

The Perlocutionary Act of Advertising Slogans —from the Perspective of Conceptual Metaphor

Dongyan Li^{1, a} and Qingfeng Guo^{2, b}

¹College of Humanities and Social Sciences, Hei Longjiang Bayi Agricultural University, Daqing, Hei Longjiang, China, 163319;

² Colleges of Information Technology and Sciences, Hei Longjiang Bayi Agricultural University, Daqing, Hei Longjiang, China, 163319;

^aredsun_2002@163.com, ^bqqfqqg@126.com

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Abstract. Advertising slogans are short and impressive clauses constantly used by companies or enterprises to establish the good image or characteristics of their products with the aim of influencing or persuading a large audience of potential consumers to purchase the advertised products and /or services via mass media. The construal of advertising slogans inevitably involves cognitive efforts and it is feasible to analyze them by means of metaphor since it is regarded as a cognitive tool. Therefore, the article attempts to explore the perlocutionary act of advertising slogans by resorting to conceptual metaphor and the conclusion that conceptual metaphor facilitates the perlocutionary act of advertising slogans is arrived at.

Introduction

Since the biggest aim of advertising slogans is to advertise and promote commodities and/or services. The language in advertising slogans is so typical that it can transmit novel meaning, arouse resonance much easier than others, provide economy with better effects, leave the audience a much deeper impression and most importantly, achieve the effect of advertising/selling. Likewise, the perlocutionary act proposed by Austin [1] is of great help to interpret advertising slogans especially as effective. Advertising slogans are more likely to attain the perlocutionary effect on the potential target consumers compared with other types of genres with regard to the above-mentioned characteristics. The paper attempts to apply conceptual metaphor in terms of its cognitive function to analyze the perlocutionary act of advertising slogans.

Literature Review

In recent years, there have been a lot of researches in many different domains that cluster around conceptual metaphor [2]-[4]. In this perspective, “the essence of metaphor is understanding and experiencing one kind of thing in terms of another” [5]. Following the developments in cognitive linguistics, recent work attempts to seek much more evidence to further prove the cognitive function of conceptual metaphor and its extended application in practice [6]-[8]. My own work locates itself within the function of conceptual metaphor in advertising slogans and conceptual metaphor is consistent with that defined by Lakoff & Johnson [5] including widely used metaphoric expressions such as simile, pun, personification, parallelism, alliteration, repetition, etc..

According to the above-mentioned viewpoint [5], conceptual metaphor is defined as “a cross-domain mapping in the conceptual system”. At home and abroad research related to conceptual metaphor has been studied a lot and meanwhile studies into conceptual metaphor are so popular that some scholars apply it to analyze daily things often and view it more from a cultural perspective since Lakoff proposed the theory [2][4][9].

In particular, it’s closely linked with applied discourses to which advertising belongs. From a

cognitive and pragmatic point of view, the role of metaphors in English advertising can hardly be underestimated. On the one hand, in advertising the conceptualization of the advertised item or service is usually expressed by either verbal or non-verbal instantiations of conceptual metaphors that act as a “link between the domain of the advertised item and other domains” [10]. On the other hand, advertisers produce metaphorical utterances to invite target audience to process the utterance. In doing so, the audience is made to see resemblances between the promoted product and service in the metaphor. Moreover, the audience takes part in the responsibility for deriving further assumptions about the object, which it associates with the product service [11].

Although many researches have been conducted concerned respectively with conceptual metaphor and advertising, the study of conceptual metaphor in terms of its cognitive function is still not as prominent as to cover everything in life and that leaves a lot of gaps to be filled. One of the gaps among so many is that the compatibility of perlocutionary acts with conceptual metaphor. The perlocutionary act is defined as “the bringing about of effects on the audience by means of uttering the sentences, such effects being special to the circumstances of utterance” [1]. The perlocution is the act done by saying something.

To this day, it is seen that not many people study the perlocutionary act combined with conceptual metaphor though much has been done as for its nature, form, understanding and mechanism, etc. So the author presents the joint study of the two by instantiating advertising slogans.

Conceptual Metaphor as the Theoretical Basis

Since the nature of conceptual metaphor involves expressing and experiencing one thing in terms of another unexpected object, consumers exposed to a metaphoric headline in an ad will search and tap into their existing knowledge and perceptions of the conventions and context of the metaphor so as to comprehend the message [12].

Consequently, consumers may perceive brands with ads that consist of such metaphoric ad elements as more complex and perceptive. In contrast, no metaphors have literal representations that tend to be less interesting. Would the headline have a stronger influence on consumer response? Effective headlines may well catch a reader’s attention, drawing him or her into the ad and framing his or her interpretation of subsequent ad information. It has been acknowledged that metaphor is not merely a linguistic, rhetorical figure, but constitutes a fundamental part of people’s ordinary thought, reason, and imagination [13] [3] [14].

