

Word Play in Advertising: A Linguistic Analysis

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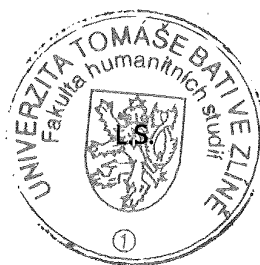
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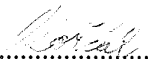
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ABSTRAKT

Cílem této bakalářské práce je seznámit čtenáře se základními aspekty slovních hříček a především jejich použití pro reklamní účely. Práce je rozdělena na teoretickou část, zabývající se specifiky anglického jazyka, které umožňují vznik slovních hříček, dále teoretickými aspekty humoru a také základním rozdělením hříček z jazykového a reklamního úhlu pohledu. Analýza samotná obsahuje několik vybraných slogan, které jsou zkoumány pro účely potvrzení či vyvrácení hypotézy.

Klíčová slova: slovní hříčky, humor, reklama, anglický jazyk, slogan

ABSTRACT

The aim of this bachelor thesis is to introduce the reader with basic aspects of wordplay, especially in the field of advertisement. This work is divided into theoretical part, examining specific features of English with focus on its linguistic properties of creating of puns, then theoretical aspects of humor and basic division of puns from the linguistic and advertising point of view. The linguistic analysis contains several suitable slogans that are examined with respect to the proving or disproving the hypothesis.

Keywords: wordplay, puns, humor, advertisement, English, slogan

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INTRODUCTION

People like to laugh. Humor makes them feel positive and in good mood. There are uncountable ways how to make somebody laugh – from the lowest forms of wit up to complex and intellectually more challenging jokes. One of the linguistic means of creating humor is using play-on-word, or simply wordplay.

Wordplay is an inseparable part of many languages. It is based on specific properties of language such as similarity of sounds of words or the number of their different meanings. However, puns are considered to be quite difficult to decipher by non-native users of language. And even native speakers need to have a certain social, cultural and linguistic knowledge to be able to understand humor used in word play.

Over time, wordplay has become a popular tool of advertisement. The math is simple: Smiling or laughing costumer = happy costumer = costumer in the mood of spending money. Therefore puns with their simple yet effective humor seem like a good way how to advertise to a large target audience. This paper attempts to get a closer look on how puns work in the field of advertisement and what the basic types of wordplay in advertising are.

First of all it is necessary to establish a proper knowledge base. That consists primarily of a general introduction to the function and options of speech as well as to the two basic levels of language – literal and figurative one. This chapter should also provide reader with essential types of figurative language that serve as a basis for the whole concept of wordplay.

Second chapter tries to define key features of humor. Without it a reader would not be able to recognize the role of wordplay in language in its full extent. This chapter also gives a general overview on basic scientific theories that study various types of humor.

General introduction to the field of wordplay is then followed by characteristic features of puns in more detail. Third chapter examines the role of puns in advertisement as well as the specific division according to the way they work and what function they fulfill. The last point in this chapter is a reflection on what characteristics a good pun should have in order to actually be amusing.

After having established the most essential theoretical background, this thesis continues with using the obtained knowledge in a practical way. The analysis itself identifies specific features of puns used in advertisement - a corpus of different types of slogans has been created in order to serve as a basis for the analysis. The practical part attempts to identify

basic types of puns according to their linguistic features with respect to the previously mentioned terms and methods.

The main objective of this thesis is to identify puns specifically designed for purposes of advertisement with respect to their semantic function and distinctive properties in contrast with puns with no advertising effect.

I. THEORY

1 LITERAL AND FIGURATIVE LANGUAGE

“When we use language, sometimes we want the words to mean exactly what they say. This is called literal language. At other times, we want words to create an image or suggest an idea. This is called figurative language” (Scholastic News 2009).

Figurative language uses many various devices to add an extra level of meaning to the utterance. The best known types are definitely metaphor, idiom and also pun. Pun, or also known as word play, operates on a level of language manipulations and intended deviations in order to achieve a humorous effect.

“Traditionally, figurative language such as metaphors and idioms has been considered derivative from and more complex than ostensibly straightforward literal language. A contemporary view (...) is that figurative language involves the same kinds of linguistic and pragmatic operations that are used for ordinary, literal language (Glucksberg and McGlone 2001, V).

