usually criminals who are wanted, or antiques or gold and silver coins, etc. Second, objects such as furniture and cars may be referred to as 'slightly used,' but people may not be. These incongruities are eye-catching

and, the advertiser hopes; memorable.

4.2.2 Contrast

Various types of contrast are also eye-catching. For example, the headline in a Converse company advertisement for running shoes announces:

Good news
for bad knees.

(Newsweek, April 19th, 1982)

In addition to the contrast between the adjectives good and bad, there is grammatical parallelism in the noun phrases good news and bad knees. These two phrases are identical in their number of syllables. The head nouns, news and knees, are phonetically identical except for their vowels.

A slightly more clever kind of contrast appears in an advertisement to distribute the Annual Economics Report of the City of Edmonton. The headline says:

When the bottom line
is a top priority.

(Globe and Mail; July 9th, 1982)

Again we have two adjectives in contrast, bottom and top, although bottom line is really a compound noun, not an adjective-noun construction like top priority. But the copywriter has seen in the compound noun an element that can be made to contrast with another word.

Prepositions may also be set in opposition to each other, as in an advertisement for Canadian Club Whisky:

You're not just moving in,
you're moving up.

(Penthouse; July 1982)

A subtle form of contrast occurs in an advertisement for Freedom Phone, a company that makes cordless extension telephones. The headline, above a picture of a man holding one of these telephones, says:

"Of course I don't need
a cordless phone this good.
I deserve it."

(New Yorker; August 23rd, 1982)

This is a subtle and intricate kind of contrast. A logical extension of 'don't need' would be 'don't want' or 'it's unnecessary.' Instead, what the man in the picture is saying, approximately, is, "I have this telephone not because I need it, but because I deserve it."

It is difficult to say exactly why contrast is so eye-catching. Perhaps it is because it comes upon the reader unexpectedly, catching him off guard.

4.2.3 Definition

Some advertisements have a definition as their basis. This may be done in a serious way, as in this headline in an advertisement for the tobacconist, Ramon Allones:

The original meaning of
"manufacture" is "made by hand."
Since 1837,
Ramon Allones has stayed
with this definition.

(New York Times Magazine; June 27th, 1982)

Giving the definition of a word appears to lend a degree of

credibility to the advertisement.

An advertisement for the YMCA is not strictly a definition, since it explains a letter rather than a word, but it has the same form as a definition:

YMCA

The 'Y'
stands for you

(Saturday Night; July 1982)

This may be interpreted in two ways: first, that the letter Y in YMCA is an abbreviation for you, and second, that the institution of the YMCA, commonly referred to as the 'Y,' supports you. Both interpretations suggest a close, supportive relationship between this service-oriented institution and its members.

Participaction is a Canadian government^{or} program whose purpose is to encourage people to be physically fit. It ran this advertisement shortly after April 1st:

April
fool:

Somebody who
sits around all spring!

(Maclean's; April 26th, 1982)

In the space between the two parts of the headline there is a picture of an overweight man sitting in an overstuffed chair and patting his cat. The cat is obviously overfed too. The headline has the format of a definition; the fact that the definition given is not what the reader would have expected is surprising and amusing.

4.2.4 Logical argument

It is common for an advertisement to offer one or more reasons why the consumer should buy a product. These may take the form of a logical argument. An advertisement for Bacardi Rum, for example, says:

Bacardi dark.
It tastes good mixed
because it tastes good unmixed.

(Sport; April 1982)

Surely rum could 'taste good unmixed' but not 'taste good mixed'. Faulty logic seems not to deter the headline writer.

The headline in an advertisement for Rust-Oleum paint asks:

If what you're painting
isn't ordinary,
why should your paint be?

(People; May 17th, 1982)

This suggests that you should never use an ordinary paint if the object to be painted is in some way 'not ordinary.' In this advertisement the object to be painted is a child's wagon that is now going to a second generation.

A headline that takes the form of a formal argument, from basic premise to conclusion, appeared in an advertisement for the New York Times Winter Survey of Education:

Money is not important.
It's what money can buy.

Money
can buy a good education.
That's important.

(New York Times; November 17th, 1981)

Although we might agree that a good education is important, we would probably not want to say that everything money can buy is important.

Headlines that have a surface logic but that are in fact illogical are discussed in Tash (1979). The discussion there and the examples cited here may give the impression that all headlines having a logical form are at basis faulty, but this is not the case. Sometimes the logic can be acceptable and quite compelling, as in this headline from an advertisement for Minolta Copiers:

If you've got a good copier
why doesn't it make good copies?

(New York Times; June 6th, 1982)

It would be difficult to argue with this line of thought.

4.2.5 Illogical statement

Headlines can also be illogical. The following, from an advertisement for the New York Times Book Review, is arresting because it does not make sense:

The New York Times
has the most respected
Best Seller List
in the book business

...all four of them.

(New York Times; May 9th, 1982)

The most respected Best Seller List implies that there is only one such list, and no more. The contradiction, that there are four Best Seller Lists, encourages the reader to look at the copy, which explains that the NYT Book Review does indeed have four Best Seller lists: for fiction, nonfiction, trade paperbacks and mass market paperbacks. This seems to be the message of the whole advertisement, that the NYT Book Review contains four Best Seller lists.

Another headline that is a contradiction in terms is one for Lehman College in the Bronx. Its headline is:

Academic
excellence

It's priceless, but
less expensive than
you think

(New York Times; December 22nd, 1981)

How can something that is priceless be described as less expensive than something else? The answer, if you read the copy, is that the graduates of this college have excellent records and have gone on to do great things, but that the tuition at the college is relatively inexpensive. Thus a statement that is logically impossible not only engages the attention of the reader, it also forces him, if he wants to resolve the illogic, to read the copy of the advertisement.

In this way he is drawn into the body copy and the illustration, to be given more information about the product.

Another method to lure the reader in is to write a headline that, while not illogical or paradoxical, still does not seem to make sense. Via Rail, for example, advertises:

How to take
a vacation
on the way
to your vacation.

(Gazette; June 8th, 1982)

The reader asks himself, 'What does this mean?' The copy explains that Via's trains are so comfortable, have such good food, accommodations, etc. that riding them on the way to your vacation is itself like taking a vacation.

4.2.6 Question-provoking statement

A related technique is to write a headline that, while clear and apparently sensible, still provokes questions in the reader's mind. For example:

On October 1st, a resort you'll never forget
will open in a place you've never heard of.

(Vogue; September 1981)

The name of the resort (beneath a two-page illustration of luxurious palm trees, beach and inviting ocean) is Camino Real Ixtapa; the place: Ixtapa-Zihuatanejo, in Mexico. Jefkins calls this type of headline the 'curiosity headline,' and says that it "is both a stopper and an

inducement to read on" (1976, p. 55).

Another technique that raises questions in a reader's mind is the employment of the pronoun it without a referent:

24 hours after
you fall in
love with it
it's on your
floor

(New York Times; May 13th, 1982)

What is it? It is a carpet from the ABC Carpet Company. (A variation of this technique is the headline "Get it at home" in section 7.3.4.)

The lineation also raises questions in the reader's short-term memory. The first two lines end, respectively, with a conjunction and a preposition. The reader establishes a mental place in his decoding of the sentence for a following clause and the completion of the prepositional phrase. These places are filled in the next lines. The third line is cut after it, which as I have noted, has no referent, and the fourth line stops after the possessive pronoun your, again forcing the reader to wait for the completion of a unit, this time a noun phrase.

4.2.7 Idioms

Idioms occur very frequently in advertising. They establish a tone of friendliness and trust with the reader. When they are used for more or less than their idiomatic meaning, that is, for their idiomatic as well as their literal meaning, or for only their literal meaning, they can

be the source of a little joke between the copywriter and the reader.

The use of the term 'idiom' here generally follows the classification of Boatner & Gates (1966, p. v-vi). They describe three categories of idiom: lexemic idioms, phraseological idioms, and sayings and proverbs.

Lexemic idioms "correlate with the familiar patterns of speech." As examples they cite work out and turn in, which correlate with verbs, and hot dog and White House, which are nouns.

Phraseological idioms "do not readily correlate with a given part of speech and require a paraphrase longer than a word;" for example, to seize the bull by the horns and to be up the creek.

The third category of idiom, sayings and proverbs, includes time-worn sayings like don't count your chickens before they're hatched and don't wash your dirty linen in public.

Boatner & Gates define an idiom as "the assigning of a new meaning to a group of words which already have their own meaning" (p. iv). They also note that many items are fairly rigid and may undergo only very limited changes in their form. For example, the passive form of kick the bucket, that is, the bucket has been kicked by the cowboy, no longer means 'the cowboy died' (p. vi).

The characteristic of permitting only an extremely limited number of changes has been discussed by Bolinger

(1976), but with regard to items that are not idioms in the usual sense. He describes the phrase indelible ink, whose "meaning is clearly deducible from the separate meanings of indelible and ink" (p. 9). It is not an idiom, yet the possible collocations of indelible are very small in number. We expect this word to be followed by a writing material of some kind. Although indelible ink does not meet the strict definition of idiomaticity, Bolinger argues that it and many other similar phrases are, like idioms, stored as single units in the brain and permit only very tightly controlled usage. He claims that "speakers do at least as much remembering as they do putting together, and a great deal of what we have been regarding as syntactic will have to be put down as morphological" (1976, p. 2). "Idiomaticity," he claims, "is a vastly more pervasive phenomenon than we ever imagined" (p. 3).

It is in this broad sense that the term 'idiom' is used here. The meaning of phrases like more power to you and multiple-choice, discussed in the next section, may be deducible from their component words, but these expressions are idiomatic in that they will not allow even slight changes in their internal words or structure to pass unnoticed. Moreover, phrases such as these are so well established that a major change, as when scour is substituted for power, still does not prevent the reader from thinking of the original phrase.

Following this usage of 'idiom,' then, we find three

typical ways in which ad writers use these language units. First, they may change an idiom slightly, although the original idiom is still recognizable. Second, they may leave an idiom unchanged, and use it for either its literal or its idiomatic meaning. And third, an idiom may be left unchanged and used for both its literal and its idiomatic meanings. The first two techniques are described in the immediately following sections. Discussion of the third is reserved to the more general discussion of puns in chapter 7.

4.2.7.1 Changing the idiom slightly

It is a comfortable feeling to unexpectedly stumble upon something old and familiar. Familiar things include phraseological idioms such as we find in a Chore Boy advertisement (Chore Boys are scouring pads used to clean stoves, grills, etc.):

If you like your
steaks medium and
your grill well done,
more scour to you.

(Woman's Day; June 15th, 1982)

A proverb or saying may also be changed to accommodate a brand-name; for example:

Dewar's unto others.

(Playboy; January 1982)

The copywriters have not strayed too far from the original in these advertisements: scour rhymes with power and the name of the whisky, Dewar's, begins with the same sound as

do.

Sometimes there is a lexemic idiom that has been slightly changed. The Burlington Northern Railroad has an extremely long line, which makes possible a wide variety of locations for the establishment of plants and factories. The headline in their advertisement is:

Picking a plant
site is easier
when you start with
multiple choices.

(Wall Street Journal; July 28th, 1982)

The lexemic idiom played on is multiple-choice. Normally a compound adjective, it is being used here as an adjective + noun construction.

4.2.7.2 Leaving an idiom unchanged and using it for one meaning

It is common to employ an idiom in a headline for only one of its meanings, either the literal meaning or the idiomatic meaning. The Pritkin Better Health Program asks potential customers:

Are you a
sitting duck for
a heart attack,
high blood
pressure, diabetes?

(New York Times; October 27th, 1981)

Similarly, the Miami Lakes Inn & Country Club advertises its golf course,

For people
who have a thing
about golf.

(Wall Street Journal; July 13th, 1982)

These idioms, sitting duck and have a thing, are to be taken in their idiomatic senses only.

