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The Use of Lexical Strategies in the Discourse of Malaysian Advertisements

Nur Syauqina Baharum[1], Hazlina Abdul Halim[2],
Roslina Mamat[3] & Hamisah Zaharah Hasan[4]
qinabaharum@gmail.com[1], hazlina_ah@upm.edu.my[2],
linamm@upm.edu.my[3], hamisah@upm.edu.my[4]

Faculty of Modern Languages and Communication,
Universiti Putra Malaysia

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Abstract

Today, advertising is the most popular money making industry and companies would actively participate to ensure that their products or services get sold. Due to the competition in advertisements among companies, it is important that they produce effective advertisements. One of the common strategy used by advertisers are the use of lexical strategy. Thus, this study was conducted to determine the significance on the use of lexical strategies in the discourse of Malaysian advertisements and to determine the influences of lexical strategy on the advertising of beauty products in the discourse of Malaysian advertisements. The respondents for this study were students from various faculties at Universiti Putra Malaysia (UPM) who represented different background and culture. A total of 100 questionnaires were distributed by using an online tool of GoogleForm. The questionnaire had adopted the Leech's theory on lexical strategies that was introduced in 1966 which were divided into the study of verb phrase, noun phrase, adjective compound, morphology, weasel words and neologism. The questionnaire was made up of three different section in relation to the objectives. The application of Leech (1966) is also used to make the questions for respondents. The results for this study shows that the respondents agreed with the significant use of lexical strategy in Malaysian advertisements and had positively agreed to the fact that lexical strategy influenced Malaysian beauty standard. Such study is significant to contribute to future research and also to advertisers.

Keywords: lexical strategies, advertisement, advertising language, discourse, beauty and health

Penggunaan Strategi Leksikal dalam Wacana Iklan Malaysia

Abstrak

Pada masa kini, bidang pengiklanan merupakan antara industri yang sedang pesat membangun. Hal ini menarik pelbagai syarikat untuk terlibat secara aktif agar penjualan produk atau servis mereka melambung. Penghasilan iklan yang efektif adalah penting untuk memastikan sesebuah syarikat mampu bersaing seiring dengan peningkatan penggunaan iklan oleh syarikat lain. Seiring dengan itu, strategi leksikal ialah antara kaedah yang sering dipraktikkan oleh kebanyakan syarikat pengiklanan di Malaysia. Justeru, kajian ini dijalankan untuk mengenal pasti kepentingan penggunaan strategi leksikal, serta mengenal pasti pengaruh penggunaan strategi leksikal dalam wacana iklan kecantikan di Malaysia. Responden kajian terdiri daripada pelajar Universiti Putra Malaysia (UPM) dengan latar belakang serta budaya berbeza dari pelbagai fakulti. Di samping itu, hasil kajian juga dianalisis daripada 100 borang soal selidik yang diolah menggunakan 'GoogleForm'. Soal selidik ini

dirangka berdasarkan teori strategi leksikal Leech (1966) yang membahagikan leksikal kepada frasa kata kerja, frasa kata benda, kata sifat kompaun, morfologi, kata weasel dan neologism atau kata daripada ungkapan baharu. Oleh yang demikian, soal selidik yang digunakan telah dipecahkan kepada tiga bahagian bersesuaian dengan Teori Leech (1966). Dapatan kajian menunjukkan responden bersetuju bahawa strategi leksikal merupakan komponen penting dalam wacana iklan di Malaysia. Responden juga bersetuju bahawa penggunaan strategi leksikal mempengaruhi tahap kriteria kecantikan di Malaysia. Adalah diharapkan kajian ini dapat memberi manfaat kepada industri pengiklanan tempatan serta membuka jalan untuk penyelidikan lain pada masa akan datang.