Humans are supposedly the only species on Earth able to use abstract thinking. This ability allows us not only to imagine things but more importantly to use language. If someone describes an object or event that is not present at the same time as the description, both the recipient and producer must use abstract thinking to understand. Therefore, language forces us to use abstract thinking in both literal and figurative meaning. The only difference is the amount of it needed.

“There is no absolute correspondence between degree of figurativeness in a word-sense and whether the sense is historically an early or a late one. The literal meaning sense of a word usually coincides with the default reading – the first sense that comes to mind in the absence of contextual clues. But some words have literal and non-literal senses that are equally good “default” candidates” (Cruse 2002, 15).

1.1 Figures of speech

Advertisers use figures of speech quite often because they allow them to communicate with the recipients of their ads on many different levels of a message. Traditional concept of advertisement sets 4 goals which the ad should reach – to attract customer’s attention, to inform him about the product and make him interested in the product, to spark a desire to buy the product and finally to get a feedback from the customer meaning an action leading to the purchase itself. The effectiveness of figures of speech in these stages depends on the ad itself, but if used properly, figures of speech such as homonymy, polysemy or puns may greatly contribute to the whole effect of advertisement.

Figures of speech are the result of human's connection between abstract thinking and language. They help us to process language and understand abstract meanings and consequently they are very popular among advertisers... This chapter focuses on the most essential figures of speech for the study of puns in advertising (Abass 2007).

1.1.1 Homonymy and Polysemy

“Homonyms are two or more different lexemes which have the same form but are unrelated in meaning and have different historical sources of language.” (Baron, 2005, 3)

Homonymy can be divided into two main categories – homophones and homographs. The variance is that homophones are two or more lexical units with the same pronunciation but different spelling [1], while homographs are identical in spelling but they are pronounced in a distinguish way [2].

On the other hand, polysemic words are lexical units with the same spelling and pronunciation, yet with different meanings [3].

[1] Taste, no waist / Taste, no waste

[2] The energy to lead / Brand new lead paint

[3] For the rest (relaxation) of your life / For the rest (remains) of your life

“Homonymy and polysemy are rather complex linguistic phenomena. Both have been discussed in connection with each other for a long time. The central point of this discussion is the question whether one is confronted with different lexical items which are formally identical, i.e. homonymy, or whether there is just one single lexical item with different meanings, i.e. polysemy” (Schulze 2001, 2).

Both homonymy and polysemy are closely connected to the concept of word play. Puns often use similarity of sounds or ambiguity of meanings to “confuse” the recipient and make him think in a slightly different pattern. As mentioned before, it is the ambiguity and incongruence of meanings that cause cognitive processes, and ultimately leading to recognizing given utterance as humorous.

1.1.2 Idioms

“An idiom is a concatenation of more than one lexeme whose meaning is not derived from the meanings of its constituents and which does not consist of a verb plus an adverbial particle or preposition. The concatenation as such then constitutes a lexeme in its own right and should be entered as such in the lexicon” (Strässler 1982, 79).

This definition by Jürg Strässler may be scientifically accurate, but it seems a little unfeasible for ordinary readers. To put it in other words, idiom is a multi-word unit with a

meaning, which is not obtainable from the individual words. Some idioms are easy to recognize “instinctively”, because their literal and figurative meaning is quite similar (e.g. speak your mind, see the light, win by a mile, etc.). On the other hand, there are also idioms with completely opposite meanings (e.g. take a rain check, kick the bucket, etc.) that can often confuse especially non-native speakers (Laviosa 2005).

Idioms are quite popular among native language users. If used correctly, they can provide an extent amount of information in quite short utterance and they also contain cultural and social reflections of the language. Idioms are therefore popular in advertisement too. Thanks to high flexibility of especially English, they also may and do appear in connection to other figures of speech, namely with puns. Such structure however, may be difficult to decipher, because of ambiguity of puns and idioms.

1.1.3 Wordplay in advertisement

“Wordplay (or pun) is a rhetorical device that often relies on the different meanings of a polysemic word, the literal and non-literal meaning of an idiom or on bringing two homonyms together in the same utterance to produce a witticism. Punning is frequently used in commercial advertising to attract the reader’s attention and maintaining her/his interest in keeping with the AIDA principle” (Lund 1947, 83). The AIDA principle is essential for the whole field of advertisement and in this work it has been already mentioned in connection with idioms. The words hidden behind the abbreviation are Attention, Interest, Desire and Action. All the figures of speech mentioned before are in fact more than able to effectively contribute to reaching AIDA principle. In addition puns are even suitable for advertisement because they are humorous, witty and also memorable. These features of puns are considered to be some of the most valuable ones in the field of advertising (Laviosa 2005).