More amusing is to see an idiom used for the literal sense of its individual words. Although the idiom is there and the reader is aware of its meaning, its idiomatic sense is ruled out by the context, by decorum or by some kind of logic. The Natural Gas Pipeline Company of America transports and sells gas through a pipeline system. Their headline, above a drawing of some pipes, is:

Every day our
chief source of
income goes right
down the tubes.

(New York Times; May 13th, 1982)

In an advertisement for Montreal Calendar Magazine, which informs Montrealers of current events that they may attend in the city, the headline is:

Montreal
Calendar
Magazine

tells you
where
to go

...nicely

(Montreal Calendar Magazine; June 1982)

A last example of an expression that is not to be taken in its idiomatic sense is seen in this headline from an advertisement by the Citizen Watch Company:

Give yourself a hard time.

(Playboy; January 1982)

Citizen makes watches out of a new alloy which is said to be three times harder than stainless steel.

A reader's amusement at these advertisements is based on his recognition of down the tubes and tell someone where to go and give someone a hard time as strong phraseological idioms; they are pieces of colorful language that can have a forceful impact on a listener or reader. Yet, their idiomatic meaning is a quiet joke between the copywriter and the reader. Only the literal meaning is used. The copywriter and the reader jointly pretend that the idiomatic meaning does not exist, and both are aware of the pretense.

4.2.8 Register ,

The register in which most advertising is written is an informal one. The tone is friendly and suggests a commonality of interest between the copywriter and the reader. "To make a sale, you've got to make a friend," notes the Creative Director of a Philadelphia advertising agency (Maples, 1982, p. 15).

Friendliness may appear through the lexical items used. For example, the headline in an advertisement for Toshiba Video Cassette Recorders says:

You'll love how it loads up front and
how little it sets you back.

(New Yorker; March 1st, 1982)

Telling someone that they are going to love something suggests a high degree of friendliness, as do the expressions up front and sets you back.

Friendliness may also be communicated through the phrasing of a headline:

Atari

There's no
comparing it with any
other video game.

(Playboy; January 1982)

There's no comparing it has a colloquial, conversational style, perhaps because of its similarity to no way.

4.2.8.1 Slang

We may say that the tone of advertising is generally colloquial and friendly, and that copywriters normally try to use language that is neutral on the casual-ceremonial scale. But, as the expression goes, 'Rules are made to be broken.' Once a certain tone of informality and friendliness has been accepted as more or less standard in advertising, the copywriter may then take advantage of this by using language that is less neutral, that is, a little more toward the extremes of the scale. He may even introduce some slang into his copy, provided that it is not offensive. For example, the headline in a Cutex nail polish advertisement suggests that you:

Tan your tootsies.

(Redbook, July 1982)

Tootsies is a slang expression that means 'feet.' The general rule against the use of slang was probably overridden here by the possibility of alliteration with /t/, as well as by the affectionate and humorous connotations of 'tootsies.'

4.2.8.2 . Excessive formality

A headline that veers toward the more formal end of the colloquial-formal dimension is found in an advertisement for the NYT Gifts Section. Placed above a drawing of a neatly wrapped gift, the headline asks:

Exclusive, extravagant?
Ineffable, memorable?
Authentic, original?

(New York Times; July 25th, 1982)

These adjectives, particularly ineffable, are unusually formal for the advertising medium and therefore attract attention. They were probably also chosen to suggest the quality of the merchandise described in this section. Under the drawing the copy says, "No matter what you're seeking in a gift for that important someone, you'll find it all in Gifts."

Thus a headline may attract attention by using language that is either too colloquial or too formal. But this technique must be used with care. Ogilvy (1963) cautions:

It is a mistake to use highfalutin language when you advertise to uneducated people. I once used the word OBSOLETE in a headline, only to discover that 43 per cent of housewives had no idea what it meant. In another headline, I used the word INEFFABLE, only to discover that I didn't know what it meant myself.
(p. 112)

This is a humorous warning but the point is worth noting: the ad writer must remember who his audience is.

4.2.8.3 Change of register

Another device relevant to the style of advertising language is a shift in tone or register in mid-stream. An advertisement for the film 'Missing' begins with the headline:

"'Missing' has just those qualities that audiences have been craving from the movies -- a sense of passion and a hell of a good story to tell."

--David Ansen, Newsweek

(New York Times; March 12th, 1982)

The headline is within quotation marks because it was taken from a film review. It is written in a reasonably formal style, until the final phrase. A hell of a good story to tell is at the extreme end of the colloquial-formal dimension. It is slang, considered in some quarters to be vulgar, and therefore contrasts sharply with the tone of the preceding phrase. Joos (1961) describes this kind of radical shift in style as anti-social, because of the convention requiring speakers to suit their style to the social occasion (p. 19).

In general, any change in the level of formality in a discourse will draw attention to itself. This is true regardless of the type of discourse.

4.2.8.4 Personal questions

On the personal-impersonal scale, a headline may veer toward the personal extreme by asking a question such as the following:

What
are you
doing
Saturday
night?

(New York Times; March 5th, 1982)

This is a rather personal question. It would be unacceptable from all but a few of one's acquaintances and is completely unexpected from a newspaper! The headline occurs in an advertisement for the Weekend Section of the New York Times, which is replete with leisure activities for Friday, Saturday and Sunday.

4.2.9 Puns

Puns are very frequent in headlines, although they are not easy to write. Fitz-Gibbon advises beginning copywriters: "Don't put any puns in your sample book . . . Most beginners' puns are terrible." (1951, p. 136).

Puns may involve single words, as in a headline for Penthouse that says:

We
uncover
facts
as well as
figures

(Penthouse; July 1982)

The picture, of a scantily clad woman, makes the puns on uncover and figures difficult to miss.

Puns may also involve an idiom, as in an advertisement for toasting glasses, or tumblers. The headline is:

How to lift spirits
at your next party

(New Yorker; March 1st, 1982)

Using part of an idiom, in this case the word spirits in the idiom to lift spirits, for its own literal sense is a common technique of copywriters. It will be discussed together with other characteristics of puns below, in chapter 7.

Numerous categories of headlines have now been described. The description has been in terms of the traditional levels of linguistic analysis, that is, phonology, lexis, syntax and semantics. There are, however, several other language-related characteristics of headlines that do not cluster as neatly into these levels of analysis. These characteristics are the subject of the next section.

4.3 Other language-related techniques of drawing attention to headlines

In addition to the devices already described, there are other devices that may be employed to draw attention to headlines, devices that, though they are language-related,

are not linguistic in the formal sense of the term. These language-related devices include using an extract from a conversation, beginning in medias res, using a quotation, placing the name first, employing another language or dialect, and using the structure "x ways/reasons/times." These devices are explained in the following sections.

4.3.1 Extract from a conversation

It has already been noted that the tone of advertising is generally friendly and conversational. Many headlines are in fact written as though they were extracts from conversations between either the copywriter and the reader or between two people in the advertisement. A copywriter may try to cajole the reader, for example, saying:

Let's make a deal!

(Gazette; March 17th, 1982)

This is from a Metropolitan Home Services advertisement. "Because of the slow economy," the subhead explains, "we are ready to accept any reasonable offer."

In a Jewellers of America advertisement we see someone giving a girl a gold necklace. The headline says:

"Real gold, honey --
after all, you're going out
into the real world."

(People; May 17th, 1982)

Reading this is like eavesdropping on a private conversation.

Occasionally the headline represents the reflection of

one person. An advertisement for the Regent International Hotel in Hong Kong shows a window of the hotel from the inside looking out. The headline is:

"With a view of
Hong Kong like this,
I don't know why
they bother
to have curtains."

(New Yorker; March 1st, 1982)

These are presumably the thoughts of a guest in the hotel as he looks out the window of his suite.

The vast majority of headlines are direct address; that is, the advertiser (through the person of the copywriter) is addressing the consumer directly. However, in these last two cases we have examples of the less frequent indirect address advertising. Here a secondary participant is speaking. The "Real gold" headline is an extract from a dialogue between two secondary participants. The "With a view of Hong Kong" headline is a monologue.

4.3.2 Beginning in medias res

Many headlines that are conversational in tone begin in medias res. It is assumed that the advertiser has been speaking before, as in this headline from an advertisement for Crown Royal Whisky:

As we've been saying, you couldn't find a better whisky
if you stood on your head.

(Inside Sports; May 1982)

Or it may be assumed that the reader has asked a question and the copywriter is now answering it:

Yes...
you can still get a
14 1/2% mortgage.
for 5 years.

(Toronto Star; March 20th, 1982)

4.3.3 Quotation

In an effort to lend credibility to a claim and perhaps also to personalize it, an ad writer may attach a name to a headline. This suggests that a real person is actually endorsing the product. In an advertisement for the Xerox 2350 copier, for example, the headline is:

"This desktop
copier can reduce
my size 14 sneakers
to an 8 1/2."
--John Havlicek

(Newsweek; April 19th, 1982)

John Havlicek is identified in the copy as a businessman and from a picture we see that he is very tall and probably has big feet. Presumably this is sufficient attestation for the product.

Sometimes a person's name will be followed by his position and affiliation, as in this testimonial for Commodore computers:

"My Commodore computer
lets me control my business --
instead of my business
controlling me."
--Bruce Ritchie, President, Tiesco Limited

(Magazine that's all about Small Business; May 1982)

In lengthy body copy Bruce Ritchie, described as a

manufacturer of chemicals for industrial use, explains how he uses a computer in his business.

The name of a person may also be used within the headline. An advertisement for Femiron multi-vitamins has a headline, above and below a picture of a smiling woman, that says:

Gail Jones
lost 22 pounds

and a lot of essential
vitamins and iron.

(Vogue; September 1981)

The only identification we have for Ms. Jones is the smiling lady in the picture who, it is claimed, has recently lost a great deal of weight. She is showing us that her slacks are now much too big for her.

Some quotations are real. The headline in the advertisement for the film 'Missing,' for example, (section 4.2.8.3) was taken from a critic's review of the film. The following headline from an advertisement for Klark Teknik sound equipment is also real:

Better than all
measures of
delightful sound.

(Shelley 1792-1822)

(Canadian Musician; May/June 1982) *

Giving the source of a quotation in this way, together with the dates of the poet, appears to lend a degree of trust, authority and precision to the advertisement. This is true in spite of the anachronism involved, that is, a nineteenth

century poet endorsing twentieth century electronic equipment.

4.3.4 Product name first

As common as the conversation and quotation techniques is the technique of placing the brand-name at the beginning of the headline. Normally, because of its position, it functions as the subject of a clause. For example:

Weight
Watchers
works

(Gazette, May 22nd, 1982)

But the product name may also constitute its own clause. For example:

BMW. One of the few
car companies not
currently introducing
imitation BMW's.

(Saturday Review; May 1982)

Here the product name is given first and then is followed by a noun phrase containing lengthy post-head noun modification.

A brand-name in initial position is often followed by a because- clause, as in this Eaton's advertisement:

Bremworth
Carpets.
Because wool
is worth it.

(Chatelaine; April 1982)

The second clause appears to be in response to the question, "Why Bremworth Carpets?" This implied question is a

logical consequence of seeing the brand-name in isolation.

4.3.5 Use of another language or dialect

An effective way of engaging a reader's attention in a publication written in one language is to write the headline in another language, or even in several other languages. For example, an advertisement for Kohler, a manufacturer of kitchen and bathroom products, contains a picture of an ancient Greek statue lying in a modern bathtub. The headline is written entirely in Greek. It is translated in the copy as "The Greek. Cradle of civilization."
(House & Garden; July 1982)

The headline for Moreau Blanc wine is written in eight languages, including Spanish, French, Italian, English, German, Hebrew, etc. It takes the form of a list:

El vino de la casa
Le vin de maison
Il vino da tavola
The house wine
Der Hauswein
etc.

