

LANGUAGE, CULTURE, COMMUNICATION

VISUAL ARTISTIC MEANS IN FRENCH ADVERTISING DISCOURSE

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Summary

The article is devoted to the study of the use of artistic means of visualization, namely visual metaphor and personification in the discourse of French social advertising. The artistic, rhetorical and stylistic features of the use of metaphor and personification in advertising discourse are demonstrated on concrete examples of advertising messages of modern French advertising, taken from print and Internet sources.

In general, the discourse of modern French social advertising is rich in artistic means. Many examples of figures of emphasis or understatement, figures of construction and figures of speech were found in the analysed corpus of advertising messages. However, in our opinion, the use of figures of speech, such as metaphor and personification, gives advertising more vivid clarity and imagery, and is therefore the most effective in achieving the final goal of the advertising message – to influence the potential reader. The research demonstrates that the most characteristic of French advertising discourse is the use of zoomorphic metaphor and subject metaphor. The second visual stylistic figure frequently used in French advertising discourse after metaphor is personification. The use of personification is typical of the discourse of French social advertising, as the authors of advertising messages tend to give certain phenomena or objects human qualities.

Keywords: advertising rhetoric, metaphor, personification, social advertising of France, stylistic figures.

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1. Introduction

In today's world, no one doubts that advertising has become part of universal culture. It penetrates deeper and deeper into our lives. Advertising affects a person, his or her consciousness, the decision. In the struggle for the attention of the audience in the arsenal of advertising are constantly emerging more sophisticated, more thoughtful strategies. Unfortunately, in the Ukrainian advertising discourse there are many cases when the variety of advertising tools and techniques causes quite a negative impact on the recipient. Therefore, the question of the need to neutralize the negative impact of advertising and avoid obvious linguistic manipulation is very important for research.

In this regard, it is crucial to get acquainted with the positive foreign, namely the French experience of the advertising process. In our opinion, the study of the peculiarities of the use of

visual artistic means and figures in the French advertising discourse will help modern specialists in the field of advertising and will help to increase social responsibility and the culture of advertising in the world as a whole.

Theoretical and methodological basis of the work were the works of Ukrainian and foreign scholars in the field of linguistic analysis of advertising texts O. Zelinska (2002), V. Zirka (2005), M. Kokhtev (1997), G. Pocheptsov (1999), research of the linguopragmatic aspect of advertising (Yu. Korneva (1998), I. Moiseenko (1996), Yu. Silvestrov (1996), cognitive aspect of advertising (V. Okhrimenko (2002), O. Tkachuk-Miroshnichenko (2001), as well as at the level of text categories (T. Hulak (2005), N. Kovalenko (2006), T. Livshits (1999).

Topical issues of Western European and American advertising in modern society were raised in the works of such authors as B. Brohand (1983), J. Lendrevie (1983), K. Bove (1995), W. F. Ahrens (1995), W. Wells (2001), D. Burnett (2001), S. Moriarty (2001), W. Berger (2004), H.-P. Jendi (1997), J. Durand (1981), J. E. O'Toole (1985), D. Pope (1983) and others.

The purpose of this article is to explore and describe the features of the use of artistic visual means, namely the use of visual metaphor and personification in the discourse of modern French advertising.

Achieving this goal involves the following **tasks**:

– to substantiate the theoretical foundations of the study of rhetorical and stylistic features of French social advertising and give examples of the use of various artistic means and figures in advertising;

– to study the peculiarities of the use of artistic visual means, namely visual metaphor and personification in the French advertising discourse and to describe the linguistic and stylistic features of the French social advertising.

The object of study is modern French social advertising.

The subject of analysis is the linguistic pragmatic and rhetorical and stylistic features of French social advertising.

The study was based on 180 samples of French social advertising messages taken from electronic sources and the Internet.

Research methods. The research methodology of French social advertising is complex. The method of linguistic observation and the semantic-cognitive approach were used to study and analyse the functions of the visual image and textual components in socio-advertising messages. Methods of linguistic-pragmatic and linguistic-stylistic analysis allowed us to study the communicative characteristics of modern social advertising and to explore its rhetorical and stylistic features.

The scientific novelty of this article is that for the first time in Ukrainian novels a comprehensive linguistic and stylistic analysis of French social advertising was carried out.

2. Artistic means of French advertising discourse

Even if advertising is often perceived as a factor in the impoverishment of language, and sometimes as a real “anti-culture”, it can still be studied from the angle of rhetoric. Thus, in the 1980s, J. Durand, in his article “Les formes de la communication” in a magazine founded and directed by Roland Barthes, created an interesting parallel between rhetoric and advertising. He noted that the reputation of advertising in the intellectual world comes in part from the rejection of rhetoric that characterizes Western thought since the days of romance (*Durand, 1981: 724*).