1.1.4 Conclusion

This chapter provided several reasons why figures of speech are essential for study of puns in advertisement and how they are connected. Various combinations of these figures (i.e. bringing two homonyms together, literal and non-literal meaning of idioms and different meanings of polysemy) should be always sufficient for punning. Most of the examples stated in this chapter will be discussed further and in more detail also in later chapters.

The following part of this thesis attempts to give a general overview on the field of humor which is also a valuable feature of advertising and also an essential core of word play.

2 HUMOR

Previous chapter provided a general introduction to the different levels of language (literal and figurative). It also listed certain linguistic and rhetorical devices important for the purposes of the thesis such as homonymy, polysemy and idioms. All these instruments can be, and often are, used to evoke humor. To see how important humor is, especially in advertising, this chapter attempts to clarify the term humor from both theoretical and practical point of view – all with respect to the field of advertisement.

2.1 General introduction

“Linguists, psychologists, and anthropologists have taken humor to be an all-encompassing category, covering any event or object that elicits laughter, amuses, or is felt to be funny” (Attardo 1994).

Many attempts to distinguish areas of general humor have been made, yet no clear division has been achieved so far. The reason is that humor as a complex phenomenon overlaps in many scientific fields, each with its own methods and approaches. In attempt to at least state the basic terminology, a semantic field of humor has been established. In order to understand the concept of puns in the field of humor, a simplified version of the scheme is illustrated in the following picture (Attardo 1994, 7).

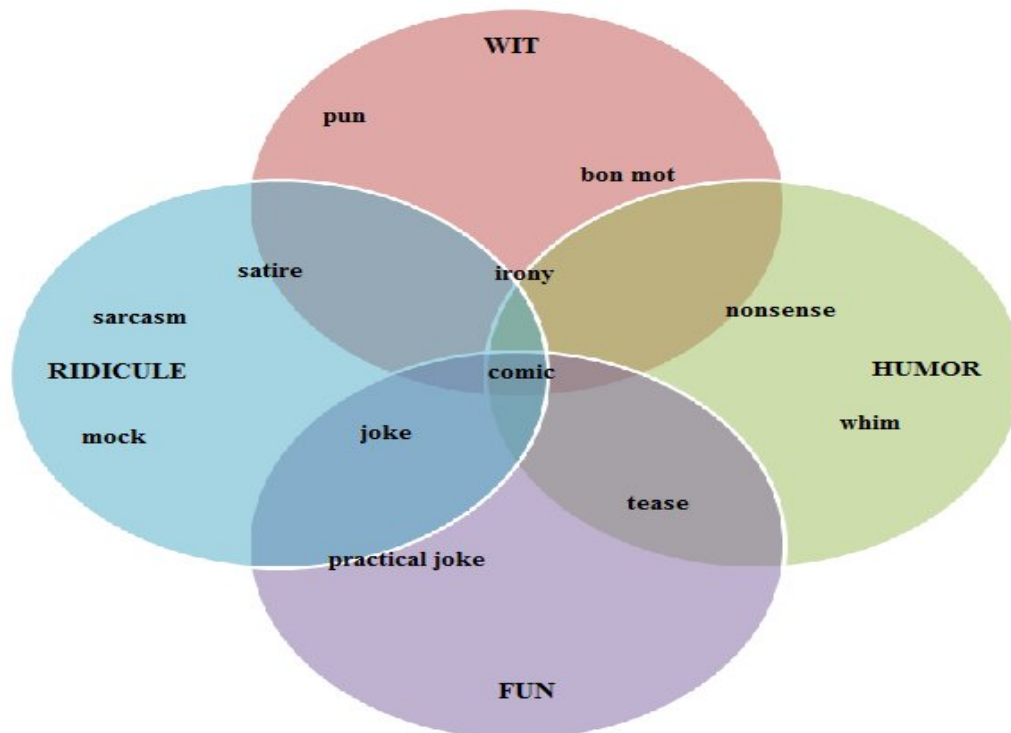


Figure 1: Semantic Field of Humor

What is also important is to be familiar with is the psychological effect of humor and what necessary conditions need to be reached in order to create such effect.

“The conditions (...) are a subjective state of apparent emotional absurdity, where the perceived situation is seen as normal, and where, simultaneously, some affective commitment of the perceiver to the way something in the situation ought to be is violated” (Veatch 1998).