(New Yorker; May 17th, 1982)

A headline may be written entirely in a foreign language, as the Greek one above or "Vive la diffurence!" (section 1.10.4), it may contain other languages but also have an English translation as we have just seen in the last example, or it may be written primarily in English but have a few foreign words tossed in for effect. The most popular language for this function is French. The headline in an advertisement for Ship'n Shore Collectibles (a clothing

company) is:

"My crepe nouveau is très chic --
and très affordable."

(New Woman; September 1982)

The phrase très chic is congruous with the French name of the product, that is, crêpe. (Both accents were incorrect in this advertisement: crêpe was written as crepe, both in the headline and in the copy, and très was written as trés.)

The French words in a headline need not constitute a complete syntactic unit. An advertisement for Blue Angel, an importer of records, says:

These European imports are
nice to le wallet & to le ear too.

(Stereo Review; May 1982)

Employing a French article with an English noun results in amusing incongruity.

Occasionally an advertisement in a North American publication will use a word that belongs to British English.

For example:

The British way

"A car for \$17 a day
leaves a pretty penny in
your pocket for petrol."

(New York Times; April 18th, 1982)

This is from a British Airways advertisement. Petrol strikes the North American reader as distinctly British and is immediately noticeable for this reason. The reader feels amusement at its inclusion here and also at the alliteration with /p/ to which it contributes.

A final use of a foreign language involves a headline that, though written in English, sounds at least in part like a translation from another language. An advertisement for Arnold bread begins:

Arnold Jewish Rye.
It makes a great sandwich. So eat.

(Redbook; July 1982)

This takes advantage of the recent popularity of Yiddish in North America. The reader can almost hear the stress and intonation of the stereotypical phrase, 'So' eat, already.'

The inclusion of a foreign language in a headline is immediately noticeable and therefore is an excellent attention-getting device. It can be amusing, as we have seen, and might act as a compliment to the reader who understands it. It appears to be restricted, however, to languages toward which people are likely to have positive feelings and, in the case of French, the most popular language, to words that people might recognize without in fact knowing the language.

Kumar (1978) has also noticed the use of linguistic switching in his study of Hindi advertising. However, it seems to be neither common nor a source of humor there. He says that switching into English occurs primarily in written advertisements and is restricted to the advertisement of "substandard goods" (p. 17).

4.3.6 "x ways/reasons/times"

A final language-related device in headlines is the phrase, "x ways/reasons/times," where x is a number that is usually not larger than ten. For example, an advertisement for the Montreal Convention and Tourist Bureau announces:

Montreal.
It's four times better.

(New York Times Magazine; June 27th, 1982)

Four reasons are given to explain why Montreal is better: the U.S. dollar goes further than it does in the U.S., hotel prices are lower, Montreal is only a short drive from key Northeast cities and it has a French heritage that makes it a "Europe next door." Citing a number in the headline and listing the reasons in the copy make the claim very concrete. It gives the impression of organized, and therefore valid, thinking.

Two similar headlines are:

Five reasons you should step up to
our new realistic digital receiver

(Stereo Review; March 1982)

and:

7 ways to an
executive career

(Gentlemen's Quarterly; September 1982)

The first is from a Radio Shack advertisement. The copy is divided into sections, each of which has a numbered sub-head, for example, "1. Digital Synthesized Tuning System," "2. Computer Control," etc. The second headline is

from an advertisement for the Center for Degree Studies. It offers seven different degree programs for home study.

Lists are used to support claims made in the headlines and to describe the products. They are a direct means of influencing the reader. But a list may also be used to amuse the reader. The goal remains purchase of the product, but the means employed are more indirect. An advertisement for Merle Norman cosmetics provides an example. It contains very little body copy, being composed mainly of headlines (spread over three pages), sub-heads and pictures. On the first, right-hand page is the headline, in very large print:

Ten excuses
for not looking
more beautiful...

Under this, in slightly smaller print, is the lengthy sub-head:

1. I don't have time.
2. My husband doesn't like makeup.
3. I don't want to look made up.
4. No one will notice anyway.
5. I don't know how.
6. I can't afford it.
7. What's wrong with the way I look?
8. I don't want to talk about it.
9. My plants need watering.
10. I'm scared.

The second, left-hand page and the third, right-hand page contain pictures of a model with and without makeup, respectively. The headline continues at the top of the second page and is completed at the top of the third:

...and one beautiful reason why you should.

(Vogue; September 1981)

The "one beautiful reason" is presumably the beautifully made-up face on the third page, intended to be the reader's own.

The list of ten excuses has the ring of a psychological analysis. It begins rather defensively and then becomes increasingly personal and honest. Female readers probably identify with some of the items on the list, as well as recognizing its initial defensiveness and final, ultimate honesty. Herein lies most of its amusement value. Without being overly serious or heavy, it manages to come very close to concerns with which the reader may identify. A part of its amusement value and appeal also resides in the order of the items and in the inclusion of completely irrelevant excuses like number 9, "My plants need watering."

4.4 Conclusion

This completes the survey, begun in chapter 3, of linguistic devices used in headlines.

It seemed wise to classify the multitude of devices according to their form, and not their function. If function had been chosen as the starting point for the classification scheme, the resulting number of categories would have been much larger and indeed unmanageable. Occasionally, form and function were combined in the classification scheme, for example, in the sub-classification of complete questions. A separation was made between those which ask for an answer, those which are

rhetorical and those which are riddles. But in the main the classification has been based on form. Where one form may be used to convey a number of different functions I have noted this fact, for example, in the discussion of the imperative.

It seemed, as I said, the wiser course to classify devices this way. However, two things may have been lost in the process. One is the rare function, such as a toast, which while having a specific form of its own, does not occur naturally in a form-based classification. A headline in an advertisement for a scotch, for example, says:

Here's to gut feelings and
those who still follow them.

(New Yorker, May 10th, 1982)

This is taken from a Cutty Sark advertisement.

The second thing which may have gone unnoticed because of the classification scheme adopted here is the large variety of language functions which appear in headlines. We have just seen the toast; many different functions are expressed with the imperative form and others are expressed with questions. Other functions are definition, logical argument and the addressing function of the vocative, to name only a few.

Pedagogically, headlines exemplifying specific functions may be useful illustrations in an English-as-a-second-language class. They allow an utterance to be examined in a complete, clear and limited context. A teacher may elicit from his or her students other situations

that utilize the same function and then have the students practice the function with appropriate changes. For example, the invitation to have a free Chanel shave (section 3.3.2.1) could lead to invitations to have coffee together, study together, etc. Knowing how to express an invitation facilitates the ESL student's interactions with other students in his course. A headline like this might also be used as a springboard for discussion of different types of invitation, the shaving habits of men in other cultures, etc. Finally, of no small importance is the fact that many advertisements are interesting to look at. They are colorful, have different print types and sizes, have attractive illustrations, and so on. They may be a welcome change from the textbook normally used in the language class.

CHAPTER FIVE

Ambiguity'

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5.1 Introduction

I now turn to the subject of the second part of this paper, namely, ambiguity. Most cases of ambiguity in advertising headlines are of the lexical kind; that is, they are puns. These will be described in chapters 6-7. A relatively small number of cases of ambiguity arise from grammatical and layout considerations. These are mentioned in chapter 8. In this chapter I will look at different types of lexical and grammatical ambiguity, and at the terms homonym, homophone, homograph and heteronym. These terms are essential to a description of puns. But as we shall see, not all of them can be distinguished from each other in practice and there is confusion when one tries to describe ambiguous items using these terms.

In what follows I shall present without comment the views of other researchers and attempt to resolve some of the difficulties in explaining ambiguous terms.

5.2 Types of lexical and grammatical ambiguity

Ambiguity, in linguistics, has been defined as "a many-one relationship between levels, whereby different meanings are expressed alike in form (MULTIPLE MEANING), or different formal items have the same spelling or pronunciation (HOMONYMY) (Leech, 1966, p. 184). The meaning that linguists are concerned with is the dictionary meaning, sometimes called the cognitive or denotative meaning of a

word.

In literary criticism, ambiguity is used in a much broader sense. Empson, for example, defines ambiguity as "any verbal nuance, however slight, which gives room for alternative reactions to the same piece of language" (1961, p. 19). This study is concerned primarily with ambiguity as it is understood by linguists, although there is the occasional foray into the broader area of literary ambiguity. (See, for example, section 7.3.4)

There are two kinds of linguistic ambiguity described in the literature: multiple meaning and homonymy. As an example of multiple meaning, or polysemy as it is sometimes called, we have the lexeme mouth, which can mean 'oral cavity,' 'entrance to a cave,' etc. Examples of homonymous lexemes are the two words port, 'harbor,' and port, 'a kind of fortified wine.' (Examples are from Lyons, 1977, p. 550)

Like lexical ambiguity, grammatical ambiguity also originates in either homonymy or polysemy. An example of grammatical homonymy is Chomsky's phrase, the shooting of the hunters, where hunters may be understood as either the subject or the object, analogous to either the growling of lions or the raising of flowers, respectively. The syntax is ambiguous (Chomsky, 1957, p. 88).

As an example of grammatical polysemy Leech gives The centre-forward Smith kicks hard. The simple present tense is used to describe both 'a momentary happening now' and 'a habitually repeated event.' The sentence can therefore mean

either that Smith is doing this now (as it might be reported by a sports commentator) or that this is his habitual tendency (see Table 2).

Table 2

Examples of Lexical and Grammatical Ambiguity,
According to Source

| <u>Source of ambiguity</u> | <u>Type of ambiguity</u> | |
|----------------------------|--------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| | <u>Lexical</u> | <u>Grammatical</u> |
| <u>Homonymy</u> | port, port | The shooting of the hunters |
| <u>Polysemy</u> | mouth | The centre-forward Smith kicks hard |

It is sometimes difficult to determine the correct category for a specific piece of language. Leech suggests that a criterion of semantic similarity be used to separate instances of lexical homonymy from those of lexical polysemy. If there is no obvious connection between two words, they are regarded as separate words, that is, as homonyms.

Leech's criterion for distinguishing between the two types of words is adopted here although, as Lyons points out, it is not without its difficulties. A major problem is that native speakers do not always agree on the relatedness or unrelatedness of meanings. Some native speakers, for example, will see a connection between an ear of corn and the part of the body denoted by that noun and others will not. A discussion of this and other problems, as well as of

possible ways of circumventing them, is found in Lyons, 1977, pp. 550-569.

5.3 Homonyms, homophones, homographs and heteronyms

In the following section, in addition to the distinction between homonymy and polysemy I will also make a distinction between homonyms and homophones as they appear in lexically ambiguous advertising headlines. Certain features are characteristic of one and not the other. The defining criteria of these terms, as well as of the related terms homograph and heteronym, are discussed and their treatment in students' textbooks briefly noted before actual cases of lexical ambiguity in advertising headlines are examined.

5.3.1 Defining criteria

Port and port are homonyms, words which differ radically in origin and meaning, but which have the same spelling and pronunciation. Another example is jet, the color, and jet, a type of aircraft. The criterion of semantic similarity is easier to apply in the case of homophones, words which differ in origin, meaning and spelling, but which have the same pronunciation; for example, plain, plane and threw, through.

Two related terms are homographs, words which have the same spelling but which sometimes differ in pronunciation,

and heteronyms, words which have the same spelling but different pronunciation (see Table 3). Fair, 'market,' and fair, 'beautiful' are examples of homographs, as are wind, 'a current of air,' and wind, 'to coil.' Examples of heteronyms are row, 'a line,' and row, 'a fight.' (These examples are from Walsh & Walsh, 1972, p. 167.)

