

An Analysis Of Phonological Features In The Arabic Discourse Of Print

Advertisements In Algeria

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| تاريخ النشر | تاريخ القبول | تاريخ الإرسال |
|-------------|--------------|---------------|
| 2018-12-13 | 2018-11-22 | 2018-06-25 |

ABSTRACT

The present paper attempted to investigate the Arabic discourse of print advertisements in Algeria. It focused in analysing the phonological features which characterize the discourse of advertisements and which aim to fulfil advertising primary task of persuading people to buy the product or service. The study was hopefully aimed at drawing out some hints for Arab, particularly Algerian, advertisers especially in print advertising, which may help to improve their effectiveness and professionalism. A total of 72 advertisements were selected as representative for the analysis of Algerian printed advertising. The advertisements were randomly taken from three Algerian popular newspapers pressed in Arabic (Al-khabar, Echourouk and Ennahar) and the Algerian magazine Echourouk TV published between 2014 and 2016. This investigation was specifically concerned with those phonological and rhetorical features that contribute to the development of text in advertisements. Thus, this investigation, which was based on a linguistic analysis of data, was carried out in the hope that it will contribute to our understanding of Arabic printed advertising discourse.

KEY WORDS: advertising, language, phonological features, Arabic, persuasion

INTRODUCTION

Advertising is a form of media communication which plays an important role in spreading information about products or services from the seller to the buyer. Moreover, advertising is, according to Bovee and Arens (1982: 10), a form of “non –personal communication of information usually paid for and usually persuasive in nature about products, services, or ideas by identified sponsors through the various media”. Thus, advertisers’ major aim is to attract people’s attention and persuade them to buy. An effective use of language helps people remember and identify the products. Accordingly, the current paper attempts to shed light on the phonology of the language of advertisements. The different phonological choices made by copywriters to make the advertising message persuasive and highly effective are subjects of investigation.

Creating effective and impressive words in advertisements requires choice of words. The copy writer uses words that can easily be remembered and which have pleasant sounds. Hence, in advertising, techniques similar to those of poetics are often used. Like in poems, advertising language uses the so called mnemonic devices (rhyme, rhythm, alliteration and assonance) which guarantee a better remembering of the text and also a later recall of it.

RHYME AND RHYTHM

Rhyme is related to the use of correspondence of syllables at the end of words or lines e.g. still/fill – more/bore. It “presents a formalized consonance of sounds between words or the endings of words” (Cuddon 2013:608). Discussing rhyming in Arabic, Gully (1996:24) argues that the rhymes in advertisements are “created by combination of a long vowel plus a consonant at the end of each line, or half of a two part slogan”.

Rhythm is “the perceived regularity of prominent units in speech” (Crystal, 1999:290). In advertisements, copywriters often use a rhythmical arrangement so that the text becomes subconsciously memorable for receivers. Even scientists are unable to explain the powerful emotional and mnemonic attraction of rhythmic language. Langer (1967, cited in Cook, 2001:125), for example, suggests that rhythm is an imitation of the body’s vital processes and recalls the regular sound of the mother’s heartbeat in the womb. Turner (1992, *ibid*) claims that rhythm may stimulate creative neuronal circuits in the brain. Moreover, Glucklich (1997, *ibid*) compares it to the dances of ritual magic because it induces both emotion and alteration of consciousness. Therefore, Cook (2001:125) advocates that “descriptions of this power are commoner than explanations, and explanations all remain highly speculative”. Moreover, discussing the extent to which prosody is used in prose, Cook (*ibid*) says: “Though poetry is exceptional in the degree to which it exploits prosody, and bureaucratic prose is exceptional in the degree to which it does not, most genres make more use of it than it is generally supposed”.

According to Hermerén (1999), it is very important that the advertising text sounds pleasant and catchy to be more acceptable and effectively remembered by receivers. This is also applied to written texts

since “even in silent reading people are aware of the way words are pronounced and the rhythmic patterns that are created when words are put together” (Hermerén 1999, 120). In fact, this technique might be considered as an attention seeking device in advertising. Discussing the importance of rhyme and rhythm in advertising, Cook (2001:125) claims: “On occasion phonetic and phonological criteria may dominate, and a word or other linguistic unit be chosen primarily for its rhyme, rhythm or syllabic structure, and in spite of its meaning.”