This semantic and psychological knowledge of humor is vital for better understanding the role of word play in advertising. In contemporary world, markets are filled with companies trying to attract customers and stay ahead of competition. Advertising has become an extensive and complex scientific discipline that uses various strategies and methods to stand out. One of the strategies is definitely use of humor because of its positive effects on human psychology which can trigger certain cognitive processes, motivating the customer to buy the advertised products (Werner 2001).

2.2 Theories

As it was mentioned before, humor is in fact a field with many scientific approaches and theories. To list all of them would be quite difficult and, in this case, completely unnecessary. However, there are some theories of humor that may be helpful in order to understand the role of humor in advertising better, as well as what function puns serve in the whole concept.

First four theories in this chapter are examined in order to provide a general overview about humor and especially what aspects of it are essential for using in advertising. Last theory is more scientifically based and it attempts to identify semantic processes of understanding humor.

2.2.1 Release theories

Humor releases tensions and psychic energy. As it was mentioned before it also triggers certain biological and neurological processes that make the recipient happy and more willing to purchase the advertised product. Furthermore, Keiko Tanaka in his research observed an important role of puns in humor. According to Tanaka, “the effort made by an audience in recovering the intended effects of the advertisement is actually increased by punning” (Tanaka 1994, 64). The actual result of solving puns is gratitude for understanding the meaning and satisfaction with the recipient’s own cognitive skills. These feelings also contribute to the overall positive effect of puns. Wordplay also liberates

language by escaping conventions and laws of language by using word-play and puns. This is referred to as defunctionalizing or refunctionalizing language. This theory focuses mainly on psychological effects of humor and it is based on Freud's work. He listed 20 mechanisms with which humor works and then divided it into two major ones: condensation and displacement. Condensation means that one signifier contains several meanings (puns, metaphors) and displacement works on a relationship between two senses present at the same time (syntagmatic relations) (Laviosa 2005).

2.2.2 Excitation Transfer Theory

Excitation transfer theory claims that excitement gained from one source may be transferred in certain extent to another. This phenomenon is called post-exposure and it is crucial for creating for example successful TV commercials. When the recipient is exposed to entertaining or arousing program followed by a commercial the excitement can prevail during the commercial break. It also works the other way around when exciting or arousing TV commercial is followed by a TV program. However both commercial and TV program should be mood-congruent in order to affect the recipients in intended way. For example it is not desirable to expose an exciting TV commercial followed by a solemn TV program or vice versa.

The phenomenon excitation transfer is very important for the whole concept of advertising. That way, advertisers may rely on the fact that if an advertisement sparks humor in target audience, thus creating a positive feeling, the recipient is likely to unconsciously transfer the excitement to the product itself.

2.2.3 Incongruity Resolution Theory

“The notion of congruity and incongruity refer to the relationships between components of an object, event, idea, social expectation and so forth. When the arrangement of the constituent element of an event is incompatible with the normal of expected pattern, the event is perceived as incongruous” (McGhee 1979).

According to this theory, the recipient has to be surprised by an incongruence of the message in order to develop a desired feedback. While the recipient expects certain features of the message it in fact carries a different message that does not comply with the recipient's expectations and by understanding a proper context of message a humorous situation appears.

Incongruence works as an impulse of several analytical steps taking place in human brain. First the recipient identifies an obvious meaning of the message may or may not make

sense yet. By connecting pieces of information in the text with proper context or with different information provided earlier in the message, the recipient is able to recognize the humorous intention.

The principle of incongruity as an entertaining device is also called “Ah-ha humor” because the desired humorous effect usually comes hand in hand with an intellectual pleasure of solving a small challenge. As mentioned before, puns are in fact great source of both incongruity and intellectual brain exercise. Additionally, successful deciphering of puns may evoke a feeling of excitement which is then transferred to another source as described earlier.

2.2.4 Superiority / Disparagement Theory

In this case, humor is considered as something evil because it uses humiliation and ridicule to make fun of individuals or group of people. According to this theory, humorous effect of message is even stronger when used against generally unpopular people rather than against people perceived as friendly or popular. Being a target of such humor can occur momentarily, i.e. humor among friends or self-irony only for the sake of the joke. This theory is also called “Ha-Ha humor” and its origins lead back to Aristotle and Plato who defined comedy as “something that makes us laugh when evil is ridiculed and suffers” (Werner 2001).