Table 3
 Defining Criteria and Examples of Homonyms,
 Homophones, Homographs and Heteronyms

| | <u>HOMONYMS</u> | <u>HOMOPHONES</u> | <u>HOMOGRAPHS</u> | <u>HETERONYMS</u> |
|--------------------------|---------------------------|-----------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------|
| <u>DEFINING CRITERIA</u> | | | | |
| <u>Spelling</u> | same | different | same | same |
| <u>Pronunciation</u> | same | same | sometimes different | different |
| <u>Origin</u> | different | different | different | different |
| <u>Meaning</u> | different | different | different | different |
| <u>EXAMPLES</u> | <u>port</u> , <u>port</u> | <u>plain</u> , <u>plane</u> | <u>fair</u> , <u>fair</u> <u>wind</u> , <u>wind</u> | <u>row</u> , <u>row</u> |

There is a small degree of overlap in the four categories, due to the looseness of the pronunciation criterion for homographs. According to the Heritage Dictionary (1969), homographs "may differ in pronunciation and syllabification," and similarly for Walsh & Walsh (1972), they "differ in origin, meaning and sometimes in pronunciation. (Underscoring in quotations is mine.) This definition allows Walsh & Walsh to include fair, 'market'

and fair, 'beautiful' as examples of homographs. But fair and fair also meet the criteria for homonyms.

I will follow Leech in making the criterion for different pronunciation an obligatory criterion instead of an optional one. This avoids the overlap between the categories and also eliminates the need for the fourth category, the heteronyms. The result is shown in Table 4.

Table 4

Defining Criteria and Examples of Homonyms,

Homophones and Homographs

| | <u>HOMONYMS</u> | <u>HOMOPHONES</u> | <u>HOMOGRAPHS</u> |
|--------------------------|----------------------------------------|---------------------|--------------------------------------|
| <u>DEFINING CRITERIA</u> | | | |
| <u>Spelling</u> | same | different | same |
| <u>Pronunciation</u> | same | same | different |
| <u>EXAMPLES</u> | <u>port, port</u> <u>fair, fair</u> | <u>plain, plane</u> | <u>wind, wind</u> <u>row, row</u> |

5.3.2 Treatment in textbooks

Of these three categories, homonyms, homophones and homographs, the first two are a particular boon to copywriters. They are a fruitful source of puns and ambiguities in written advertisements. (Walsh & Walsh claim that there are at least 374 pairs of homophones in English, of which they list 171 pairs.) However, it is interesting to notice the treatment that these words receive in

students' grammar and composition textbooks. Far from being regarded as an asset to the English language, they are considered to be a nuisance and to require very careful handling by the student.

Grammar books often take up these words in their treatment of English spelling, regarding them as "troublesome" (McCrimmon, 1967, p. 454), as a cause of "confusion" (Walsh & Walsh, p. 167) and as responsible for "about one in twelve of all our mistakes in spelling" (Smith, 1939, p. 335). This negative view appears to derive from Robert Bridges' 1919 essay on English Homophones. Bridges contends that homophones are a nuisance and that English is exceptionally burdened with them. (Described in Fowler, 1965, in the entry for 'Homophone,' p. 248)

The definitions and usage of the terms homophone, homonym, etc., are at least as confusing as the words that they describe are purported to be. According to Bridges, "When two or more words different in origin and signification are pronounced alike, whether they are alike or not in their spelling, they are said to be homophonous, or homophones of each other" (Quoted in Fowler, p. 248).

Current textbook writers either use the terms homonym and homophone as synonyms, to refer to words that have different spelling and meaning but have the same pronunciation (for example, Crowell, 1964, p. 172), or else they use only the one term homonym but include in their lists sets of words that are in fact homophones of each

other (for example, Smith, p. 336 and Tressler & Lewis, 1961, p. 20). They do not distinguish between words that have the same spelling, homonyms, and words that have different spelling, homophones. Homographs are rarely mentioned at all (two exceptions are Crowell, p. 172 and Nilsen & Nilsen, 1978, p. 127). The term heteronym is generally confined to dictionaries.

Much of the confusion may be traced to the treatment of these terms as though they were at the same level of analysis. Walsh & Walsh introduce them by saying:

English, like other languages, has a number of paired words that cause confusion. There are four classes of such words.

1. Homonyms
2. Homophones
3. Homographs
4. Heteronyms (1972, p. 167)

The impression given is that these are four classes of words, separate but equivalent. This is not the case. Homophones and homographs ought to be regarded as sub-classes of homonyms because, as Crystal notes, they represent different types of homonymy (1980, pp. 175-176). Homophones are homonyms in the spoken medium and homographs are homonyms in the written medium. Crystal includes both these groups in the term heteronym, which he defines as "words (LEXEMES) which display partial HOMONYMY, i.e. they differ in MEANING, but are identical in FORM in one medium only (viz speech or writing) (p. 172). Figure 1 illustrates the relationship between these terms.

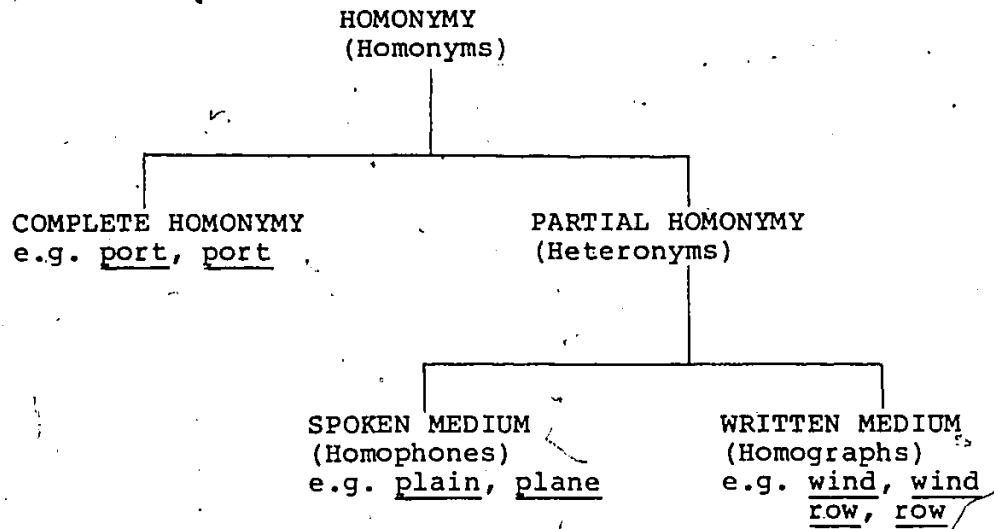


Figure 1. Relationship between homonyms, heteronyms, homophones and homographs.

Figure 1 is consistent with the information in Table 4.

CHAPTER SIX

Lexical Ambiguity in Advertising

Headlines -- Part 1

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6.1 Homonymy and polysemy in advertising headlines

The two types of lexical ambiguity, homonymy and polysemy, occur frequently in advertising headlines.

Homonymy, two different words having the same realization, may involve both homonyms and homophones, although the former are more frequent. An example that utilizes homonyms is a Canadian Pacific Air Lines advertisement that begins with the suggestion:

Starting April 26.
Take off for Regina with CPAir.

And take off
50% (Until May 5th.)

(Gazette; March 16th, 1982)

The first instance of take off means to 'depart' or 'rise up in flight.' It is an intransitive idiom, and take and off are inseparable. The second instance of take off means 'to deduct.' It is a transitive phrasal verb, with a separable verb and particle. In this advertisement, both the idiom and the phrasal verb have the same realization.

The following advertisement is for gift subscriptions to the magazine Saturday Night. It is also a case of homonymy, but here the pun is based on a pair of homophones.

Presents of mind

(Saturday Night; July 1982)

The headline takes advantage of the homophony that exists between presence and presents, substituting the latter in the idiom presence of mind. The idiom is not actually

related to the product, a gift subscription to Saturday Night. It means aplomb, unflappability, etc., and the phrase 'presents of mind' is a rather awkward one. Nevertheless, the meaning of the phrase, roughly 'intellectual gifts,' is sufficient for the headline to work, since this meaning is related to the product. In addition, the pun is transparent enough for the headline to have some amusement value.

Polysemy, multiple meanings of a single word, occurs in this advertisement for a weekend at the Shoreham, a Washington hotel:

Give us \$52, and we'll give you
a Capital weekend.

Washington Weekend Fling

(New York Times; March 21st, 1982)

Capital, as a noun, means 'the official seat of government' and as an adjective 'first-rate, excellent.' In this headline, both meanings are relevant.

The two meanings seem to share a broader sense, namely 'first and foremost, principal.' Therefore, using Leech's criterion of semantic similarity (section 5.2), they are regarded as two meanings of a single word, not as separate words.

6.2 A possible objection

Are these three headlines all true cases of ambiguity? The CP Air headline, cited as an example of homonyms, would work in speech as well as in writing. That is, the pun on

take off exists regardless of the medium. But ambiguity is not a necessary consequence of homonymy. The context in each part of the CPAir headline indicates clearly what the particular meaning of take off is. The reader is of course made aware of the polysemy of take off by the juxtaposition of the two meanings.

Capital, in the last headline cited, is also ambiguous independently of the medium. But an objection may be raised about the homophones presents and presence in the advertisement for Saturday Night magazine. Homophones, that is, words which have the same pronunciation but different spelling, share the same form in the spoken medium only. The term homophone means 'same sound.' In the written medium, they do not share the same form. What, then, are we to do with the Saturday Night headline? Should we say that if it were spoken there would be no pun here, but since it is written there is a pun?

I suggest that we accept the pun on presents, because it is heteronymous with presence in the written medium. Clearly, the reader recognizes the wordplay in the headline. Although the medium is writing, as they encode and decode the headline both the writer and the reader bring to bear their knowledge of how these words sound. In the few cases, then, where homonymy is based on homophones, let us bear in mind that in reading, the words may be recognized as heteronymous by virtue of how the reader hears them, and not solely on the basis of their spelling.

6.3 Poor reputation of puns

Puns have a long history and, at least in our own era, a generally poor reputation. Encyclopaedia Britannica tells us that they go back to the time of Cicero (15th ed., 1977, vol. 19, p. 927). But in more modern times they are often regarded as a low form of humor. In Ars Punica (1719), for example, Thomas Sheridan gives 34 rules for the art of punning. Britannica notes that "Rule 32, 'Never speak well of another punster,' has become the general practice." (*ibid.*) More recently, Morreall remarks that "many people have a strong dislike for puns" (1981, p. 342), Nilsen & Nilsen note that "most of us groan when we hear a pun" (1978, p. 210), and Abrams feels compelled to begin his discussion of this literary term by noting that "puns have had serious literary uses. The authority of the Pope goes back to the Greek pun in Matthew XVI:18, 'Thou art Peter (Petros) and upon this rock (petra) I will build my church'" (1971, p. 139). The most insightful comments about the pun are made by Fowler, whom I quote in full:

The assumption that puns are per se contemptible, betrayed by the habit of describing every pun not as a pun, but as a bad pun or a feeble pun, is a sign at once of sheepish docility and desire to seem superior. Puns are good, bad and indifferent, and only those who lack the wit to make them are unaware of the fact. (1965, p. 492)

I therefore offer no apology for making puns the subject of this study. They are an extremely popular device in advertising headlines. The reasons for this, as well as

the ways in which they are used, will become clear in this and in the following chapter.

6.4 Leech's technical variations

I now turn to an analysis of puns in advertising headlines. The approach taken will lie, initially, within the literary framework expounded by Leech (1969, pp. 210-212). He describes six technical variations of punning and word-play that are used in English poetry. These variations are ways in which the reader is made aware of the ambiguity. Most of them also exist in advertising. In addition, advertising has other ways of making the reader aware of the pun.

Leech's poetic variations are listed in the following six sections, together with his definitions and, where they have been found, appropriate examples of advertising headlines. Several further characteristics of puns are described in the next chapter.

6.4.1 Punning repetition

The first technical variation that Leech discusses is punning repetition. "A double meaning can . . . be brought to one's attention by a repetition of the same sequence, first in one sense and then in another" (Leech, 1969, p. 210). The repetition may be either of homonyms or of homophones. An advertisement for Newsweek magazine uses a pair of homonyms:

Most women's magazines give you women interested in the latest china patterns.

