Languaging their Way from Media to Market

Dr. Yogendra Pareek*

Associate Professor, Department of English, SPNKS Govt PG College, Dausa, Rajasthan

Abstract - The present research paper is an attempt to explore how far the language goes in carrying a desired message prepared by professionals/copywriters in order to sell products/services to the potential buyers at the other end. The language experts resort to highly specialized language in order to influence and persuade people into buying the stuff being promoted making effective use of language over the media and getting the desired outcome at the market. But language is not a small term; there are several levels - graphology, phonology, lexis/vocabulary, syntax/sentence structure, and semantics/meaning. Each of these levels are further divided into sub-levels which are diligently worked upon for success.

Keywords - Languaging, Media, Market, Communication, Language use, Linguistic strategies, Marketing communication

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Media, **market**, **and language are so closely connected**, in fact, interwoven and intertwined, that one without the other is unthinkable. Basically, the media comprises the newspapers, the TV, the radio, but also to some extent the cinema, the recordings of popular music, and some computer-mediated forms. The *International Encyclopedia of Communication* lists under media nearly thirty forms of varying generality, including sculpture, photographs, motion-pictures, murals ... books, maps, stamps, portraits, writing, telegraphy etc. No matter what the form is, they all make use of literature, and language to be more specific. They make use of the language to inform, instruct, persuade, build or change opinions-and all this for the sole purpose of selling at the market, to get the customer to buy their products, items, services etc. It is not an easy task to get anybody to part with his money; he has to be persuaded, convinced, and coaxed into doing so. And this process is a great art that the media produces or creates all the time. Whether this results in success or not is a different story. But the entire media indulges in it all the time helping business owners who themselves are constantly studying and researching and forming new strategies of beating their competitors in business.

Professionals round the world work round the clock devising various tactics and strategies in order to sell and get ahead in an environment of cut-throat competition in the market. Broadly speaking, the selling techniques can be divided into three:

A product-based approach will praise the features of a product or service, hoping to win the customers on the strength of product or service itself.

An audience-based approach will try to convince the target audience that they need a particular product or service: by concentrating on practical needs like saving time, or psychological needs like the desire to look younger…

An impact-based approach will aim to attract attention visually or linguistically. (Thorpe 261)

In order to accomplish this, effective use of the electronic and the print media is made. And in all this, language plays a major role. And whether anybody likes it or not, language is used in such a way so as to lure the customers into buying what is available at the market. They tell you why only particular toothpaste should be used and not the other and you make up your mind to buy their product. Have we ever wondered what is it that makes up our minds? What is that mechanism that makes you narrow the whole range down to a specific item?

Every word - and particularly those in the headline or slogan introducing the ad - must impact the readers'/viewers' minds…make them want to buy…There is a tried and

tested vocabulary for the selling of food and domestic items… (Russell 176)

There is widespread use of adjectives like new, good, natural, fresh etc and verbs like buy, give, taste, look, choose etc. and

"… the two most powerful adjectives you can use to attract attention in a header are free and new". (Russell 177)

Verbs are often omitted to make a catchphrase more concise and striking. Informal spoken language is used in advertisements, and all these strategies that are used to formulate the linguistic styles used for the discourse of selling at the market are chiefly related with catchiness, attracting the attention, holding it for enough time, and then luring in towards the item/product etc.

So language experts use sound-alliteration, assonance, rhyme, tone and intonation etc; they also make use of the print-frequency of letters, deviation or unpredictability in spelling, mixing languages, names and shapes, homophones etc. The other grammatical features that do the job are transitivity, passivization, especially agentless passives, nominalization, modality and evaluation, naming and descriptions, collocational incongruity, presupposition, syntactic markedness and various other such foregrounding and focusing devices that strike. There is constant intensification and downplaying going on all the time. Here is an example that proves the point.

Of America's best-tasting gums, Trident is sugar-free (*Language Awareness* 100)

Disregard for a moment, the obvious subjective weasel 'best-tasting...something has been left out. Omitted very deliberately... the word only...the government doesn't allow the superiority claim...so the Trident left it out. But the sentence is so brilliantly constructed, the word 'only' is so heavily implied, that most people hear it even though it hasn't been said. That's the weasel of omission. Take another example of the word 'enriched':

You mostly find in bread, where the bleaching process combined with the chemicals used as preservatives renders the loaves totally void of anything but filler. So the manufacturer puts a couple of drops of vitamins into the batter, and presto! It's enriched. Sounds great when you say it. Looks great when you read it. But what you have to determine is, is it really great? (*Language Awareness* 100)

And this is precisely what this whole language mechanism does; it makes whatever is available at the market look great, sound great.

Graphology does everything to catch the reader's eye-to attract them to the page. They will see first, only then read, and so to hold their gaze is the first step, and so editors work meticulously with all that appears on the page. For this they consider typeface, font size, boldness/italics/underlining, use of capitals or small caps, the layout, spacing, line spacing, columns, type of paper used, colours, contrast, posters, avoiding overprinting, and long documents. They make the print catchy. Effective use is made of punctuation, abbreviations, and symbols.