Kata Kunci : Strategi leksikal, Iklan, Bahasa pengiklanan, Wacana, Kecantikan dan kesihatan
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1. Introduction

Advertisement and society are inseparable especially in today's society. The appearance of advertisement is often a surprise and can happen everywhere and at any time. The emergence of advertisements has also dated way back, as far as the act of selling and buying can be found. In this era, however, the advertising game has changed tremendously to fit in better with the society as well as to move forward in a creative manner. Traditional advertising medium such as fuzzy radio, black and white screened television and newspaper has long gone and has been replaced by a new way of advertisement broadcasting. The emergence of The Internet or The World Wide Web has changed the advertising industry ever since. There is now unlimited access for advertisers to showcases their advertisements. Not only that, advertisers can also reach to bigger audiences. The development of the Internet today has definitely ease the way and as mentioned by Katz (2003 : 92), "Internet penetration rose faster than any other medium (or appliance), reaching the critical mass of 50 million users in 5 short years".

The Internet has also plays a huge role in distributing advertisements through variety languages, countries and communities through the use of social media such as the Facebook and Instagram, and therefore advertisers need to study and comprehend the social demand of the society for advertisements to really play out its role in influencing the society. In catching the audience's eye and interest towards a certain advertisement, many features need to be included.

Just like the other features of advertisements, the language of use has also play an important role in appealing to the audience and to increase recall opportunity. Additionally, the word play creates claims and promises that can attract the reader or listener and also change and influence the behaviour and attitude either to purchase the product or otherwise. Language is a communication channel to an advertisements and therefore as mentioned by Kotler (2007), advertisements should have a persuasive effect on the audiences. Thus, it is essential to view advertising as a discourse which combines text and context, blending both in a way that will be perceived as meaningful and cohesive by the audience.

Although the use of advertisements in daily life may fulfil and create consumer's demands and needs, the impact of advertisements can be seen as either positive or negative outcome. Advertisements has shaped the way we think not only towards a brand, product or service, but also lifestyle. Many advertisements also utilise celebrity's endorsement to showcases a so-called 'dream lifestyle'. Thus, these kinds of advertisements do not solely advertise its product or service, but rather the brand. This has helped advertisers to win millions of hearts every time a new product launches, not taking account of what the product is. Similarly, advertisements do not only shape our view and perception towards a certain brand, product or service, but rather how we view and deemed for a lavish lifestyle by attaining any product or service by the brand. However, its impact can differ on every person and can affect an individual in a secret and slick way in a way that cannot be seen virtually.

2. Literature Review

According to Kandarpa & Sitanath (2017), advertisements comes from the Latin word 'advertere' which brings attention towards a specific thing. In addition, advertising can also applicate different

meaning in which it is a form of public announcement but in the age today, advertisements are not only used for the sole of public announcement, but integrates many aspects such as persuading, reminding buyers, creating demand, build brand preference and brand loyalty in order to rise advertisers higher in comparison of other competitors. Moreover, an advertisement is also much more than a strategic cognitive process of problem-solving as it also forms series of discipline and creativity process in its creation (Hariraksapitak, 2016). He further describes advertisement as the result of 'creative idea' as it integrates visual elements, artistic style, motion, moods, concepts and ideas to appeals to their audience.

According to Suggett (2018), in today's technological advancement world, society has found the importance of text-based advertisements in selling brand, product or services as the use of words in advertisements sell. Suggett (2018) also indicates that the use of proper and right words helps sell goods and services, always have and always will.

As the use of advertising became widely popular, the use of vocabulary is important in tying the words to a certain meaning because it have a certain power to appeal to consumer for it to be highly favourable (Häkkinen, 2016). In addition, advertisers have also concentrate on the importance of advertising language as it has integrated as a part of the society in accordance to the world's growth (Lopez, 2015). Furthermore, Leech (1966) has also described advertising language as 'loaded language' because of its power in influencing the behaviour and attitude of the public.

Leech (1966) also explained that advertising language usually emits the use of complicated grammar as they are not favoured by the society. Thus, it is also vital for advertisers to understand the function of persuasive text in appealing to the audience. Primarily, they must raise the curiosity of readers, increase pleasure in reading and listening, integrate the element of memorability among audience and also, provoke the audience to take the next action. The language of advertisements also tends to be conversational instead of formal as it creates a two-way communication between advertisers and society.

