

Exploring Poetic Effects in Ads: Advertising Literature as an Emergent Genre

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If we regard the sentence like Colourless green ideas sleep furiously as semantic anomaly (Chomsky 1957) or syntactic deviance solely from linguistic structural viewpoint, the discussions within the scope of semantics would fail to catch the panorama of linguistic facts and shall be unable to engage in multifaceted communication. This is not merely inappropriate for the explanatory power concerning form and function in language use, but epistemologically unconvincing for elaborating implicit meaning in discourse as well. Figures of speech in this regard play an indispensable role in human cognition and communication, and the ramifications of verbal arts are quite prominent in advertising and media discourse in their own right.

This paper thus aims to explore the audience's comprehension and interpretation concerning poeticity in media communication, being approached within Relevance Theory (Sperber & Wilson 1986/1995, Noveck & Sperber 2006), by looking into contemporary Chinese advertising language. The rhetorical strategies of syntactic parallelism and repetition of name and metaphor are creatively manipulated through literary stylistic patterns within the advertisements to attract the audience's attention, to initiate cognitive poetic effects and advertising literariness, to perform diverse communicative functions, and to convey the significant/dominant ideologies. They not merely position the readers as social elite and shape the enterprise as landmark of cultural empowerment, but trigger an emergent genre with communicative innovation within cultural industry and academic disciplines.

People often mean more than they say. Grammar/syntax on its own is typically insufficient for determining the full meaning of an utterance, the assumption that the discourse is coherent or 'makes sense' has an important role to play in determining meaning as well (cf. Asher & Lascarides 2005). Just as syntactic surface structures display complexity of underlying structures, we can well appreciate the implicit meaning enriched by various lexical items and the syntactic-semantic-pragmatic interplay in advertising discourse. The dialogic relations between form and function in advertising discourse reflect the social interaction and cognitive dynamics of communicator and audience, thus maintaining the dialectical relationship between sociocultural structures and social practice/discourse (Fairclough 1995).