Conceptual metaphor involves understanding one domain of experience in terms of a very different and more concrete domain of experience. There is a tight mapping according to which entities in the domain of a source correspond systematically to entities in the domain of a target.

Analysis of the Perlocutinary Act of the Advertising Slogans via Conceptual Metaphor

Data Collection. The author takes advantage of cyber resources to gather English advertising slogans as many as possible and the slogans are carefully chosen on the basis of the following conditions: keep them fit for the characteristics of slogans such as conciseness and impressiveness; it is in the purely verbal form with the non-verbal ones excluded; it is filled with metaphoric expressions such as simile, parallelism, personification, etc.. Based on the principle, there are many clauses altogether to be available to analyze the perlocutionary act of advertising slogans. The metaphoric correlations between metaphoric expressions and basic conceptual metaphor are discussed and analyzed as follows one after the other.

Metaphoric Expressions. The metaphorical correlations arise out of our embodied functioning in the world. In each case, the source domain of the metaphor comes from the body’s systematic interaction with the world. A primitive is a metaphorical mapping for which there is an independent and direct experiential basis and independent linguistic evidence. A ‘compound’ or ‘complex’ metaphor, on the other hand, is a self-consistent metaphorical complex composed of more than one primitive. Complex metaphors are created by blending primary metaphors and thereby fitting together

small metaphorical pieces into larger metaphorical wholes. From the selected data, we can make out that different aspects in the source domain such as feat, performance, and efficiency, etc. are mapped onto the target domain to convincingly illustrate the top-quality of the advertised products, say, cars, wine and watch, etc..

For instance, slogans *To me, the past is black and white, but the future is always color...* (Xuannishi wine) and *Poetry in motion, dancing close to me.* (Toyota) manifest that such thought-provoking slogans can arouse the audience's desire to buy Xuannishi wine and Toyota. For those lovers of drinking it is really good to taste the sweet and poetic wine which is bound to provide an unforgettably great flavor. Similarly, those who love cars after reading or hearing the twentieth slogan fall to the wonderful land of poetry just like a dancing pretty girl coming nearer and nearer.

Within the successfully concise and impressive slogans, the advertisers (speakers) can easily accomplish the AIDA goal. Also, it's no difficulty to see that there are perlocutionary acts behind those slogans with the blend of several metaphorical expressions co-working appropriately. If we take into account the two participants in the advertising slogans (advertisers and audience), then we can achieve the perlocutionary effect upon the hearers (audience) by the speakers' (advertisers') utterance of the metaphoric slogans as given above.

What's more, "Metaphors based on simple physical concepts---up-down, in-out, object, substance, etc.---which are as basic as anything in our conceptual system and without which we could not function in the world---could not reason or communicate---are not in themselves very rich" [15].

The Correlation between Metaphoric Expression and Basic Conceptual Metaphor. The following shows that advertising slogans are included in those basic conceptual metaphors in fact on the basis of which some examples are listed as such.

Table 1 the correlation between metaphoric expression and basic conceptual metaphor

Metaphoric expression	Basic conceptual metaphor
Intel Inside.(Intel Pentium)	IN-OUT
Connecting People.(Nokia)	CONTACT
Let us make things better.(Philips)	SCALE
Communication unlimited.(Motorola)	LINK
Poetry in motion, dancing close to me. (Toyota)	NEAR-FAR
Life is a journey. Enjoy the ride. (NISSAN)	PATH
.....

According to the above table, we say that the act of persuasion has benefited a lot from the metaphoric language used in advertising slogans. Assuming that the person who does the persuading and the person who is persuaded have a successful cooperation, the perlocutionary effect must have been achieved by the hearer in the transaction. At the same time, the hearer must be regarded, according to [16], as an active participant in the transaction. A successful perlocutionary act means a change in the hearer's mental attitude. If the success of a perlocutionary act depends solely on the speaker, it may be only the hearer's automatic, unintentional, motor responses that constitute the consequential effect of the speaker's saying something. But this response may not be the one intended by the speaker; it is not the desired perlocutionary effect. That happens only by the hearer's adopting an active role in the transaction, and the net result will be a successful act of persuasion—a successful perlocutionary act. All of this necessitates the use of metaphoric language anchored in basic conceptual metaphor in advertising slogans.

But we have to limit the definition of perlocutionary effect not merely to the actual effect on the hearer, but primarily to the effect intended by the speaker. That is, we should relate to the perlocutionary goal only. In principle, it is applicable to realize the perlocutionary effect by means of making the best use of metaphor in advertising slogans.

Conclusion

Conceptual metaphor plays a role in constructing and construing advertising slogans. Through the analysis of the perlocutionary act in advertising slogans via conceptual metaphor, it is drawn that indeed conceptual metaphor as a way of thinking and a reflection of linguistic application can work so well that it is of great help to interpret the perlocutionary act of advertising slogans. Of course, the data of this paper is too limited and the further research on the combination of the perlocutionary act and the cognitive function of conceptual metaphor is still in much need.

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