Leech (1966) clarifies the function of persuasive advertising language by analysing them using lexical strategy. Lexical strategy focuses on the word formation in a phrase or sentences. The study of verb phrase, noun phrase, adjective compound, morphology, weasel words and neologism are the sub-branch of lexical strategy. Firstly, verb phrase is highly prominent in the advertising industry as it indicates an action, event or state while presenting the presence of verb in phrases or sentences (Anamgba,2017). It is favoured as the use of verb can enhance and interpret meaning of a phrase or sentence differently according to what the advertisers proposed to their audience. Verb is also a part of stylistic equivalence (Sawant, 2012) and can be divided into finite and non-finite verb phrase (Anamgba, 2017). Finite verb illustrates the use of tense contrast of a person and number in accordance to the subject and object in either the first or only word in the phrase or sentence meanwhile the rest of the words in a phrase represents non-finite verbs. Although verb phrase is often used in advertisements, verb can also be found in a single word (Fialová, 2017).

On the other hand, noun refers to living things, objects, action, places, concept or abstract quality (Fialová, 2017). Noun can also represent nouns, determiners, pronouns and other usual constituents for a noun phrase to be build. In addition, noun phrase typically contains complex morphological order (Huadhom & Trakulkasemsuk, 2017). In advertising language, however, a rule for advertisers to follow is to always use a clear and simple words to ease audience's comprehension. Then, the use of adjective compound is the most recurrent to be seen in advertisements. This happens as adjective provide a clear sense to the modification of noun or pronoun. The use of adjectives can also be divided into three comparing adjectives which are positive, comparative and superlative adjectives. Also, the use of comparing adjectives is used in comparing the brand, product or service to appeal to the audiences.

Morphology, on the other side, is the study of morphemes and word formation. According to Rojo (2015), morphology focuses its study on the internal structure of word formation by studying its

smallest unit, which is the morphemes. Moreover, as claimed by Leech (1966), morphology can either be formed as suffixes or prefixes. Although the present of the root attachment to words is not highly raved in advertisements as it can be considered as a more complex form of word usage.

Weasel words, additionally is a form of word modifier that contradicts with the meaning of the word, phrase of clause that follows (Nordquist, 2017). According to Spacey (2018), weasel words are used by advertisers to give the impression that a brand, product or service is meaningful and authoritative, while all it is are full claims and promises with no place to go. The use of weasel words can also be associated with the intention of a misleading or misinform advertisements by advertisers. Weasel words can also be called as faux words in describing its function in the use of advertising language.

Last but not least, a neologism is expressed as a newly-coined words or expression (Nordquist, 2017), for example, the word "404" that does not only represent a series of numbers but also refers to someone who is clueless (Tomiak, 2016). This shows the dynamic flexibility of language to change over time to fit the contemporary society. It appears due to the development of social surrounding, advancement of culture and rise in science and medical treatments that usually contribute to a specific era (Kalinowska, 2016). There are plenty of factors that can determine if the word created by neologism can stay around for a long time or not in a language.

Research Objectives

1. To determine the significance of lexical strategies in the discourse of Malaysia advertisements
2. To determine the influences of lexical strategies on the advertising of beauty product in the discourse of Malaysia advertisements.

3. Methodology

A quantitative approach with questionnaires as instrument for data collection was utilised for the study. This research employs advertisements from variety of sources such as the magazines, newspapers, books, television, radio and the World Wide Web. The advertisements used in this study were selected among the beauty and health products and were limited to only brands that were sold in Malaysia. The advertisements selected must also consists of at least five words to be further examined and clarified in this research. The advertisements selected were from two different languages which were Malay and English. Therefore, the respondents must be familiar with both languages and able to comprehend the two languages for them to be a suitable candidate to take the questionnaire.