Newsweek gives you women who are also interested in the latest patterns in China.

We don't fit the mold.
We break it.

(New York Times; April 20th, 1982)

The use of china, first in the sense of 'porcelain' and then as the name of a country, is an example of punning repetition. This type of pun is sometimes called an equivoque (Abrams, 1971, p. 140). We saw another example of it in the use of world in the headline "Discover a world," in section 3.4.9.

In an advertisement that relies on sound and graphic resemblance, a university soliciting funds from its graduates asks:

Does your alma mater
matter?

(McGill News; June 1982)

An advertisement for Christie crackers shows half a dozen different kinds of cracker and a variety of meats. The headline says:

Barbecued meats
meet
crunchy Christie crackers.

(Canadian Living; July 1982)

In the second and third examples the adwriters have not only separated the homophones so that they are not adjacent to one other but they have also isolated the second member of each pair. The first device is perhaps to avoid an obvious

it in a non-antonymous sense, in the Shakespearean sense of 'frivolous.' Then we are made aware of light as an antonym to dark. But although we are made aware of these two meanings of the word, it is the first interpretation, the non-antonymous sense, which applies in the context.

Advertising headlines often contain similar, though not identical, plays on antonyms. Consider the following examples, the first by Hearst/ABC to advertise new cable television programs in Manhattan:

Something
new for
Manhattanites

and
Manhattandays

(New York Times; March 11th, 1982)

and the second by the Government of Canada:

Canada
Day:

Exercise your rights
and your lefts!

(McGill News; June 1982)

There is a pun in the first advertisement on Manhattanites and in the second on rights. In each case the word is first interpreted in a non-antonymous sense because of the context or orthography, and then reinterpreted in an antonymous sense, because of the antonym which follows (see Table 5). In the first advertisement, the copy lends further support to the antonymous sense: two programs are being advertised, one for daytime watching, the other for night-time watching.

In the second advertisement, the antonymous sense is supported by the pictorial, an amusing cartoon of a jogger and the signature line, Participaction, which is the name of the Government program to encourage Canadians to be physically fit and active.

Table 5

Interpretation of Antonyms in Advertising Headlines

| | <u>FIRST INTERPRETATION</u> | <u>REINTERPRETATION</u> |
|----------------------|--------------------------------|----------------------------------------|
| <u>ANTONYM</u> | | |
| <u>Manhattanites</u> | 'people who live in Manhattan' | 'Manhattan nights' |
| <u>rights</u> | 'privileges' | 'right side of the body (arm and leg)' |

There is an important difference between these advertisements and the poetic example of a play on antonyms given by Leech. In the Romeo and Juliet example, the reader is only made aware of the antonymous sense of the word light. He does not actually use it to interpret the sentence because it does not apply in the context. In the advertisements, however, the reader is not only made aware of the antonymous sense (after first interpreting the word in its non-antonymous sense), but it is the antonymous sense that is the more important meaning in the context. The contrast between these two processes is illustrated in Table 6.

Table 6

Interpretation of Antonyms in Poetry
and in Advertising Headlines

| <u>ANTONYM</u> | <u>INITIAL INTERPRETATION</u> | <u>AWARENESS OF OTHER MEANING</u> | <u>FINAL INTERPRETATION</u> |
|----------------------|----------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| <u>Poetry</u> | | | |
| <u>light</u> | 'frivolous' (non-antonymous sense) | 'daylight' (antonymous sense) | non-antonymous sense |
| <u>Advertising</u> | | | |
| <u>Manhattanites</u> | 'people who live in Manhattan' (non-antonymous sense) | 'Manhattan nights' (antonymous sense) | antonymous sense |
| <u>rights</u> | 'privileges' (non-antonymous sense) | 'right side of body' (antonymous sense) | antonymous sense |

The process of initially interpreting a word in one sense and then reinterpreting it in another may be broadened to include not only antonyms but other types of systems as well. These are discussed in section 7.2.3.

6.4.3 The 'asyntactic' pun

Leech's third variation of word-play is the asyntactic pun. In this case, "one of the meanings does not actually fit into the syntactic context" (Leech, 1969, p. 211). For example, the Fortunoff Company's advertisement for pillows made of goose feathers invites you to:

Rest assured on whole
goose feathers, 62% off

(New York Times; April 18th, 1982)

Although copywriters do often use idioms or set expressions for both their literal and their idiomatic meanings (see section 7.3.3.1), in this case the idiom rest assured may not be interpreted literally. The sleep-related meaning of rest that is being played with may not be modified by assured.

Asyntactic puns also occur with homophones. For example, the Hotel Inter-Continental New York advertises:

The priceless weekend
It's incredibly suite.

(New Yorker; March 1st, 1982)

The syntax works with sweet, the adjective, but not with suite, the noun. The adverb + noun construction is not common in English.

A mildly asyntactic pun may be seen in a British Airways advertisement for flights to London:

There's nothing everyday about us.
Except our departures to Britain.

(Gazette; March 13th, 1982)

Everyday in the first line is the adjective form, meaning 'ordinary, commonplace.' The lexical item suggested by the second line is the adverbial every day. It is not syntactically interchangeable with everyday but, because the two are so close in form as well as in meaning, the pun is only mildly asyntactic.

6.4.4 The etymological pun

The most esoteric of Leech's punning variations is the etymological pun. Etymological puns "bring together an etymological meaning and a current meaning of the same word" (Leech, 1969, p. 211). He gives an illustration: "In Auden's phrase 'the distortion of ingrown virginity' [Sir, No Man's Enemy] distortion can, because of its proximity to ingrown, be construed literally and etymologically as 'twisting out of shape,' as well as in its obvious abstract sense" (Leech, 1969, p. 211).

Of the six technical variations of word-play that Leech describes, this is the only one of which I have been unable to find an example in advertising. That this kind of pun does not occur in advertising is not surprising, for two reasons. First, copywriters are probably not as well versed as poets in the history of the language. And second, even if they were, advertising assumes a lower educational level on the part of its readers than poetry does. Without an adequate background the reader could not appreciate an etymological pun.

6.4.5 Syllepsis

The fifth type of punning, syllepsis, arises from the syntax of the sentence. Syllepsis is a "compound structure in which two superficially alike constructions are collapsed together, so that one item is understood in disparate senses" (Leech, 1969, p. 211). Leech gives an example from

Pope:

Here thou, great Anna! whom three realms obey,
Dost sometimes counsel take -- and sometimes tea.

The Rape of the Lock, III

Leech explains: "The similar constructions are 'take counsel' and 'take tea.' The two uses of take are both idiomatic, and are plainly distinct in meaning, the one being abstract, the other concrete" (p. 211).

The examples of syllepsis that I have found in advertising also involve verb + object constructions. For example, the headline in an advertisement for Spra-Rite lawn sprinkler systems says:

Finally,
an in-ground
lawn sprinkler system
that soaks your
lawn and not
your pocketbook.

(Reader's Digest; March 1982)

The W&J Sloane Company, which sells relatively expensive leather chairs, advertises:

Investments worth sinking your money and your body into
(New York Times Magazines; March 21st, 1982)

In the first advertisement, the verb + object constructions are soaks your lawn and soaks your pocketbook. The second meaning of soak, to 'overcharge,' is slang. It normally takes a human object. The copywriter, however, may not have wanted to say that soaks you for fear that this would sound too negative. In the Sloane Company advertisement, sink your money and sink your body play with the meanings of

'invest' and 'lower.'

Leech's literary example and the instances of syllepsis which I have seen in advertising both involve ellipsis of the verb in a verb + object construction. However, other types of syllepsis are possible, for example, those involving a preposition: "She was seen washing clothes with happiness and Pears' soap." This example is from Fowler (1965, p. 610), who explains that "with expresses first accompaniment, but secondly instrument."

6.4.6 Play on similarity of pronunciation

The final variation that Leech describes is a play on similarity of pronunciation: "a 'jingle' depending on approximate rather than absolute homonymity is technically not a pun, although its effect is similar" (Leech, 1969, p. 211). The poetic example that he gives is;

A young man married is a man that's marred.

(All's Well that Ends Well, II,iii)

The only similar examples I have seen in advertising headlines are the following:

Summer fast delivery. . . .some aren't

(New York Times; June 6th, 1982)

and:

"I served them cod
for dinner and I
cod them by surprise!"

(Gazette; March 17th, 1982)

The first is an advertisement by the Kleinsleep Company,

which sells mattresses and boxsprings. The second is a joint production by the North Atlantic Seafood Association and the Government of Canada, Department of Fisheries and Oceans. It is not actually selling a specific product, but instead is trying to encourage people to eat more fish. Summer in place of some are may represent a difference in juncture, while cod instead of caught is a case of similar but not quite identical pronunciation. These two words can have the same vowel sound, except that it is slightly shorter in caught, and the final phonemes may differ only in voicing: /d/ is voiced and /t/ is not if they are released.

This particular type of word-play, especially the cod-caught kind, is relatively rare in advertising.

6.5 Conclusion

Nearly all of Leech's technical variations apply to advertising headlines as well as to poetry. The only one which is entirely missing from advertising is the etymological pun, probably because it is too obscure for the average newspaper reader.

CHAPTER SEVEN

Lexical Ambiguity in Advertising

Headlines -- Part 2

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7.1 Introduction

In the last chapter we examined the six technical variations of the literary pun described by Leech, and found that five of them also applied to puns in advertising:

1. Punning repetition
2. Play on antonyms
3. The 'asyntactic' pun
4. Syllepsis
5. Similarity of pronunciation

These variations represent different ways of making the reader aware of a pun.

7.2 Other methods of helping the reader to recognize a pun

Copywriters also have three other methods at their disposal to help the reader recognize a pun:

1. Use of a pictorial
2. Use of the less likely meaning
3. Play on a system of semantically related words

In this chapter I describe these three methods and then consider several remaining features of puns.

7.2.1 Use of a pictorial

Many illustrations are, to varying degrees, dispensable. For example, illustrations that consist only of the product (a bottle of liquor, a car, a container of makeup, stereo equipment, automobile tires, etc.) may help the reader to remember the product name, which has already been noted several times in the text of the advertisement. But their presence is not absolutely necessary.

However, when a pun in the headline depends on the illustration, that illustration becomes necessary. For example, an American Express advertisement encourages people to attend an arts festival (music, opera, drama, theatre, dance, etc.). The headline is:

Discover the
state of the arts.

(New York Times; April 18th, 1982)

The pun in the headline only becomes apparent when you see the pictorial below it. The festival is in Miami and the pictorial is a map of the state of Florida, with people singing, dancing, playing various instruments, etc., on it.

Similarly, a company that assists other companies with their shipping problems asks:

Want to see freight costs
kept on the right track?

Watch
Borg-Warner

(Wall Street Journal; March 9th, 1982)

The picture shows a locomotive sitting on its track.

In both cases the pictorial is related to the product. The American Express advertisement encourages people to travel to Florida and in the Borg-Warner advertisement, trains and tracks are obviously involved in freight shipping.

Here is a final case of a pun involving a homonym, again where a pictorial is necessary. Drexel Burnham Lambert is an investment counselling firm. An advertisement

promises that they can help you, even in bad economic times when investment opportunities appear to be scarce. The headline is, simply:

Getting over the hump.

(Wall Street Journal; March 9th, 1982)

and the accompanying pictorial is a camel. But, other than to explain the pun on hump, a camel is not really related to the service being sold, investment advice. So the copywriter draws an analogy between the two in the body copy. This analogy is so ingenious that it is worth quoting in full:

Worried about the economic future? Take heart from the camel. An accomplished survivor who finds nourishment where others see only scraggly shrubs. Just as an investor can always find opportunity where others see only risk. Drexel Burnham Lambert can help. We believe investment oases exist in even the driest of economic deserts. Why don't you give us a call?