For J. Durand, advertisers have, in a way, rediscovered rhetoric, or rather, they have restored most of the figures of classical rhetoric without even knowing it. After all, advertising has not come up with new forms of persuasion, – says the scientist (*Durand, 1981: 724*).

B. Brohand and J. Lendrevie (1983) dive even deeper in their fundamental work "Le Publicitor". For them, the three found operations of classical rhetoric (invention (fr. L'inventio), disposition (fr. La dispositio) and elocution (fr. L'elocutio) are in the process of advertising: invention – market research, disposition – "copying strategy" and eloquence – the concept and writing of the message (Brohand & Lendrevie, 1983: 231).

It is worth noting that the French advertising discourse uses only a limited number of artistic means. French researchers argue that the writing of an advertising slogan must meet certain requirements, namely: conciseness, melody (selection of words depending on their sound), be humorous. These requirements de facto eliminate some style twists, especially those that express passion.

For a deeper understanding of the peculiarities of the use of techniques of visual metaphor and personification in France, in our opinion, it is important to separately characterize the artistic means encountered in advertising discourse in this country. Traditionally, rhetorical figures are divided into three categories: figures of speech that transform the meaning of words into a new meaning or play on the sounds of the word (comparison, metaphor, personification, oxymoron, pun), figures of construction that change grammatical construction (anacoluthon, inversion, ellipse, anaphora) and figures of emphasis or understatement that change meaning or structure, adding expressiveness (antithesis, hyperbole, litote, rhetorical question, tautology, paradox).

Analysis of the scientific literature on the problem of research shows that French linguists have proposed other classifications. Thus, R. Barthes proposed to distinguish between metabolites that lie at the level of the paradigm, and parataxes, which change the relationship between successive signs and are at the level of the syntagm (Barthes, 1963: 82-83). However, in our study we will follow the traditional classification.

3. Examples of artistic means in the advertising discourse of France

Let's start with examples of the use of *figures of speech* in French advertising discourse.

1) **Metaphor.** The main function of metaphor is to change the proper meaning of a word to a figurative meaning that fits the context. Metaphor in advertising is usually used to convey the imagery of the statement, the disclosure of hidden content.

"Les Belles Plantes ne s'arrosent pas à l'alcool" (Beautiful plants aren't watered with alcohol). Here the metaphor is the phrase "belles plantes" (beautiful plants), which obviously represents a woman to whom alcohol does not give any beauty, but vice versa.

"L'alcool vous donne de belles couleurs" – in this example the expression "donner de belles couleurs" is metaphorically played – "to give a beautiful complexion". By this expression, the authors of advertising mean that a person under the influence of alcohol can harm himself or other people around him.

2) **Comparison.** The comparison is to compare two terms to emphasize the relationship between the analogies. It is usually formed by comparative words such as *"comme"*, *"tel que"* or *"semblable à"* and so on. It should be noted that comparisons are not so often used in French advertising slogans. Here is an example :

«Les préservatifs, c'est comme le papier-toilette, il faut toujours en avoir d'avance» – an example of a simple comparison with the conjunction *"comme"* (like). In this slogan, condoms are compared to toilet paper, which is better to always have in advance.

3) **Irony.** The reception of irony is very common in social advertising. With the help of irony, the authors of the advertising message try to make it brighter, atypical and such that it quickly attracts the attention of potential audiences. Often the use of irony in advertising is enhanced by the image, which is a clear confirmation of the text of the ad.

“*Le maïs transgénique est vraiment sans danger (et bon pour le poil)*” – the irony consists in use of genetically modified corn which is considered to be “completely safe” (although in fact it is well-known that GMOs are harmful to human health) and good for “hair growth” (which fortunately people do not have). The advertising poster depicts two young people – a man and a woman, who are so hairy that they look like Neanderthals (Picture 1). The authors of the advertising message want this image to demonstrate how dangerous the use of genetically modified products can be and what the consequences might be.

4) **Metonymy.** It is a word whose meaning is transferred to the name of another object related to the object inherent in that word by its nature. Here is an example: “*Cette petite coulotte a côtoyé l’horreur. La gonorrhée, c’est horrible. Ça peut causer les pertes vaginales verdâtres. Mais encore pire, ça peut empêcher d’avoir les relations sexuelles parce que ça fait trop mal. Le condom c’est pas un Luxe*” – an example of the use of metonymy in advertising, under the phrase “*cette petite coulotte*” – “these shorts” – the authors of the advertising message refer to the girl who wears them. Also, this advertising message is written using a conversational style register, which is indicated by the absence of the particle “*ne*” in the negation and the use of the indicative pronoun “*ça*”.

5) **Oxymoron.** An oxymoron is a combination of words with opposite meanings to obtain a paradoxical expression.