There were 100 Malaysian respondents who have participated in this study to investigate the responses from a diversity of students who were exposed in different family experiences and education. The respondents were chosen in a random manner in accordance to their availability and willingness to fully participate in this study. In addition, this research also utilised various faculties across Universiti Putra Malaysia (UPM), Serdang as its research location because of its diversity in student's background. The respondents vary from the ages of 20 to 30.

The questionnaires were a major part of this study as it helped to identify the use of the lexical strategies in Malaysian advertisements as well as to investigate the effectiveness of lexical strategies in Malaysian advertisements. The questionnaire constructed for this study uses the Google Form as a tool for data collection as it can easily be distributed to students. Moreover, students can easily access and fill-in the questionnaire anywhere and in their own free time.

The questionnaires were divided into four different parts consisting of the Demographic section and three parts A, B and C to answer the objectives of this research. The demographic section gathered the respondents' details such as their gender, age, shopping preferences and shopping frequency. Part A, on the other hand, consists of two advertisements for respondents to quickly observe and comprehend, accompanied with 10 questions relating to the use of lexical strategies in the exemplified

advertisements. A quick note was also added for respondents to understand what is lexical strategies and what lies under it.

Part B of the questionnaire integrate another 10 questions on the influences of lexical strategies on Malaysian beauty standard in Malaysian advertisements. While Part C was constructed as open-ended questions to ask on the insight and awareness of each respondents if the use of lexical strategies can appeal, interest and influence them to buy the product or brand and why do they think advertisers use them in advertisements. This section consists of only five questions. The construction of the questionnaire has applicate the theory of Leech (1966) in which only lexical strategies are focused on. The lexical strategies used in this particular research was also part of the use of verb phrases, noun phrases, adjective compound, morphology, weasel words and neologism in its advertising language.

The five-point likert scale is used as a tool ranging from Strongly Disagree(1) to Strongly Agree(5) to measure the perceptions of the respondents towards lexical strategy in the advertisements chosen. Before proceeding to formulate the questionnaire, identification of proper advertisements was carried out to find the right and relatable materials for this research. This includes the process of skimming through and browsing through various media such as magazines and the Internet to find advertisements that fit through the criteria set. After an abundance amount of applicable advertisements found, the selection process begins by giving it a thorough evaluation and identification of which advertisements can be used. The next process included the creation of the questionnaire based on the theory of Leech (1966). Then, the questionnaire was distributed to the selective respondents through Google Form.

Finally, a discussion on the use of lexical strategy and how it influences Malaysian beauty standard among Malaysians is conducted. For the analysis of the research, the mean, standard deviation and percentage of each of the answers in relation to the question from Part A and Part B uses Oxford's (1990) related classification. This was used to understand the mean scores on instruments used in response with a scale from 1 to 5. For the average scores of 3.5 to 5.0 ($3.5 \geq M \geq 5$) refers to high means, 2.5 to 3.4 ($2.5 \geq M \geq 2.4$) refers to medium means and 1.0 to 2.4 ($1.0 \geq M \geq 2.4$) represents low means.

4. Findings and discussion

This section will discuss the findings on the use of lexical strategy and its influences on Malaysian beauty standard in Malaysia advertisements. Descriptive analysis using percentage, mean and standard deviation were used to discuss the findings.

Table 1: Distribution of percentage(%) of respondents' demographic variables.

(n = 100)		No. of Respondents	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	32	32
	Female	68	68
Age	20 -25 years old	68	68
	26 – 30 years old	32	32
Shopping preferences for beauty and healthcare products	Online Shopping	22	22
	Store and Outlet Shopping	78	78
Shopping frequency for beauty and health products	Once per week	4	4
	Once every two weeks	20	20
	Once per month	54	54
	Others	22	22

Table 1 shows the distributions of the percentage of the respondent's demographic. The table shows 68% of the respondents were female and only 32% were male. In addition, the age range from 20 – 25 year's old showed a higher percentage at 68% compared to the age range of 26 0 39 year's old which shows a total percentage of 32%. The study also showed their higher preferences toward the store and outlet shopping with 78% while only 22% of the respondents favoured online shopping. As for the shopping frequency for beauty and healthcare products, the findings showed that most of the respondents buy beauty and healthcare products only once per month, followed by others (22%), once every two weeks (20%) and lastly, only once per week at 4%.