Rhyme and rhythm are used in print advertisements in Algeria. Here are some examples that might contribute to the memorability of sentences and phrases and thus the whole advertisement¹.

(1) A slogan for ‘obei’ milk

ʔu:bi: huwa hli:bi:

(‘obei’ is my milk)

In this slogan, a rhyme effect is created by repeating the same final syllable ‘bi:’ in ‘ʔu:bi:’ and ‘hli:bi:’.

(2) An advertisement for ‘Dozia’ coffee, the slogan is:

qahwat do:zja mdo:zja wa bni:na

(‘Dozia coffee, a dose and delicious coffee)

Here in this example, a rhyme effect is created by the repetition of the final syllables **do: / zia** in ‘do:zja’ and ‘mdo:zja’.

In most cases a product’s name is not derived from an identifiable root in the Arabic language. However, this fact does not impair the copywriter’s ability to create rhyming schemes. As noticed, in the two examples above, the brand name is part of the rhyme in both advertisements. Examples like these are so frequent in the data of this study. Such technique helps to make the brand name memorable and effective. According to Dubovičienė and Skorupa (2014), rhyming the brand name in a slogan is one of the best techniques to introduce such brand to the audience.

Moreover, in the second example, the words ‘do:zja’ and ‘mdo:zja’ are morphologically similar words and they occur in close contiguity. In print advertisements in Algeria, a lot of examples like such are found.

‘arabella’ coffee

ʔarbah alkarru:sa w alʕarru:sa

(Win the car and the bride)

As seen, the two words ‘alkaru:sa’ and ‘alʕaru:sa’ are morphologically similar and they are only separated by the conjunction ‘w ‘ (and).

Worthy to note that in Algerian print advertisements, the rhyme effect is not only created between successive words but also between lines or two parts slogan as in the following example for 'Facto coffee capsules':

(3) **fa:ctu: espresu: ahsan ma: xtartu:**
 ('facto espresso', your best choice)

In this example, the copywriter uses a maximum mnemonic effect by repeating the long vowel sound 'u:' twice in 'fa:ctu:', 'espresu:' and 'xtartu:'. In addition, between the two lines, the syllable 'tu:' is repeated.

More examples on rhyme and rhythm in Algerian print advertisements are described in the following table.

Table 1: Examples of rhyme and rhythm

| The brand name | The ad text containing rhyme | The repeated sounds, words or syllables |
|---|--|---|
| 1-'alʕajla' brick pastry sheets | mʕa dju:l alʕa:ʒla majdatna: ha:ʒla (with 'alʕajla' brick pastry sheets, our table is superb) | la |
| 2-'Milkospray' milk powder | ħali:b muʒaffaf ka:mil li ʕihhatik um wa ʕihhati ʔaʔfa: likum (powdered whole milk, for yours and your children's health) | lkum |
| 3-'Alliance' assurances | ʔamnu: sijja:ra: tkum ʕla: qi: skum (get the suitable car insurance) | kum ² |
| 4-'Dermacol' make up products | makia:ʒ miθa:li: lilʕajn ajn wa ʕafata ajn (perfect make up for eyes and lips) | ajn ³ |
| 5-'Maria' pasta products | maria: ʒau da wa nauʕi ja ('Maria', goodness and quality) | a |
| 6-'Super Tab' tablet | ʕala:ma tiʒa:rii ja belʒi :ki ja alhad ija lmiθa: lija ...(The Belgian commercial brand, the perfect present ...) | ija |
| 7-'la vache qui rit' cheese. | waʕfa ʒadi: da muzawwada bilħadi:d (a new recipe rich in iron) | a |
| 8-'starlight' brand for household appliances. | kun da:ʔi man naʒ man la:miʕ an (Be always a brilliant star) | an |

Example 1 of brick pastry sheets explains another aspect of rhyme and rhythm in Algerian

advertising. In this example, the two nouns ‘alʕa:jla’ (family) and ‘ha:jla’ (superb) are examples of ‘zinas’ in Arabic (paronomasia)⁴ (Gully,1996:26). In this case, it is what Gully calls ‘zinas na:qis’ (incomplete paronomasia) in which the ‘zinas’ components, that is, the words ‘alʕa:jla’ and ‘ha:jla’ contain identical vowels and final syllables , but different initial sounds.