“*L’alcool vous donne de belles couleurs. A ta santé!*” – the phrase “*A ta santé!*” is an oxymoron, because people who regularly drink alcohol, on the contrary, are more prone to disease.

6) **Pun.** A pun is a play on words based on the difference in meaning between two words that are pronounced the same or similar to each other (Pictures 2 and 3).

Another interesting example of pun in the advertising is the anti-tobacco poster “*Le tabac t’abat*”. The slogan of advertising is based on the repetition of its vowel [a]. We hear four repetitions of the vowel sound [a], so that the slogan stays in the brain for a long time.

The examples of the use of **figures of construction** in French social advertising are found relatively rarely in comparison to the figures of words and thoughts. Here is an example of the parallelism created by the use of the homeoteleuton: “*L’accessibilité c’est la liberté*” is an example of the use of the stylistic means of a homeoteleuton in a socio-advertising slogan.



Picture 1. Transgenic corn is really safe (and good for the hair)



Picture 2. To avoid wasting water, close the tap tightly



Picture 3. Good habits for the trash

The endings of the nouns “*l’accessibilité*” – “accessibility” and “*la liberté*” – “freedom” are consonant, which gives this advertising slogan harmony and accessibility to perception.

Next to this, we have found a lot of examples of the use of *figures of emphasis or understatement*.

1) The most commonly used figure of thought is *the tautology*.

“*Le tabac rend stérile: ON S’EN FOUT. Le tabac nuit au fœtus: ON S’EN FOUT. Le tabac coupe le souffle: ON S’EN FOUT. Le tabac cause des maladies mortelles: ON S’EN FOUT. C’est marrant, ce matin, par peur d’être malade, vous avez jeté un produit périmé depuis deux jours*”. This conclusion prompts us to think about the fact that the vast majority of people are not really aware of the basic things that are obvious and proven by doctors in many countries. Such people may be frightened by a small danger, not paying attention to the fact that every day they poison themselves with nicotine. That is why this advertising message is quite paradoxical.

2) Changing *proverbs, colloquial expressions* or titles of works. This process has become one of the most common in the French advertising language.

“*Alimentation durable – êtes vous bien dans votre assiette?*” – the phrase “*ne pas être dans son assiette*” literally translates as “not to be on your plate”. In this case, its connotative meaning has been replaced by a direct meaning, as this phrase calls for the use of only products that are healthy and environmentally recyclable.

The use of phraseological units in French-language advertising messages is explained, on the one hand, by drawing attention to the problem raised, and on the other – by the ability to express what cannot be expressed by phraseology in its usual use.

4. Visual metaphor in French advertising discourse

The use of visual means is becoming one of the most effective mechanisms in the modern French-language advertising space. Compilers of advertising messages began to attract potential consumers not only with the image of the product, but also with the so-called visual tropes, to which we can conditionally include visual metaphor, visual personification and metonymy. Although on the one hand, these mechanisms sometimes seem to semantically complicate the decoding of information, requiring additional mental effort from the recipient, on the other hand, they are characterized by the ability to add expressiveness, emotion and evoke positive associations, images in the target audience.

Acquaintance with a large number of French-language advertising messages allows us to conclude that the most commonly used visual tropes in French social advertising are visual metaphor and personification. We fully share the point of view of the researcher M. Tversky that the characteristic features of the visual metaphor is its “compactness”, the ability to be easily incorporated into the advertising message, to effectively convey a large amount of information without explanation and confirmation (Tversky, 2014: 163).

Having studied the peculiarities of the use of the means of visual metaphor in French advertising discourse, we came to the conclusion that it is represented by the following metaphorical models:

a) *Zoomorphic*. In this case, the source of metaphor is the animal. Its features are extrapolated to the advertised product or service. The use of zoomorphic model of a visual metaphor was frequently traced in public transport advertising which represents the rules of behaviour in the common shared spaces, where people who break the rules are depicted as the animal they look like. Furthermore, it is also common in environmental advertising to depict people in the image of a killed animal: “*Seuls des monstres portent encore de la fourrure*” (Picture 4).



Picture 4. Only monsters still wear fur.

Many different linguistic, artistic and stylistic means are used in the subject of ecology, which has in large numbers conquered the French media discourse. As well as in advertising of behaviour in public transport, there is a zoomorphic metaphor in it.

Recently, a project of social advertising of the rules of behaviour in the common shared spaces was launched in the Paris metro, which was particularly characterized by zoomorphism, i.e., endowing animals with real or imaginary objects. Advertising messages with a specific addressee complement the images of animals, which they resemble one or another wrong behaviour.