In addition, Table 2 below shows the findings of the first objective set for the research in determining the significance on the use of lexical strategies in the discourse of Malaysia advertisements. There were ten statements used to measure the variables.

Table 2: The distribution of mean and standard deviation on the response of the use of lexical strategies in Malaysian advertisements.

Statements	Mean	Standard Deviation
The use of lexical strategies in the advertisement is clear.	4.04	0.60
The use of lexical strategies in the advertisement describes the product's effectiveness.	3.80	0.86
The use of lexical strategies in the advertisement describes how the product works.	3.46	1.00
The use of lexical strategies in the advertisement help the comprehension of the product.	4.10	0.74
The use of lexical strategies in the advertisement help convey the message intended.	4.08	0.70
The use of lexical strategy in the advertisement help enhance the message deliverance.	4.20	0.73
The use of lexical strategies in the advertisement influences brand choice.	4.00	1.81
The use of lexical strategies in the advertisement influences customer's purchasing power.	3.88	0.94
The use of lexical strategies in the advertisement describes gender-inclusive words.	3.46	1.13
The use of lexical strategies in the advertisement is targeted on a specific audience.	3.72	1.20

The results from Table 2 shows the highest mean score (4.20) was for the statement 'the use of lexical strategies in the advertisements help enhanced the message deliverance'. This was followed by the statement 'the use of lexical strategies in the advertisement help the comprehension of the product' with mean score (4.10). The third highest mean score (4.08) came from the statement 'the use of lexical strategies in the advertisement help convey the message deliverance'. The findings showed the lowest mean score (3.46) from two statements 'the use of lexical strategies in the advertisements describes how the product works' and 'the use of lexical strategies in the advertisement describes gender-inclusive words'. In short, it can be deduced that the use of lexical strategies in advertisements help enhance the appearance of the advertisements towards consumer.

Table 3 shows the indication of mean and standard deviation of respondents' responses towards determining the influences of lexical strategy on the advertising of beauty product in the discourse of Malaysian advertisements. There were nine statements used to measure the variables. The finding shows the highest mean score (4.14) on the statement 'the use of lexical strategies in the advertisements depicts a clear message on beauty standard'. With a mean score (4.08), the statement 'the use of lexical strategies in the advertisements create the standard of beauty' came second highest. This was followed by the statement 'the use of lexical strategies in advertisements influence

consumers in describing what beauty is' with mean score (4.06). The finding also shows the lowest mean score (3.42) from the statement 'the use of lexical strategies in advertisements represent a tendency to only certain skin colour'. In conclusion, it can be said that majority of the respondents proclaims an agreeable view towards the use lexical strategies to shape and influence consumer's perception on beauty in advertising language among Malaysian advertisements.

Table 3: The distribution of mean and standard deviation of the responses on the influences of lexical strategies in Malaysia advertisements on Malaysia beauty standard.

Statements	Mean	Standard Deviation
The use of lexical strategies in the advertisements depicts a clear message on beauty standard.	4.14	0.78
The use of lexical strategies in the advertisements shows attainable beauty.	3.82	0.91
The use of lexical strategies in the advertisements create the standard of beauty.	4.08	0.96
The use of lexical strategies in the advertisements shows unrealistic ideas of how beauty should look like.	3.86	0.90
The use of lexical strategies in the advertisements shapes how we perceive beauty.	3.94	0.93
The use of lexical strategies in the advertisements represent a tendency to only certain skin colour.	3.42	1.33
The use of lexical strategies in the advertisements tend to lean towards certain standard of facial features.	3.62	1.53
The use of lexical strategies in the advertisements influence consumers in describing what beauty is.	4.06	0.89
The use of lexical strategies in the advertisements appeals to all races.	3.54	1.23
The use of lexical strategies in the advertisements appeals to local and international consumers.	3.68	1.03