When the pun involves homophones, the pictorial becomes crucial, especially if the headline is in some way unusual or asyntactic. For example, the headline in an advertisement for Parliament Lights cigarettes is:

The hole truth.

(New York; April 5th, 1982)

In order to understand this the reader must see a picture of one of their cigarettes, with its quarter-inch hole at one end.

The headline for a Surprise advertisement is:

Watt-a-turn-on

(New York Times; March 25th, 1982)

The Surprise company sells lamps. The illustration shows a few of their products: a floor lamp, a side lamp, and so on.

7.2.2 Use of the less likely meaning

Puns based on homophones seem to occur much less frequently than those based on homonyms. This is perhaps because there are only about 400 pairs of homophones in the language (Walsh & Walsh, 1972, p. 167). When they do occur in an advertising headline, the most common way of getting the pun across is to use the less likely, or less expected of the two meanings. Some examples are: first, an American Airlines advertisement for trips to Caribbean islands:

Trinidad & Tobago:
two good to be true.

(New York Times; June 6th, 1982)

second, an advertisement for an Italian grating cheese:

Locatelli
the grate cheese

(New York Times Magazine; March 21st, 1982)

third, a Displayco company advertisement for merchandisers' permanent display units:

A sterling
investment
is waiting for you,
that makes more
than just common cents.

(Marketing Communication; February 1982)

and fourth, a Sears Tire & Auto Center advertisement that invites you to bring your car in to have its brakes checked:

This is no time
for a brake down.

(Newsweek; April 19th, 1982)

If the more expected phrases were used here, that is, too good to be true, second, the great cheese, third, common sense and fourth, breakdown, the puns would probably not occur to the reader.

In the case of breakdown -- brake down, the copywriter has taken the liberty of dividing the word in two. This may be done with a homonym as well, provided that the larger word consists of two smaller ones. For example, a Nickolaus Exercise Center advertisement shows the fit and trim body of a woman engaged in exercise and the headline:

The Nickolaus 20% off
sale. An opportunity no
body should miss.

(New York Times; September 15th, 1981)

Who but a copywriter would see no body in nobody and be able to contextualize it this way?

It is evident from these examples that there exists a certain copywriters' license and that it involves at least a part of the same skill and creativity that we find in poetic license.

7.2.3 Play on a system of semantically related words

In section 6.4.2 I showed how Leech's variation, 'play on antonyms,' could also be applied to certain puns in advertising headlines. A pair of antonyms represents a small system, but words related in other semantic ways may

also be used to bring out the second meaning of a pun. System is used here in a loose sense to refer to any group of words which are semantically related to each other.

An example of a system is found in an advertisement for Einstein Moomjy, a carpet department store. The artwork shows several carpet samples. The headline, above, states:

This carpet does not
come in the following
popular colors:
wine, ketchup, coffee
and mud.

(New York Times; May 9th, 1982)

Wine is a color and is first interpreted that way because it follows the phrase, the following popular colors. But the words that in turn follow it, ketchup and coffee, motivate its reinterpretation as a food.

An advertisement for Kent III cigarettes shows a two-page photograph of New York City, with the headline:

Big Apple goes bananas over Kent III taste!

(Vogue; September 1981)

Another headline that involves a pun on food is found in an advertisement for Data Terminal Mart, a company that sells computer equipment:

Know
beans
about
terminals?

Come in
for coffee
and a chat

(Magazine that's all about Small Business; May 1982)

In these examples, the systems of food, fruit and words related to coffee (including coffee itself) are used to make the reader aware of the pun (see Table 7). It is the talent of the copywriter that enables him to take apple and beans out of their set expressions, which bear no relation to food, and to bring their literal, food meanings to the attention of the reader.

Table 7

Use of a System of Related Words to Bring Out
the Pun in an Advertising Headline

| <u>WORD</u> | <u>INITIAL INTERPRETATION</u> | <u>SYSTEM AT WORK</u> | <u>FINAL INTERPRETATION</u> |
|--------------|--------------------------------|----------------------------|-----------------------------|
| <u>wine</u> | the color | food | the food |
| <u>apple</u> | 'New York City' (Big Apple) | fruit | the fruit |
| <u>beans</u> | 'nothing' | words related to coffee | 'coffee beans' |

Advertisements also play with other kinds of systems, that is, systems other than food. An advertisement for Beaujolais is:

Beaujolais. The red wine
that's right with red snapper,
green salad, lemon chicken,
duck a l'orange,
veal cordon bleu, etc., etc., etc.

(New York Times Magazine; June 27th, 1982)

The red of red wine is brought to our attention as a color by the use of color terms in the list of dishes that follows it.

An advertisement for the King Edward Hotel in Toronto invites you to:

Come for
a
royal weekend,
at a princely
reduction.

(Gazette; March 17th, 1982)

Royal is first taken to mean 'of superior quality,' but princely suggests a second meaning, 'pertaining to a monarch.' The system at work here might be called 'words related to royalty.'

As a final example, there is an advertisement for Mondial 8, a sportscoupe made by Ferrari. The headline is:

Evolution moves selectively toward perfection

(New York Times Magazine; April 18th, 1982)

The ordinary meaning of evolution is 'a gradual change to a better condition.' But because 'selection' is an important concept in Darwin's theory of evolution, the presence of that word brings the biological, more technical meaning of evolution to the attention of the reader.

I have, then, broadened Leech's technical variation, 'play on antonyms,' to show how a word may be interpreted in one sense initially and then, because of the presence in the headline of a word or words from a particular system, be reinterpreted in a second sense. The systems that have been illustrated are: food, colors, words related to royalty and words related to evolutionary theory.

7.3 Other features of advertising puns

Eight ways of bringing an advertising pun to the attention of the reader have now been discussed. Numbers 1-5 were proposed by Leech (1969) to account for word-play in poetry, although as I have demonstrated, they also apply to advertising. Numbers 6-8 are more pertinent to the print advertising medium.

1. Punning repetition
2. Play on antonyms
3. The 'asyntactic' pun
4. Syllepsis
5. Similarity of pronunciation
6. Use of a pictorial
7. Use of the less likely word (homophone)
8. Play on a system of semantically related words

I will now turn to other features of headline puns. These features are not used as a solution to a problem in the same way that the eight techniques above are used, but they are nevertheless characteristic of the use of puns in advertising headlines.

1. Pun on the brand-name
2. Pun related to the product (name)
3. Pun in an idiom
4. Pun involving sex.

7.3.1 Pun on the brand-name

There are many headline puns which are a play on the brand-name. This is only possible, of course, when the brand-name comprises ordinary words in the language, not proper nouns or made-up names. A pun on a brand name is normally based on homonyms, not homophones. For example, an advertisement for Sharp calculators has the headline:

What everybody needs at tax
time is a Sharp friend.

(Gazette; March 4th, 1982)

An advertisement that encourages the reader to give his friend a gift subscription to Saturday Night magazine, instead of lending him his own copy, says:

Keep Saturday Nights
to yourself

(Saturday Night; July 1982)

The following headline is in an advertisement for the liquor, Southern Comfort:

Everyone
needs a little comfort

(Psychology Today; February 1982)

A pun may take advantage of a familiar line from a prayer, as in this syntactically ambiguous headline from an advertisement selling subscriptions to Us magazine:

Give Us this
Christmas

(Us; December 1981)

Or, an ordinary word may be divided in two if one part coincides with the name of the product. For example, an advertisement for Self magazine shows a young woman holding the magazine. The headline says:

I believe in my Self.

(Marketing Communications; February 1982)

Sometimes the headline does not 'sound' right, like ordinary English, but its meaning and the meaning of the pun are clear. For example, an American Express advertisement

tells you that you may use their card to avoid certain check-in lines at airports. The headline is:

Express yourself
past check-in lines on TWA.

(New York Times Magazine; March 21st, 1982)

I have seen only one advertising pun that is based on the product name and that also involves homophones. This is in an advertisement for Triple Sec liqueur. The brief but effective headline is:

Sec's
appeal

(Psychology Today; March 1982)

It is a fortuitous accident that the possessive form of a part of the product name is homophonous with a very popular word in the language, sex. The copywriter takes full advantage of this accident, as the copy in this advertisement shows:

What's Hiram Walker Triple Sec's appeal? The sublime essence of succulent Spanish and Curacao oranges. Which make it devastatingly delicious straight. Icy and enticing on the rocks. Hiram Walker Triple Sec. It's love at first sip.

7.3.2 Pun related to the product (characteristics, name, etc.)

Many puns, while not a play on the brand-name of the product, are a play on one of its characteristics or advantages. For example, an advertisement for a Volkswagen Pickup shows a rear view of the truck, the back filled with all kinds of sports equipment. The headline is:

Loads of fun.

(Esquire; July 1982)

The pun on load relates the idea of the large 'load' that the Pickup may carry to the expression as a whole, with its positive meaning of 'lots of fun.'

Another positive linkage is made in a Xerox advertisement for Word Processors and Personal Computers with the headline:

Thanks for the memories.

(Maclean's; June 14th, 1982)

The body copy reinforces the pun:

These two machines can help you manage your business information. You'll find they have a terrific memory for your business.

Bang & Olufsen, a manufacturer of electronic sound equipment, has a combined turntable, cassette deck and radio, all of which may be operated by remote control. To highlight this feature of the product and to simultaneously put it in a positive context the headline notes of this machine that:

There's
nothing
remotely
like it

(Maclean's; April 26th, 1982)

Finally, an advertisement for the restaurants at the Sheraton-Tara Hotels makes the claim that:

Our restaurants are upper crust.

(Wall Street Journal; March 3rd, 1982)

Crust is part of the idiom upper crust, but its literal

meaning is related to the product being advertised.

As with brand-names, there are very few homophones in puns that play on the characteristics of products. One of the few that I have seen is in an advertisement for Sperry Top-Sider, a company that manufactures shoes. Their headline is:

The new Sperry Top-Siders.
Beneath the surface lies the heart and sole
of the great classic.

(New Yorker; March 1st, 1982)

A small minority of puns are a play on the name of the product -- not its brand-name, but the name of the object itself. For example, an advertisement for a level by the Stanley company, which manufactures various kinds of tools, invites the reader to:

Come up to the
Stanley level.

(Sport; May 1982)

In this case of polysemy, level is used in its sense of 'position or rank on a scale' as well as in its sense of 'an instrument for ascertaining whether a surface is horizontal.' (Definitions are taken from the Heritage Dictionary)

7.3.3 Puns in idioms

In chapter 4 we saw two ways in which idioms may be used in headlines. The first is to change the idiom slightly, although the original is still recognizable, and

the second is to leave an idiom unchanged and use it for either its literal or its idiomatic meaning. Here we will look briefly at two other ways of using an idiom: using it for both its literal and its idiomatic meanings, and punning on a single word within the idiom. The discussion of the first of these is based on Tash (1979).

7.3.3.1 Using an idiom for both its literal and its idiomatic meanings

Using an idiom for both its literal meaning and its idiomatic meaning is a type of pun, except that instead of being a word, the lexical item played on is a series of words that work together. For example, the Leaseway Transportation company offers trucking, warehousing and related services. The headline says:

Leaseway Transportation

With our name behind
you, you're miles ahead.

(Wall Street Journal; March 3rd, 1982)

To have someone's name behind you and to be miles ahead are idioms with very positive associations. In this case they are also literally true (if you use Leaseway Transportation).

Esquire has an advertisement aimed at people who buy the magazine at newsstands. They would like these people to become subscribers and therefore offer a 67% reduction on the newsstand price. The headline is:

Everybody who's
been paying full
price for Esquire,
cut it out.

(Esquire; July 1982)

Under this headline is a coupon for the potential subscriber to send in. The literal meaning of cut it out is with reference to the coupon. The idiomatic meaning, 'stop,' refers to buying the magazine at newstands. It is colloquial and carries overtones of friendliness.