Another example can be seen in the way the car advertisements are framed in which cars are shown in environmental-friendly conditions, which is to do away with all those negative aspects associated with car ownership. Pollution and road congestion have come in for severe criticism in the recent times. Such things need to be countered, and tactfully at that. As John Storey points out in his book *Cultural Theory and Popular Culture: An Introduction,* "To confront them in a direct way would always run the risk of allowing the criticisms to come between the car being advertised and any potential buyer. Therefore showing cars both in nature (unpolluted) and space (uncongested) confronts the claims without the risk of giving them a dangerous and unnecessary visibility. In this way the criticisms are answered without the questions themselves having been formally posed." (75)

Then comes the turn of phonology ie what deals with whether what looks great also sounds great. Apart from assonance, consonance, and alliteration, there are misspellings that strike the eye ie it is the pronunciation in print. For instance, there is an advertising slogan:

Beanz Meanz Heinz (Durant and Lambrou 208)

There is a deviation in spelling, but there is also a phonological rule that says that if the letter 's' comes after a voiced consonant or a nasal sound, a voiceless letter changes to its voiced counterpart-the sound /z/. And so it is pronounced/beinz//meinz//heinz/, and so the putting of the sound /z/ even for the eye makes it so catchy and attractive that a viewer or reader just cannot avoid noticing it, gazing at it, and clinging to it. This apart, rhyme is quite effectively used. For instance:

If men are wise, they socialise with Appletise. (Durant and Lambrou 210)

Tunes and intonation play an important role too Here is an example:

So, if ordinary shampoos don't fix your problem, try this. (Durant and Lambrou 211)

Lexis deals with the choice of words used - nouns, verbs, adjectives, and adverbs. And also with other modifiers, connotations etc. Special care is taken to use the popular variety, the language used daily by people. Colloquial expressions are used. Adjective phrases are deftly turned into catch phrases making things look pleasant. Sentence variation is done to suit the context. Nouns are the most common in news. And according to Biber et al in the *Longman Grammar of Spoken and Written English* "the registers with the highest frequency of nouns... have the highest frequency of adjectives". (65)

So higher the density of information, higher the frequency of nouns. As far as the function words are concerned, whatever will have a high frequency of nouns will require a proportionate number of prepositions and determiners which serve to further specify the nouns. Frequency of prepositions 1,20,000 per million, that of pronouns is 40,000 per million, primary auxiliaries is 45,000 per million, determiners is 80,000 per million, coordinators is 30,000 per million, modals is 15,000 per million, subordinators is 15,000 per million, and that of particles is 8000 per million.

Statistics apart, let's now turn our attention to two words: help and like. For instance -

Helps keep you young

Helps prevent cavities (*Language Awareness* 92)

Help qualifies everything. Nobody in the world is hundred percent sure that a product will keep anybody young or a toothpaste will positively keep one's teeth disease free forever because the manufacturers also know ver well that there are no products like that produced. But by adding that one little word 'help' in front, they can not only use the strongest language possible after that but also avoid any legal issue. And the most fascinating part is that people have become immune to the word. They completely ignore or overlook the word 'help', paying attention only to what comes after it. About seventy-five percent of all advertising uses the word 'help'.

The second word is 'like'.

It is like getting one bar free

Cleans like a white tornado (*Language Awareness* 93)

Other than being a qualifier, 'like' is also a comparative element. The term 'like' is used to get a potential buyer to stop thinking about the product per se, and to get him/her thinking about something bigger or better or different from the product which is being sold, so that the sellers can make one believe that the product is more than what it is, by likening it to something else.

Constant lexical innovations are made-new words are coined to make the brand memorable. Here are a couple of examples:

Cookability- that's the beauty of gas.

Gordon's and Tonic - innervigoration. (Thorpe 263)

The same mechanism works as far as the syntax or the sentence structure is concerned. There are a number of ways in which the media persons reorder their material in the sentences to draw attention to certain elements. Marked themes bring clause elements other than the subject to the front of the sentence giving them prominence. Fronting is a useful device for doing so. For example:

Far more serious were the severe head injuries; in particular a bruising of the brain. (Biber et al 902)

Inversion of subject - verb or subject - operator occurs 1000 occurrences per million words. And ninety percent of all inversions occur in main clauses.

Postponement of the direct object is common in news. (Biber et al 926)

Again, the principle of end weight is important in favouring postponement of direct object, "when the direct object is long and complex, as is the case of news reporting. News is also marked by a high frequency of short dynamic passives because the focus is on specific events rather than generalizations." (Biber et al 931)

Imperatives are used to urge consumers to buy, give, or join. The following example appeared as a television advertisement for The Department of Employment in March 1995:

Free your potential... join the search for a brighter future. (Thorpe 264)

Verbless clauses are used:

Vibrant, rich and extremely well-balanced. (Ceramella and Lee 78)

Sentences are simple and coordinated rather than subordinated. Metaphorical language, symbolism, personification, animation, puns are used effectively.

Copywriters occasionally use metaphors to create kind of emotional associations they want to implant in our minds. Examples of metaphorical language are *Fire and Ice and Cherries* for individual lipstick shades; *a taste of paradise* for the coconut 'Bounty' bar. (Russell 178)

And all this is done to make things uncommon, to strike the reader/viewer/ consumer, to color his or her view, to make him or her to buy what is being offered at the market. The aim of the sellers is to attract the attention of the consumers and they succeed in doing so to a large extent. And the potential buyers/consumers get dismayed and influenced by the imposition of some order and pattern on life, which is generally a thing of bits and pieces of disorder, and human nature craves for an ordered comprehensible wholeness. The disordered raw material of life has been mastered and controlled and an order imposed upon it. Besides, moulding language into an ordered pattern brings conviction, satisfaction, giving people a sense of control and mastery creating a tilt in the minds towards the products/services.

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Corresponding Author

Dr. Yogendra Pareek*

Associate Professor, Department of English, SPNKS Govt PG College, Dausa, Rajasthan