For the last section of the questionnaire, five open-ended questions were asked to further support this research. The questions were measured to further indicate their response and interest in the advertisements. The first question was on whether lexical strategies have the influence on consumer's purchasing power. The data showed that there were mixed reactions among the respondents and most of the responses were positive as quoted below:

"Yes, because we tend to believe more when persuasive language is used"
"Yes, in order to convince consumer how good the product is"
"Yes because it makes me believe that my skin will be better after using it"

Although the feedback were mostly positives, the number of neutral feedbacks could not be ignored. Some of the responses are as quoted:

"It depends, if the adjectives used complement the reality of the product, then I might buy it"
"Yes and No. The advertisement does attract me to buy but ingredients and price made my final decision whether to purchase or not"

The second question on the use of lexical strategies in bringing the standard of the product to consumer received mostly positive feedbacks from consumers. This shows that lexical strategies were perceived to play a major role on the standard on the advertised products. The examples for positive answers can be seen as follows:

"Yes because adjectives do help in selling and better understanding of what the product will help on us"
"Yes because it gives you an overview about the product"
"Yes because adjective acts as testimony to consumers"

Unlike the first two questions, the feedback for the third question on whether the use of lexical strategies truly portray the meaning intended were mostly negative, as seen below:

"No because the results achieved from the product does not imply the same adjectives used in advertisements"
"No, it is used just for marketing purposes"
"No, it is more of a stylistic thing"

For the next question on why advertisers employed specific lexical strategies to advertise their product, the responses were mostly oriented positively towards the boost of product marketability. The examples for respondent's answers can be seen as follows:

"To let people know about the features of a product"
"To increase memorability"
"To target specific target audience"
"To enhance its marketability of the product"

Finally, for the last question on whether the use of lexical strategies will improve the effectiveness of product sales, the feedbacks were mostly positive.

"Yes, to make sure customer believe in the product that they are going to invest"
"Yes, to give a strong appearance of the product in convincing consumers"
"Yes because people are often and easily influenced by these promising words"

From the findings, it can be concluded that most of the respondents agree that the use of lexical strategy in Malaysian advertisements can appeal to the product as well as influences Malaysian beauty standard. This was shown by the high mean score obtained from most of the statements answered by the respondents. The study supports Suggett's (2008) findings which mentioned that consumers' have the capability to be influenced by what was found in the magazine called a perfect body. Wejher (2015) also stated the dependency of advertisements in using linguistic manners as a way to send message effectively to consumer. The results of this study is also similar to Ray's (2015), which confirmed the major role of advertising is to influence consumers' buying decisions. Ray (2015) also added that advertisers takes the opportunities to create beauty product in occupying of vulnerability of the society and acts as a solution.

5. Conclusion

From this study, it can be concluded that the majority of the respondents agreed that lexical strategies played a significant role in Malaysian advertisements. In addition, respondents also viewed that lexical strategies in advertisements were noticeable and viewed as important in influencing consumers and audiences. Moreover, the majority of respondents also agreed that lexical strategies indeed have the influences on Malaysian beauty standard. Therefore, it is hoped that this study would be beneficial to help comprehending the role of lexical strategies in advertising language. It is also hoped that advertisers will benefit from this study and would fully understand grasp the demand of their respected

audiences. Similarly, consumers can also learn the features of advertising and how it works in the industry to prepare themselves in their decision making. Lastly, it is hoped that the future study will be focused on the study of other stylistic strategies in the language of advertising industry.

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Author's Biodata

Nur Syauqina Baharum was born in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia in 1995. In 2018, she received a Bachelor's Degree in Foreign Language (French) from Universiti Putra Malaysia. She is currently pursuing Master of Arts in Discourse Studies under the Faculty of Modern Languages and Communication at Universiti Putra Malaysia.