Similarly, the previous example of ‘Arabella’ coffee powder displays the pattern of incomplete paronomasia in which the words ‘alkaru:sa’ (car) and ‘alʕaru:sa’ (bride) are identical in the number of syllables and vowels but differ only in the first sound of the second syllable as shown in bold.

In examples, 1 ,5 ,6 and 7, rhyme and rhythm patterns are enhanced by the common occurrence of the feminine noun and adjective marker pronounced as ‘a(h)’ in pausal form (Gully, 1996); for instance, the nouns ‘ʕa:jla’ (family) in example 1, ‘zau**da**’ (goodness) and ‘nau**ʕija**’ (quality) in example 5, ‘al**hadija**’ (the present) in example 6, ‘wa**ʕfa**’ (recipe) in example 7, and the adjectives ‘ha:jla’ (superb) in example 1, ‘ti**za:riija**’ (commercial), ‘bel**zi :kija**’ (Belgian), ‘almi**ḥa:lija**’ (perfect) in example 6, ‘zadi:**da**’(new), and ‘muzaw**wada**’ (provided) in example 7. Therefore, the feminine vocalic ending ‘a’ helps the copywriter to create a rhyme scheme in Arabic.

ASSONANCE

Unlike rhyme which appears only at the end of words or lines, assonance refers to “the repetition of similar vowel sounds, usually close together, to achieve a particular effect of euphony” (Cuddon, 2013: 56). Assonance is also a technique used by copywriters in advertisements. In addition to rhyme, the previous example of ‘dozia’ coffee displays a repetition of the long vowel ‘o:’ in the two successive words ‘do:zia’ and ‘mdo:zia’. El-daly (2001:40) claims that “Arabic lends itself well to this type of scheme”. The following table presents more examples of assonance in the current corpus (the sounds which present assonance are written in bold).

Table 2: Examples on assonance

| The brand name | The advertising text | The repeated sound |
|--------------------------|--|--------------------|
| 1-‘Maria’ pasta | z au d a wa nau ʕ i j a (goodness and quality) | au |
| 2-‘arabella’ coffee | alkar ru :sa w alʕar ru :sa (the car and the bride) | u: |
| 3-‘la vache qui rit’ | ʕ a: ʕ at m ʕ a: n a: la ḥ a z a: t fil ʕ a: ʕ ima (she lived moments with us in the capital) | a: |
| 4-‘Choco dada’ chocolate | ʕoko da:da: sirr addau q wa ssa ʕ a:da (‘choco dada, the secret of good taste and happiness) | a |
| 5-‘Alliance’ assurances | ba:qa :t ʔal i ja: n s littatʔmi: n a: t (‘alliance’ assurance package) | a: |
| 6-‘Ramen’ pasta | ʕ i :ri j a sari: ʕ at at ḥ a d i: r (an easy noodle to prepare) | i : |

In example one, a double assonance is created by the repetition of the diphthong ‘au’ in ‘zau**d**a’ (goodness) and ‘nau**ʕ**i**j**a’ (quality).

In example two, the long vowel ‘u:’ is repeated in the stressed syllable ‘ru:’ which adds an internal rhyme to the utterance.

The repetition of the long vowel ‘a:’ in example three creates a pleasing rhythmic effect.

In examples four, five and six, the vowel sounds ‘a’, ‘a:’ and ‘i:’ are repeated respectively.

ALLITERATION

Alliteration occurs when there is a “sequence of words (or of stressed syllables within words beginning with the same sound” (Crystal, 1999:11) in order to make a special communicative effect. Dealing with the Arabic rhetoric, Abdul-Raof (2006:259) provides a simple definition of alliteration. It is, then, the employment “of a number of words whose initial letters⁵ are successively identical”. Because of the clever choice of words, alliteration is pleasing to ears. Leech (1966: 188) considers this device “striking and helpful as far as memorability is concerned”. Alliteration is generally a common device in verse. It is occasionally used in prose (Cuddon, 2013: 22). Hence, in the corpus of this study, very few examples have been found. Consider the following table:

Table 3: Examples of alliteration

| The product | The advertising text | The repeated sound |
|------------------------------|--|---------------------------|
| (1) ‘Venus’ shampoo | tamlis tæ:m (Complete smoothness) | t |
| (2) ‘Aigle’ household bleach | mæʔ ʒavel ʒi:l ʒadi:d (with household bleach, new generation) | ʒ |
| (3) ‘Arabella’ coffee powder | arbaħ alkaru:sa wa ‘lkaru:sa (Win the car and the bride) | al |

In example (1), the consonant ‘t’ is repeated in initial position. This is a very simple and clear example of alliteration.

In example (2), the ‘ʒ’ sound at the beginning of each word creates alliteration.

In example (3), the prefix ‘al’⁷ is repeated which creates alliteration in this advertisement.

TRANSLITERATION

Transliteration refers to “the conversion of one writing system into another. Each character of the source language is given an equivalent character in the target language”. Transliteration is frequently used in the advertising discourse in Algeria. It has been noticed in the current study that foreign words, especially those representing the name of the product, are transformed to the Arabic script and thus the spelling of foreign words is different. This device makes a positive result. It attracts reader’s attention and makes him think of the unusual spelling. Yet, the transliteration technique is excessively used and has become a growing phenomenon in the Arabic media discourse (Georges and Farghal, 2013: 12).

Moreover, transliteration is also a form of unpredictable spelling. The latter is a deviated spelling which makes words in advertisements unusual and memorable. Copywriters may sometimes make deliberate mistakes in words’ spelling in advertisements in order to catch the attention of their readers (Sternkopf 2005) and achieve memorability.

In the case of this study where the target text is strict to the Arabic language only, the transliteration concept is the same as arabicization which means, according to Fawwaz (1996), transferring into Arabic.

Although, studies dealing with Arabic transliteration in advertising are so rare, it is noticeable from the present investigation that this linguistic device is preferred by copywriters in producing the discourse of Arabic advertisements. Thus, a lot of examples of transliteration are found in the corpus of the present data. The list below shows a number of foreign words transliterated to Arabic⁸. And then, the table shows the frequency of transliteration occurrence in the collected data (the transliterated word is written in bold).

Table 4: Examples of transliteration

| The brand | The text as it appears in the ad and its translation to English | The translation to English | The foreign version |
|--|---|---|---------------------|
| (1) ‘Alliance’ assurances | باقات اليانس للتأمينات ... ba :qa :t ʔalijans littaʔmi :na :t | ‘alliance’ assurance package | ‘Alliance’ |
| (2) ‘Philips’ household appliances | فيليبس تتيح لكم الاستمتاع بالغداء المفضل fi:li:bs tuti:ħu lakum al ʔistimtæ:ʕ bil yidæ:ʔ almufaddal | ‘philips allows you to enjoy your preferable meal | ‘Philips’ |

| | | | |
|---------------------------------|---|---|--------------------|
| (3) 'Andrea dotti' hair dye | مصل الشعر أندريا دوتي maʃl əʃʃaʃr ʔandria du:ti | 'Andrea dotti' hair serum | 'Andrea dotti' |
| (4) 'La vache qui rit' cheese | لافاش كيري عاشت معنا لحظات في العاصمة la:va:f ki: ri: ʃa:fət mʃa:na: la ʔa:ʒa:t filʃa:ʃima | 'La vache qui rit' lived moments with us in the capital | 'La vache qui rit' |
| (6) 'Nounourse' brand | نونورس... nu:nu:rs... | 'nounours' | 'Nounours' |
| (7) 'facto' coffee capsules | فاكتو اسبريسو احسن ما اخترتو fa:ctu: ʔispri:su: , ʔaʃsan ma: ɣ tartu : | 'Facto espresso' the best of what you have chosen. | 'facto espresso' |
| (8) 'venus' shampoo | فينوس شامبو للمحترفين vi :nu :s ʃambu : lilmuʔtarifi:n | 'Venus' is a shampoo for professionnels. | 'Venus' |
| (9) 'Renault' car manufacturers | مجانا رونو تهدي لكم اول مراقبة لسيارتكم ru :nu : tuhdi: lakum awal mura :qaba lisaja:ratikum | Renault offers you the first control for your car | 'Renault' |
| (5) 'Milkospray' milk powder | ميلكوسبراي حليب مجفف... mi:lku:spræ:j ʔali:b muʒaffəf | 'Milkospray' dried milk ... | 'Milkospray' |

Let's analyse the first example of 'alliance' assurances.

