

Vocabulary and Grammatical Deviations of Indian English in Advertising & Corporate Communication

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ABSTRACT:

English has grown its popularity across the world and is now considered a global language. As the leading language of international commerce and government, English has further consolidated its position by being the language of computing and internet. In India, there are more speakers of English (as a second language), than in any other country. The increasing role of English language in Indian society is deep rooted, together with Hindi it is used across the country. The structure of Indian English at various levels of usage remains an important dimension of linguistic investigation and must receive a great share of attention of linguists than ever. Some of the pioneering studies in this direction have not been followed up by extensive in-depth researches to identify the areas and levels of Indian English structures which appear deviant from or similar with those of British English. In view of this, a sharp analysis of the structure of Indian English, will seem a step in the right direction. The present research paper is an attempt to demonstrate how Indian English is reflecting its distinguishing features at the various levels like lexical, syntactic and even at discourse level. Earlier linguists were not recognizing these characteristics, but now-a-days these have become a part of Indian cultural identity and are being accepted gradually.

KEYWORDS: Corporate, Communication, Lexical, Syntactic, Advertisement, Grammar, Deviations, Linguistic, Copywriter.

GRAMMAR OF ADVERTISEMENTS:

Commercial language, in which creativity is of the utmost importance, gives the copywriter almost unlimited scope for violations of the rules and conventions of language. Just as the poet takes liberties with the language in order to enrich his expression, the copywriter widens and deepens the potentialities of the language in several ways. The task of modern creativity in commercials is to find fresh, interest-provoking ways of conveying meaningful information realistically and on the receiver's own terms. The limitation imposed by the subject matter are, of course, very great and inescapable but the ingenious copywriter surmounts the likelihood of creating monotonous copies with the creative use of his tool, i.e., by employing linguistic unorthodoxies which not only expand his linguistic possibilities almost infinitely, but help achieve the first aim of commercial language to catch the attention of the receiver. The goal of an advertisement is, to some extent, achieved if the reader is able to identify himself or his urges with the advertisement of a product. An advertisement has not only to inform favourably but it has also to incite curiosity, build conviction, create understanding, and develop the urge to investigate for oneself. And all this, in the words of A. Dhillon can only be done by the "poeticizing of consumer goods". If advertisement is not merely to be read, but absorbed by the reader, it has to startle and engage him and, to this end, the copywriter employs linguistic deviations for foregrounding effects. Levin remarks that "one way to explain the foregrounding effect produced by syntactic and semantic deviation is to say that the implicit recourse to the grammar of the language that one normally has for understanding a text does not, in the case of deviant sequences, immediately and automatically provide an interpretation; one is thus thrown back on the text".

GRAMMATICAL DEVIATION:

“Grammatical deviance”, says Enkvist, “involves tinkering with the normal system of rules. This tinkering can be explained in terms of rule omission or suspension, rule change, or rule addition”. Modern advertising makes very liberal use of disjunctive grammar, in which minor and non-finite clauses are independent. Sentences very often do not have finite predicators, and usually consist of only nominal or adverbial groups, which may consist of only one word. Geoffrey Leech says: “Disjunctive language is primarily associated with headlines, subheads and signature”. However, the body copy of almost all advertisements today employs disjunctive grammar in preference to the discursive grammar of connected discourse. A headline has to catch the attention of the casual reader in a few words and is therefore the part of the advertisement most apt for the use of disjunctive language.

LEXICAL VIOLATION:

Lexical deviations constitute one of the richest sources for the creative copywriter. He can have recourse to functional conversion or he can introduce neologisms and nonce formations, or else he can make use of anomalous lexical collocation to satisfy his need to express himself imaginatively.

SEMANTIC DEVIATION:

ILLOGICALITY:

Semantic deviations, to some extent, help the copywriter to draw the attention of the reader to his product. Often the very illogicality of the advertising message makes it remarkable, because here “a piece of language is at odds with the immediate situation in which it occurs”, says Geoffrey Leech. He dilates later that “each use of language has what we may call Implications of Context; i.e. it conveys information about the kind of situation in which it would occur”.

AMBIGUITIES IN ADVERTISING LANGUAGE:

The violation of language classified under the term Ambiguity spans all the three levels dealt with here...phonetic, linguistic and semantic. Kelly–Holmes describes ambiguity as “any verbal nuance, however slight, which gives room for alternative reactions to the same piece of language”. Homonymy, in which two different formal items have the same spoken or written realization, and Polysemy, multiple meaning, are the most common kinds of ambiguities found in advertising, where as in poetry, ambiguity adds to the linguistic repertoire of the composer. Geoffrey Leech says: “In informative or reasoned discourse, ambiguity is usually considered a fault to be eliminated. In poetry on the contrary, it is usually treated as a means of enriching the communicative resources of the language, by superimposition or juxtaposition of alternative interpretations”. Linguistic deviations can be explained by reference to scales of institutional delicacy. “A linguistic feature”, says Leech, “will be highly deviant if it is unique to a low-generality variety of English; if it is common to a number of low-generality varieties, or unique to a variety of higher generality, it is to that extent less deviant. The least deviant or ‘most normal’ feature of all will be that which is common to all varieties of English.”⁸ Transformational grammar which explains the concept of grammaticality, can also explain deviance by recognizing the depth of the generative process at which a construction deviates from normal. However, the answer to the question, what is ‘grammatical’ or acceptable?’ is becoming more and more doubtful. The problem is intensified by the fact that very often what is ungrammatical may be acceptable. “Even if ‘correct’ were deemed in the social situation to be more or less equivalent to ‘acceptable’ (in the same sense as ‘correct’ dress and ‘correct’ table manners) from a purely linguistic angle, the two notions need to be dissociated.”⁹ This, in fact, is the purpose behind the assessment of the attitudes of a number of native speakers to certain disputed English usages. Again “the question arises whether the descriptive norm should be based on informant reaction (the so-called “intuition” of the native speaker) or on distribution-frequency measures, or on criteria related to simplicity or accessibility of the description.”⁹ There seems to be a great

need for a grammar which can account for and thus predict all deviation within a context. Deviant structures can be systematized either by simply listing them or as Thorne suggests by “stating the rules which would actually generate those structures”.¹⁰

Such a grammar however loses all definable contact with ‘normal’ or ‘non-deviant’ grammar. Therefore till there is a grammar which can explain deviation and is at the same time related to normal grammar, deviation will belong to a subsystem rather to any accepted system.

LOAN WORDS:

Contemporary advertising is predominantly expressive, informative and aesthetic in nature. The language of advertisement, therefore fully depend on choices from wide range of style repertoires. It also borrows occasionally from other languages.

The occurrence of loan lexical item in the language generally signals some or all of the following possibilities.

- a. The Language (native/non native) has proved to be ineffective to the measure it falls to convey the bits of message form a culture alien to it, and hence takes recourse to loan lexical terms.
- b. The language suffers from existing limitations to meet the surging demands of specific communication in field concerned.
- c. The performance of the individual linguistic repertoire is not viable enough to help exploit the available resources of language.

The occurrences of lexical item from Indian newspaper English is also reflective of the pervasive constraints of socio-culture factors. The phenomenon is generally related to situational requirements of communication rather than registral variation of text, e.g.

1. Srivastava Gautam Smartha
2. Brahmin Smartha Non Bharadwaj groom.
3. Keralite girl.
4. Delhite girl.
5. Himachali girl.
6. Gujrati girl.
2. Punjabi Brahmin girl.
3. Sunni Muslim boy
4. Kanyakubja girl.
5. Kshtriya groom.

The lexical items used in the examples given above are so constrained by the Indian socio-cultural factors that any attempt to interpret or paraphrase them would not be easy. The lexical items refer to various sub categories of the Indian society structured on the basis of caste, sect, region etc.

The regional differences also serve to sub-categorize the people having the same placement in the caste/religion-structured Indian society. The lexical item *Punjabi Brahmin*, for instance, would sharply differ in meaning from *Brahmin Maharashtrian* and so on. As for other instances, *Gujarati girl* means ‘a girl from Gujarat’ and *Himchali girl* refers to ‘a girl from Himachal Pradesh. Thus the frequency of native lexical items is high in matrimonial advertisements. The Indian terms in matrimonial like *Kundali* and *Gori* are also *noticeable*. *Kundali* refers to horoscope and *Gori* means ‘a girl of fair colour’.

The use of Hindi terms in English advertising not only touches upon a highly creative process but also raises significant linguistic/stylistic issues. The influence of Hindi can easily be traced in the area of lexis where necessary experiments has been carried out. Lexis, being an open system, freely admits Hindi lexemes in English advertisements.

The use of native words in matrimonial advertisements may be due to eagerness to assert Indian consciousness or an Indian attitude or emotional response to a situation, which by its very nature is typically Indian. This may also be helpful in catching the attention of the reader

Use of the hybrid-lexical set is also a remarkable feature of matrimonial advertisements. Hybrid-Lexical sets are generally composed of elements from two or more different languages. In matrimonial advertising these hybrid-lexical sets are generally composed of Hindi/Urdu and English word as we see in the following **examples:**

Unit-1+Unit-2 = Hybrid expression

(i) Non + Manglik = Non Manglik

(ii) Khandani + background = Khandani background

These hybrid lexical sets contribute quite remarkably in making the advertisement catchy. In case of these lexical sets, it is found find that a large number of hybrid lexical sets belong to the nominal group, with two or more elements.

The modern advertiser writer wishes to give an advertisement idea, shape, substance, body, movements and gestures. In order to achieve the objectives of “modernization” and “Indianization”, he translates his advertising ideas into attractive words. Language thus becomes a vehicle of gestures in a special sense, a mode of expressing advertising ideas. Grammarians may find fault with the apparently liberal use of these words and figures of speech in matrimonial advertisements, but it does help in communicating the message effectively.

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