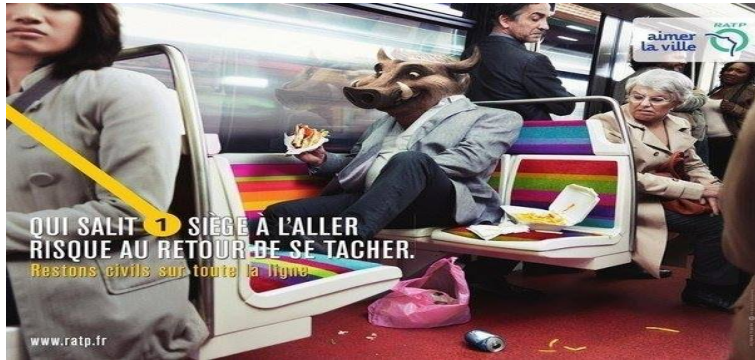
For example: “**Qui saute par-dessus tourniquet peut tomber sur un contrôle à quai**” (Picture 5).



Picture 5. Whoever jumps over a turnstile may come across a dockside control

This advertisement depicts the addressee violating the rules of public transport and jumping over the turnstile to avoid paying for the trip, with the head of a frog to convey who he looks like when he does so (Picture 5).

Or: “**Qui salit siège à l’aller risque au retour de se tâcher**”.



Picture 6. Whoever dirties his seat on the outward journey risks getting stained on his return

Here the addressee is depicted with the head of a pig eating in the wagon and leaving all the food around (Picture 6).

Showing Parisians in the form of animals, the illustrations reveal the full depth of their selfish behaviour. Thus, the state intends to use the method of mirror reflection, so that they think about who they are and change their behaviour for the better.

b) *Subject metaphor*. Within this metaphorical model, the features of an object are transferred to a product or service. Example :

“*Ceci n’est pas une poubelle*” (This is not a trash can). Here the metaphorical model is represented by a trash can filled with unused vegetables. The purpose of such a poster is to draw human attention to the problem of malnutrition, devaluation of food. The advertising poster urges not to throw away food that can still be consumed (Picture 7).

We believe that one of the best examples of a subject metaphor in French social advertising is a series of social advertisements against food waste (Picture 8).

This poster underlines very famous slogan of French social advertising “*Pour votre santé, mangez au moins cinq fruits et légumes par jour*”. He encourages the consumption of at least 5 fruits and vegetables a day, inserting into this ingrained expression the epithet “*moche*” which means “ugly”. The author visually depicted vegetables and fruits that the French often refuse to eat and throw away or simply do not buy. For each picture, he gave examples of why



Picture 7. This is not a trash can



Picture 8. For your health, eat at least five servings of fruit and vegetables every day

it should be used. With this metaphor, he hopes to encourage citizens to buy locally produced products, whatever their appearance.

5. Visual personification in French advertising discourse

The second common visual stylistic device frequently use in French advertising discourse after metaphor is personification. The use of personification is typical of the discourse of French social advertising, as the authors of advertising messages tend to give certain phenomena or objects human qualities.

In such advertising, we can also observe the presence of jargon, which function is to attract the additional attention of the consumer to the problem.

In one of the examples of French social advertising, the personificated object is a tomato that has an unpleasant appearance and seems to address its addressee: *“Quoi ma gueule, qu'est ce qu'elle a ma gueule?”* (Picture 9).

Tomato is given living qualities, and he addresses his consumer in his language. The expression *“ferme ta gueule”* is often used in colloquial language and literally means “shut up (close your mouth)”. The word *“la gueule”* is argotic, during the abbreviations remained *“ta gueule”*. In this way, the tomato seemed to be asking what's wrong with him, why he's not being eaten.

In another example the subject of personification is flour, which says that it can be used to prepare many things and leftover pasta, which also do not want to be thrown in the trash.

6. Conclusions

Thus, the effectiveness of the use of visual metaphor and personification is explained by their ability to successfully persuade a potential audience in the right way for the addressee, strengthening the internal motivation to decide to purchase a product or service. The mechanism of metaphor in advertising messages is based on the implementation of anthropomorphic and zoomorphic models, which create in the process of perception by the addressees a kind of launch of the corresponding images that serve as means of emotional impact on the recipient.



Picture 9. What's wrong with me, what's wrong with my face?



Picture 10. Avoid throwing away products that are still consumable

The mechanism of personification, in its turn, is based on personification models, the perception of which provides an intensive impact by creating a specific objectivity by the addressee.

Thus, we came to the conclusion that rhetorical figures and stylistic techniques are widely used in French social advertising. This makes the text more imaginative, memorable, and forms its pragmatics. In the analysed corpus of French advertising posters, the most frequently used is a visual metaphor and next to it a visual personification. The use of visual means is one of the most effective mechanisms in the modern French-language advertising space, which requires further comprehensive research not only from the side of the linguists, but also from the side of the marketers.

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