باقات أليانس للتأمينات ... ba :qa :t ʔalijans littaʔmi :na :t ('alliance' assurances package)

In this advertising text extract, the foreign word 'alliance' is written using Arabic letters. However, the element of foreignness can still be felt. In other words, the brand name is not completely translated into its Arabic equivalent 'attaħa:luf'. Advertiser does it in purpose not to translate the word because in order to sell the products, the brand names are supposed to be known for consumers. Therefore, if the brand name is completely translated into its Arabic equivalent, there is a risk that the potential readers are not going to recognize the brand name, and thus they may refrain from buying such products because of the none mentioning of reliable source. In addition, a complete translation will also sound odd.

In the second example of 'la vache qui rit' cheese, the words 'vache' 'qui' and 'rit' in French undergo phonetic adaptations for the sound 'v' and 'R'⁹ which become 'f' and 'r' respectively. This adaptation is attributed to the fact that the sounds 'v' and 'r' do not exist in

the Arabic sound system. Torresi (2014: 21) advocates that sometimes brand names undergo “phonetic/graphic adaptation”. Their phonological and writing systems are adjusted from one language system to another in order to meet the target audience expectations (Eshreteh, 2016).

This is achieved by using the transliteration technique: whereby the foreign words are transferred from a

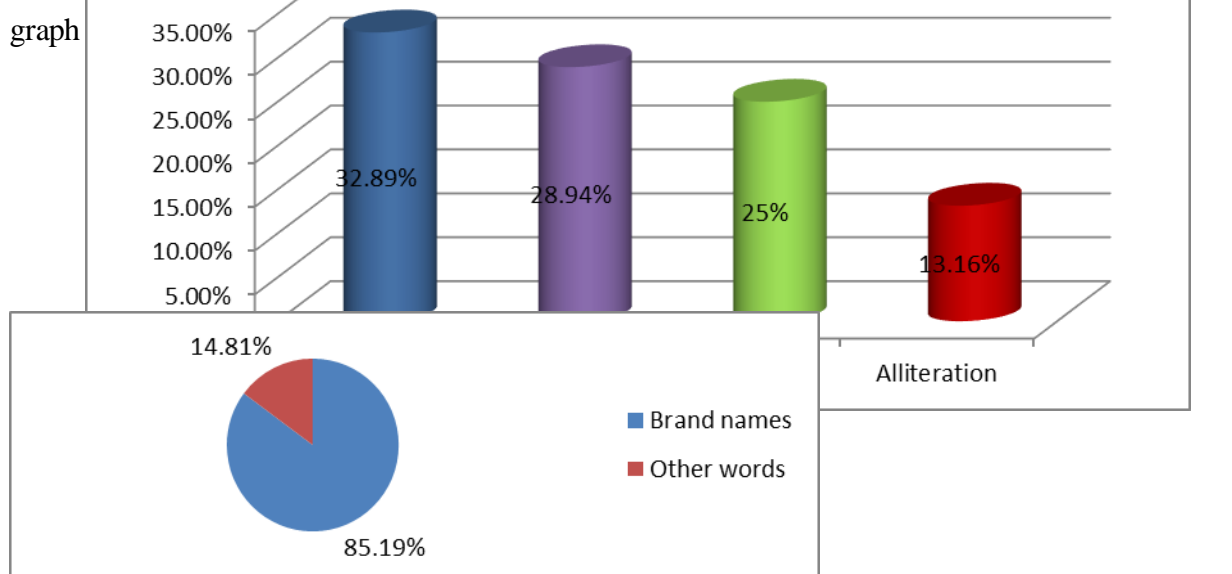


Figure 2: The transliteration strategy in advertisements

For the sake of making the advertising text more noticeable and memorable, copywriters play with the sounds within the utterance to create euphony. The table above and the graph in figure one show clearly that the highest occurrence of phonological features is that of transliteration (32,82%). Copywriters do frequently transliterate foreign words to Arabic script. In the pie chart, it is clear that the transliteration of brand names to Arabic is the prevalent. 85, 19% of the transliterated words are those of brand names where as only 14, 81% represent transliteration for other words in the text . This result can be attributed to the fact that most advertising brands are of foreign origins. Thus, the advertiser’s aim behind transliteration is probably to make the advertising text easy to understand, more familiar and closer to the Arabic audience.