This is a very clever type of pun, because both the literal and the idiomatic meanings are appropriate in the context of the advertisement. This kind of pun is described by Morreall in his discussion of single-word puns; it is referred to there as a double entendre in order to distinguish it from the simpler kind of pun, where only one meaning is appropriate (1981, p. 342).

7.3.3.2 Punning on a single word in an idiom

There is another use of idioms in headlines that also involves puns, but instead of punning on the entire idiom the copywriter puns on a part of it, usually on one word. For example, the Honeywell company helps mining and energy concerns with their management problems. Their headline, in an advertisement that has a picture of an open-pit coal mine, is:

We're a mine of
materials management
information.

We are Honeywell.
Challenge us.

(Financial Post; July 10th, 1982)

Similarly, the Meridien Hotel in New York advertises their
hotel:

For the executive who's going places, the perfect place
to stay in New York.

(New Yorker; March 1st, 1982)

The word-play in these headlines is on mine and place,
both of which are related to the product. In addition,
within the context of the Meridien Hotel headline, going
places in its entirety may be interpreted not only
idiomatically, as 'succeeding,' but also literally, as
'visiting different locations.'

The word being punned on may follow the idiom, as in
the Meridien Hotel headline, or not appear separately at
all, as in the Honeywell headline. It may also precede the
idiom, as in the following advertisements, the first for a
New York Times cutting board:

A cutting
board
that's a cut
above...

(New York Times; June 6th, 1982)

and the second for the American Express credit card:

Even if you lose the Card, all is not lost.
We can replace it fast, usually within a day.

(Esquire; July 1982)

Punning on a single word in an idiom is clever and amusing. It directs the reader's attention to an individual word and that, particularly in an idiom, is something that he would not ordinarily notice.

7.3.4 Pun involving sex

Sex is a prevalent theme in print advertising. It is everywhere: in the art work, in the body copy, and of course in the headlines.

Zastrow & Gorski (1977) have described the pervasive use of sexual words to sell products. Advertisements indirectly promise that buying a certain product will lead to a better love life, security or the realization of sexual fantasies. They point out that the sexual reasons connoted for buying something may bear little relation to the product itself. "The consumer is being enticed to buy a product, not because it will serve the function it is produced to serve, but because it is implied to be a ticket to a sexual relationship and to security" (p. 145). Their examples include advertising for products as diverse as toothpaste, aprons, nylons, wine and cigarettes.

But there is a risk in using sexually-oriented advertising. A study by Bruce John Morrison, a brand research manager at an American tobacco corporation (Sexy ads . . . , 1983), examined the relationship between sexual advertising and readers' ability to remember the brand-name. It was found that 'high-sex' advertisements had good

stopping power, that is, they attracted readers' attention, but they scored below average (for the product category) on memory for the brand-name and persuasion to buy the product. There was also a gender difference in the reaction to these advertisements. Morrison says, "My studies found that females could tolerate ads that produced a high level of sexual arousal and still recall the product names, while males with high sexual arousal couldn't remember anything. Often the men couldn't even describe the ad, much less remember the product."

In this section we shall look at headline puns that involve sex from within the perspective of linguistic ambiguity, that is, words that have more than one cognitive meaning. But before doing that let us venture for a moment into the broader area of literary ambiguity, to consider how sexual thoughts may be evoked in the reader in a looser way, without the use of multiple cognitive meanings.

First, the headline in a Health & Racquet Club advertisement asks the reader:

Are you ready to
take off your clothes?

(New York Times; April 15th, 1982)

The sub-head says: "Get in shape for swimsuit weather" and the copy describes scientific body conditioning, free classes, saunas, etc. The girl in the drawing is dressed in a T-shirt and slacks, has her index finger in her mouth and looks surprised and uncertain. Beyond its evocation by the headline and what one may read into this

picture, sex is nowhere mentioned.

Sleep Design, a company that sells sofas and sofa bed frames, offers a bit of advice:

Be careful whose bed
you get into!

(New York Times; May 13th, 1982)

And the Deva company, which sells cotton drawstring pants, makes a suggestion:

Get out of your jeans!

(Mother Jones; December 1981)

Again, sex is nowhere mentioned in either advertisement. A liqueur advertisement is slightly more explicit:

Drambuie over ice the night before

(Playboy; January 1982)

The sexual connotations of the phrase, the night before, are so strong that they overshadow its literal, cognitive meaning.

Another relatively explicit headline is the following statement:

Part of the art of being a woman
is knowing when not to be too much of a lady.

(Chatelaine; April 1982)

This is from an advertisement for Epris, a "most provocative fragrance by Max Factor."

A headline may be an extract from a conversation, as in an advertisement for Dbx, a manufacturer of sound equipment for automobiles:

"Why should we go to your place?
The car sounds better to me."

(Popular Electronics; July 1982)

Finally, a headline may take the form of a sexual invitation, with a few minor changes in content so that it is, ostensibly, about the product. An advertisement for Maxell tapes and cassettes says:

If you've got the watts, we've got the tape.

(Penthouse; July 1982)

The popular suggestion underlying this, If you've got the money, I've got the time, cannot be missed.

These headlines have double meanings, although not by virtue of the punning techniques we saw earlier, that is, a play on a lexical item. Here it is the entire headline that evokes another meaning. As was the case with the cultural allusions discussed in section 1.10.7, the reader must be familiar with American culture to catch some of these.

Sexual themes also appear in more conventional types of puns. For example,

The line women fall for

(Vogue; September 1981)

is the headline in an advertisement for Ultrasuede suits at Neiman Marcus. The model in the picture is wearing a suit, with its long, soft lines, while a man stands next to and slightly behind her, his face close to hers. He has obviously been talking to her.

In an advertisement by the Blue Bonnets Racetrack, the headline promises:

The raciest show in town

(Montreal Calendar Magazine; June 1982)

and the Delta Faucet Company advertises its chrome-plated faucets with the headline:

Not just another pretty turn on.

(Sport; April 1982)

The amusing thing about these puns on line, raciest and turn on is that they are actually related to the product being sold. It seems almost accidental -- almost, but not quite -- that they also have sexual meanings.

A particularly clever headline with a pun on a word related to the product appears in a 3M advertisement for Electronic Typewriters. Above a picture of a little typewriting ball is the headline:

At 3M, we've got something
on the ball.

(Wall Street Journal; July 28th, 1982)

Here we have a pun on a word in an idiom, to have something on the ball. The idiomatic meaning applies, as well as one of the literal meanings of ball. And then there is the colloquial, sexual meaning -- all this in one short headline.

When the pronoun it is used without a referent, it sometimes refers to sex. One headline suggests that you:

Get
it at
home!

(New York Times; March 15th, 1982)

The small print underneath the headline informs the reader that this is an advertisement for home delivery of the New York Times. (A similar use of it occurs in the jazz chant, "I gave it away," in Graham, 1978, p. 41)

Polysemy is the basis of a pun in an English Leather advertisement. The headline informs us that their deodorant stick is:

So effective,
nothing comes
close...

(except blonds,
brunettes
and redheads.)

(Penthouse; July 1982)

Finally, an advertisement for the liqueur, Campari, is an extended double entendre. The headline says:

Elizabeth Ashley talks
about her 'first time.'

(New York; April 5th, 1982)

The copy tells the story of the first-time Miss Ashley tried Campari, on a plane "somewhere over the Rockies." She was unable to sleep. Her seatmate on the plane, a man, suggested that she try something "really different." Her reaction to the experience was that:

It wasn't sweet. On the other hand, it wasn't really bitter. I guess bittersweet is the only way to describe it.

The copy goes on to describe her reaction to her first taste of Campari. The word sex may be substituted wherever Campari occurs.

7.4 Conclusion

Puns are an amusing form of word-play and the reader usually feels "a sense of satisfaction or accomplishment when he recognizes one. But reader amusement and satisfaction are not goals in themselves. They are used to lower the reader's defenses and modify his generally negative attitude to advertising. In speaking of humor, Mollica claims that "the reason for its impact is in having induced a state of relaxation and laughter in the reader who leaves himself/herself open for the message to penetrate" (1979, p. 726). No matter what means the copywriter uses to attract the reader's attention, the ultimate goal remains the message of the advertisement, namely, 'you should buy this product.'

CHAPTER EIGHT

Other Types of Ambiguity in Advertising
Headlines

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8.1 Introduction

Ambiguity in advertising is not limited to punning. Two other types of ambiguity, though they are not nearly so prevalent, deserve mention in a study of this kind.

The first type, grammatical ambiguity, arises when there is the possibility of more than one grammatical interpretation of a word. The lexicon is still involved; there must be lexical interpretation before the grammatical ambiguity becomes apparent. But the problem for the reader seems to be less one of deciding between alternate meanings of the word than of deciding between alternate functions for it.

A second type of ambiguity arises from layout. The spacing, the punctuation, the orthography -- all of these may contribute to the possibility of reading the headline in more than one way.

8.2 Grammatical ambiguity

Most cases of grammatical ambiguity that occur in advertising headlines derive from homonymy rather than polysemy, that is, the words allow for more than one syntactic interpretation. For example, the headline in an advertisement for the 10 Body Salon, where people go to lose weight, says:

Leave your fat behind...

(Los Angeles; June 1982)

The body copy continues the headline: "along with your stomach, hips and thighs." Initially, fat behind is probably interpreted as an object + adverbial. But the copy suggests another interpretation: fat behind as a modifier + noun construction. The accompanying drawing, of an overweight lady in a bikini holding her hand on her behind, reinforces the second interpretation.

Grammatical ambiguity sometimes depends on unusual word order. For example, the New York Furniture Center begins an advertisement for a chair and ottoman this way:

The chair you know...
Our price you didn't!

(New York Times; June 17th, 1982)

The chair you know may be read in either of two ways:

1. A noun with a post-modifying clause, i.e., the chair that you know, or as
2. An object + subject + verb construction, instead of the more common subject + verb + object

The second interpretation works better in the context of the advertisement, even though it involves a word order rarely seen in standard English. But deviant word order does occur occasionally in advertising headlines and is attention-getting precisely because of its rarity. (See section 3.4.2 for other examples of deviant word order)

Grammatical ambiguity may arise from confusion over where a word belongs: with what precedes it or with what follows it:

Give your favorite graduate
class honors --
the Seiko Lassale

(New York Times; May 18th, 1982)

At first class seems to be the head of the noun phrase graduate class. But when we reach honors in the sentence we return to reinterpret class so that it functions as a modifier in the noun phrase class honors. The second interpretation is reinforced by the relative expense of these watches -- \$750.-- and also by the copy: "A gift of gleaming perfection she'll cherish for years..." This is a classy gift for your favorite graduate, not your favorite graduate class.

Another case in which a word is interpreted in one way according to what precedes it but then must be reinterpreted in light of what follows occurs in an advertisement for cassettes. In this case the grammatical ambiguity is more dependent upon lexical ambiguity:

When all others fail...Loran cassettes
are safe and sound sensational.

(Stereo Review; March 1982)

Safe and sound is a common expression; we are accustomed to seeing these words together in this way. But when we reach sensational we realize that sound is not an adjective coordinately linked to safe, but instead a verb modified by the following adjective, and that and joins two clauses, not two adjectives.

This grammatical ambiguity, the play between safe and sound and sound sensational depends on the fact that there

are two different words with the same realization: sound, 'free from defect,' and sound, 'to make a noise.' A third meaning meaning, 'noise,' is also relevant in this context. By Leech's criterion of semantic similarity, the first and second meanings are homonyms and the second and third are a case of polysemy (see Table 8). The Loran cassettes headline thus contains both grammatical and lexical ambiguity, the latter involving homonymy as well as polysemy.

Table 8

Possible Interpretations of Sound and the Relationships
Between the Interpretations

- | | |
|----------|---------------------------------------------------|
| homonymy | 1. <u>sound</u> , 'in good condition' (adjective) |
| polysemy | 2. <u>sound</u> , 'to make a noise' (verb) |
| | 3. <u>sound</u> , 'a noise' (noun) |

A word may be ambiguous with regard to what it modifies. For example, in

Unwanted hair problem?