As expected, rhyme, precisely ‘saʒʕ’ in Arabic, as explained above, is also widely used in the language of print advertisements to make advertising texts sound good to ears. Yet, in advertising, it’s very important that the text sounds pleasant and catchy to be more acceptable and effectively remembered by receivers.

Though not to the same degree of transliteration and rhyme, assonance is also interestingly used in the discourse of advertising. However, surprisingly, alliteration marks the lowest score (13%).

CONCLUSION

A close descriptive and statistical analysis of the phonological features appearing in the collected corpus of Arabic print advertising discourse in Algeria shows that the advertisers do not randomly use words in advertisements. Yet, to achieve their aim and persuade consumers, it has been seen that Algerian copywriter use a language which sounds good to ears; a language which makes the readers enticed by the advertised product or idea.

Therefore, it has been confirmed in this study that rhyme, transliteration, assonance and alliteration are phonological features meant to be attention-grabbing in advertisements. These sound strategies make a piece of writing memorable and provide the ad, particularly the slogan, with the strong beating rhythm. Furthermore, Dubovičienė and Skorupa (2014) consider these devices as having an emphatic effect on the meaning.

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¹ Rhyming and rhythming prose technique in Arabic is called 'sazf'

² 'Kum' is a plural possessive pronoun in Arabic . It is added to a noun as a suffix. Ryding (2005: 301) states that the possessive pronouns “agree with the gender and number of the possessor”. She adds “ A noun with a pronoun suffix is considered definite”

³ 'ajñ' is a dual noun marker in Arabic added to a noun as a suffix.

⁴ Paronomasia is “a punning play on words which uses similar or identical phonemes for its effect (an ‘assonant pun’)” (Cuddon, 2013:516) . A pun is “a witticism which relies for its effect on playing with the different meanings of a word, or bringing together two words with the same or similar form but different meanings” (Crystal, 1999, 279)

-Discussing paronomasia in Arabic, Hami AL-Hajjaj and Nazar Ali (2013:20) argue: “paronomasia occurs in a lexical domain involving two or more lexical items which are similar or almost similar in form. That is to say, these lexical items might have the same phonological form repeated twice or they may have a certain amount of phonological similarity”

⁵ In general, Arabic words do not start with a vowel.

⁶ Because it is preceded by the vowel ‘a’ of the conjunction ‘ wa’ (and) , the short vowel which accompanies the elidable weak hamza (hamzat al waṣl) is not pronounced. Noting that heren the elidable weak hamza is also dropped out because it is not ‘utterance-initial’ Ryding (2005:19).This technical process is called aphaeresis or aphasis, deletion of an initial vowel of a word and substituting for it the final vowel of the previous word. for more details on the glottal stop ‘?’ (hamza) consonant and its realisations in Arabic , see Ryding (2005:16-20)

⁷ In Arabic, ‘al’ is a definite article. It is a prefix, a particle which renders the noun or adjective to which it is added definite. ‘al’ does not inflect for gender, plurality, or grammatical case. Ryding (2005: 40) argues: “In general, the definite article is pronounced “al” but many speakers shorten the /a/ sound so that it sounds more like “el” (as in English “elbow”)”. Along this study it is transcribed ‘al’.

⁸ It will be noticed in the list that some foreign sounds are arabicised with some alternations at the phonological level. Thus, sounds such as ‘p’, ‘v’, ‘g’ which do not exist in the Arabic script are replaced by ‘b’, ‘f’, ‘q’ respectively. This technique of arabicisation is referred to as the loanword method (Thawabteh and Hreish, 2014: 34). For more details on the loanword method, see Al-Najjar (1989, 78–9).

⁹ [R] is a French Contoid which does not exist neither in English nor in Arabic. [r] is its representative in these languages.