(Gazette; June 9th, 1982)

unwanted may modify both hair and problem. This is an advertisement for hair removal by electrolysis; the context allows dual modification.

8.3 Ambiguity arising from layout

Occasionally the layout of a headline contributes to

its ambiguity. L'Acadie Renovations, for example, would like to change your doors and windows so that you do not lose heat. Their headline is:

Save energy
money!

(Gazette; March 16th, 1982)

The word energy is placed half a space above the line, the word money half a space below. This lineation allows two interpretations:

1. 'Save energy money,' where energy functions as a modifier of money, and
2. 'Save energy and money,' where energy is coordinately linked to money, i.e., they are coordinate within the sentence.

Finally, spacing may affect our perception of where one word ends and the next one begins. An advertisement encouraging people to visit British Columbia has the following headline superimposed on a picture of Vancouver:

Super,natural

(Maclean's; March 1st, 1982)

The comma is small, the letters are large and it is therefore easy to perceive the headline as one word instead of two.

CHAPTER NINE
Concluding Comments

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9.1 Summary

In this paper I have attempted, first, an inventory of linguistically deviant items in advertising headlines, and second, a detailed examination of lexical ambiguity in headlines.

Many of the devices that have been discussed here, including puns, are eye-catching, amusing and flattering to the reader who recognizes them. They lure the reader in to read the body copy and they encourage him to remember the advertisement.

I have shown that the technical variations of literary punning described by Leech (1969) are, except for one, also found in advertising headlines. In addition, advertising puns have also been shown to exhibit other variations: playing on a system of semantically related words, playing on the brand-name or on a characteristic of the product, punning with a sexual theme, etc. All of this is light-hearted and occurs almost in a spirit of fun. However, the purpose of the advertisement is very serious, namely, to increase product sales. The amount of money invested in advertising in our economy and the potential for increasing sales and profit through it underline the seriousness of the venture.

9.2 Questions for further research

A large number of devices has been discussed and many

examples given in each case. For purposes of the analysis it has been necessary to consider each device separately. But in practice they are routinely combined. The "Tan your tootsies" headline (section 4.2.8.1), for example, has both alliteration and slang. "Before you insulate, investigate" (3.2.3) has rhyme, the popular word you, and the imperative form. The Newsweek headline, "Most women's magazines" (6.4.1) has a pun on china and also plays with the order of the words, changing the latest china patterns to the latest patterns in China. And the "At 3M" headline (7.3.4) contains an idiom, we've got something on the ball, as well as a pun on one word in the idiom, ball, which can be interpreted in both its literal and its sexual meanings.

An interesting question is whether, when the reader sees a headline that contains more than one device, he decodes it in a particular order, for example, semantic devices first, phonological last, or whether they impinge upon his consciousness at random. A related question is whether all of the devices that have been discussed here are consciously perceived at all, or whether some are below the conscious level. No doubt many devices are never consciously perceived.

Another question is: Do all the devices discussed here have any one thing, or any two or three things, in common? Can they be divided into groups of similar devices? This is a difficult question to answer. It is not easy to classify the things we do with language beyond slotting them into the

traditional linguistic levels of analysis of phonology, lexis, etc. However, there are two themes that recur in the headlines that I have studied. These are, first, repetition, and second, a change or something unexpected.

Repetition is involved in all of the phonological devices that were examined. In assonance, it is the repetition of vowel sounds; in alliteration, of initial consonant sounds; and in rhyme, of the last stressed vowel and following consonants. At the lexical level it is obviously involved in the repeated use of a word or morpheme and at the syntactic level in parallelism. There is relatively little repetition in headlines at the semantic level, and in non-linguistic devices (chapter 1) we saw it only in spelling alliteration.

Elements involving a change of some kind or having surprise value do not seem to exist at the phonological level. At the lexical level, things that can surprise the reader are neologisms, the repetition of a word in a different sense and the use of a foreign language. We see the unexpected at the syntactic level in the realization of the existence of grammatical ambiguity, in parallelism where there is a change in the last structure, in the rearrangement of words, in unusual word order, and in the use of a lexical item in an unfamiliar syntactic role. There is much that comes unexpectedly at the semantic level: odd definitions, anomalous collocations, puns, slang, a register that is either too personal or too formal or that

changes in the middle, etc.

If we imagine a scale, with phonology at the extreme left and semantics at the extreme right, with lexis and syntax, in that order, between them, then the theme of repetition will be concentrated on the left side of the scale and the theme of unexpectedness on the right.

The unexpected has a certain amusement value, which is valuable when one is attempting to establish positive feelings towards a product. Repetition is also slightly amusing; however, I believe that it is primarily important for establishing a sense of solidarity and security, similar to that found in children's nursery rhymes that are repetitive in themselves and that children love to hear over and over again. In addition, both repetition and the unexpected contribute to the memorability of headlines.

9.3 Conclusion

Jefkins has described copywriting as "one of the greatest skills of the advertising world" (1976, pp. 2-3). It is clear that the copywriter's art depends on talent and on creativity with words. For most of us it is sufficient to know what words mean. The successful copywriter has a heightened awareness not only of what they mean but also of how they transmit meaning, how they sound, what they remind people of, etc. It is art produced for a purpose. While this might not be termed 'art' in the traditional sense, it is nevertheless worthy of our attention as we travel through

our favorite magazines and daily newspapers.

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Montreal./It's four times better. 3.4.1, 4.3.6

Most women's magazines give you women interested/in the latest china patterns./Newsweek gives you women who are also/interested in the latest patterns in China./We don't fit the mold./We break it. 6.4.1, 9.2

"My Commodore computer/lets me control my business --/instead of my business/controlling me."/Bruce Ritchie, President, Tiseco Limited 4.3.3

"My crepe nouveau is tres chic --/and tres affordable." 4.3.5

My sock runneth over. 1.10.7

(The) new Sperry top-siders./Beneath the surface lies the heart and sole/of the great classic. 7.3.2

New York is all wet.../and wonderful. 1.11

New York is all wet...and wonderful. 1.11

(The) New York Times/has the most respected/Best Seller List/in the book business/...all four of them. 4.2.5

(The) Nickolaus 20% off/sale. An opportunity no/body should miss. 7.2.2

(The) not-just-for-anyone gift:/Psychology Today 3.3.2.1

Not just another pretty turn on. 7.3.4

Not just long./Not just lasting./But long lashes/that last/24 hours long. 3.3.1.1

"Of course I don't need/a cordless phone this good./I deserve it." 4.2.2

Okay./What pays off like a term deposit,/handles like a savings account,/and makes you smile? 3.4.6.3

On October 1st, a resort you'll never forget/will open in a place you've never heard of. 4.2.6

(The) original meaning of/"manufacture" is "made by hand."/Since 1837,/Ramon Allones has stayed/with this definition. 4.2.3

Our restaurants are upper crust. 7.3.2

Outfoxes,/outbusts,/outscouts/every radar/detector/in its class. 3.3.1.2

Part of the art of being a woman/is knowing when not to be too much of a lady. 7.3.4

Picking a plant/site is easier;/when you start with/multiple choices. 4.2.7.1

(The) pleasure to the palate is worth/the price to the purse. 3.2.2

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(The) priceless weekend/It's incredibly suite. 6.4.3

Quietly,/we've become the/most complete/resort on
Florida's/West Coast. 3.4.2

(The) raciest show in town 3.4.1, 7.3.4

Rado.

Suisse/Unconventional? Highly. Prestigious? Very. Dur-
able?/Extraordinarily. For Father's Day?/Absolutely.
3.4.7

"Real gold, honey --/after all, you're going out/into the
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So effective,/ nothing comes/close.../(except blondes,/brunettes/and redheads.) 7.3.4

Soft contact lenses to fit/almost any prescription. 1.6

Something/new for/Manhattanites/and/ Manhattandays 6.4.2

Starting April 26./Take off for Regina with CPAir./And
take off/50%/(until May 5th.) 6.1

A sterling/investment/is waiting for you,/that makes
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24 hours after/you fall in/love with it.../it's on
your/floor 1.11, 4.2.6

Take/your honey/and run. 1.10.7

Tan your tootsies. 4.2.8.1, 9.2

Ten excuses/for not looking more beautiful.../1. I don't
have time./2. My husband doesn't like makeup./3. I don't
want to look made up./4. No one will notice anyway.
/5. I don't know how./6. I can't afford it./7. What's
wrong with the way I look?/8. I don't want to talk about
it./9. My plants need watering./10. I'm scared./...and
one beautiful reason why you should. 4.3.6

Thanks for the memories. 7.3.2

There was/a time when/all computers/were big. They
were/also costly and complex./Nevertheless, they were
very/well-suited to the jobs they had/to do. But the
average person rarely/ saw one of these computers and
certainly/didn't consider using one. At IBM, something
has been/happening to computers. They have been getting
smaller. Their/prices have been shrinking. And the
special knowledge required to use one has/been reduced
dramatically. Our IBM Personal Computer, for example, is
small enough to/fit on a desk blotter but its power is
equal to older computers many times its size. Today,
small/IBM computers can help businesses of all sizes
manage their growth. Or families handle their
bank/accounts. Even very small people (kids for example)
will find them just the right size. Of course there is
something else that's/small about our small
computers. The price: they start at under \$1,600. You
see, it always pays to read the small print. 1.10.6

There's nothing everyday about us./Except our departures
to Britain. 6.4.3

There's/nothing/remotely/like it 7.3.2

These European imports are/nice to le wallet & to le ear
too. 4.3.5

This carpet does not/come in the following/popular
colors:/ wine, ketchup, coffee and mud. 7.2.3

"This desktop/copier can reduce/my size 14 sneakers/ to

an 8 1/2."/--John Havlicek 4.3.3

This is no time/for a brake down. 7.2.2

This little ivy/had Knox./This little ivy/had none.
1.10.7

Trinidad & Tobago:/two good to be true. 7.2.2

(The) true test/of a great food wrap. 1.10.1

Try us risk-free 3.3.2.2

Unappreciated?/Uninspired?/Underpaid?/You've settled for
less.../for too long! 3.3.1.2

Under the sun; Tropitone...probably the finest 1.10.2,
3.4.1

(The) untold story/of the unsung/unsalted peanut.
3.3.1.2

Unwanted hair problem? 8.2

Vive la difference! 1.10.4, 4.3.5

Wanted/slightly used/executives 4.2.1

"Want to know/what's really/odd about those/'odd jobs'
around/your place?" 3.4.6.4

Want to see freight costs/kept on the right track?
/Watch/Borg-Warner 7.2.1

Watt-a-turn-on 7.2.1

We/uncover/facts/as well as/figures 4.2.9

Wear a concert. 4.2.1

Weight/Watchers/works 4.3.4

We're a mine of/materials management/information./We are
Honeywell./Challenge us. 7.3.3.2

What/are you/doing/Saturday/night? 4.2.8.4

What everybody needs at tax/time is a Sharp friend.

7.3.1

Whatever happened to that little/aluminum plant from Shawinigan? 3.4.6.2

When all others fail...Loran cassettes/ are safe and sound sensational. 8.2

When is swapping/municipals/for the/tax advantage/a disadvantage? 3,4.6.3

When the bottom line/is a top priority. 4.2.2

Why do women need the American Express Card?/For the same reasons men do. 3.4.6.2

"Why should we go to your place?/The car sounds better to me." 3.4.1, 7.3.4

"With a view of/Hong Kong like this,/I don't know why/they bother to have curtains." 4.3.1

Yes.../you can still get a/14 1/2% mortgage/for 5 years. 4.3.2

YMCA/The 'Y'/stands for you 4.2.3

You'll love how it loads up front and/how little it sets you back. 4.2.8

You're not just moving in,/you're moving up. 4.2.2