2.2.5 Semantic Script Theory of Humor (SSTH)

Script is an organized complex or set of information concerning an entity in the broadest sense – an object, an event, an action, etc. It is a cognitive structure internalized by the speaker, which provides the speaker with information on how a given entity is structured, what are the parts and components, how an activity is done, and so on. Simply put script is a cognitive structure of organized information and knowledge about the world. In linguistic terms a script is an equivalent to the lexical meaning of a word. A script contains all the necessary information such as subject, activity, place, time, condition and so on. Using these criteria we are able to describe any situation in order to make a sufficient overview and connect it with a proper context.

Attardo (2001, 17-18), states that in order to create a humorous effect two scripts that are overlapping and opposite at the same time need to be put together. Overlapping means they have to have a certain level of similarity that can fit to both of them. Oppositeness on the other hand states 3 basic types of incompatibility between scripts – one is actual and the

other one is non-actual, one is normal the other one abnormal or one is possible whereas the second one is impossible.

In order to create a humorous effect both overlapping and oppositeness must occur at the same time. If not, interacting scripts create a different result such as metaphors or allegories in case of lack of oppositeness and conflict or tragedy in case of opposing scripts without an overlap.

At the beginning of a narration the receiver analyses the utterance in a specific way which evokes a certain script. While expecting the script to follow its pattern in the usual way it is suddenly confronted with something unexpected in the narration. The receiver is thus forced to reject the current script and try to use another more suitable for the course of events. The ambiguity of the two overlapping scripts then creates a humorous effect.

2.2.6 Conclusion

Information stated in this chapter focused primarily on explaining the phenomenon of humor from broad and general point of view to more scientific and narrow perspective by listing basic yet relevant theories of humor as well as by introducing the concept of the semantic script theory. Along with the Chapter 1 a general knowledge base of verbal humor should be established. This knowledge base will prove valuable in later parts of this thesis, when analyzing a corpus of ads.

However, it is still necessary to supplement the current insight of language and humor with more detailed perspective on puns. In the next chapter a general overview on puns is made, which is then followed by different methods of analyzing puns from both linguistic and advertising point of view. This will be necessary when comparing key features of word play as a tool of general humor in comparison to puns used primarily as a tool of advertisement.

3 PUN

3.1 Introduction

This chapter provides a closer look at wordplay, especially the general division of puns according to their linguistic features and also with focus on specific types of puns used for the purposes of advertising.

Pun is a figure of speech based on the ambiguity of words with certain specific features, because not all ambiguous words are puns. Generally it is a joke meant to be read aloud. The ambiguity in pun cannot be just random. In order to create a pun the two senses of utterance have to be semantically incompatible in context. Only by reaching the semantic incompatibility an incongruity may be created thus leading the recipient into humorous interpretation. Also the recipient has to be aware of multiple meanings present in the message to process the utterance as a pun. Only by doing so the full range of intended advertising effects is reached.

Using puns in advertisements is increasing continuously, especially in Anglo-Saxon countries and Japan. Not only that puns save time and money due to their ability to carry two meanings in one word but also they are perfectly working attention attractors because of their incongruity which evokes a sense of surprise in the audience.

Puns can be then divided into several categories according to their semantic and linguistic features as well as their intended usage in advertisement.

Semantically speaking puns most frequently appear in a form of homonyms especially its subpart called homophones which a group of words with certain audio similarity, i.e. they sound similar. Homophonic puns may work on a similarity between different words, as a result of a simple word with a composed one, two groups of different words, etc. The reason why puns often appear in a form of homophones is, as mentioned earlier, their intention to be a joke read aloud. However puns takes also other forms such as homographs, polysemic words, antonyms or also contamination of languages, e.g. Denglish = Deutsch + English.

3.2 Linguistic point of view

3.2.1 Paradigmatic puns

Also called “self-contained puns” are pieces of text which can be used under various circumstances without any specific additional information. Usually, the recipient only

needs to possess a general cultural (or other, depending on the specific pun) knowledge. Paradigmatic puns are not obliged to have an appropriate semantic content, because the core of the pun is within the wordplay itself and therefore can be used in various situations (Ritchie 2005).

Additionally, Attardo states, that in case of paradigmatic puns “only one of the two strings (of information) is actually present in the text, and the second has to be retrieved by the bearer from his/her storage of homonymic or patronymic strings” (Attardo 1994, 115).

3.2.2 Syntagmatic puns

Syntagmatic puns or “contextually integrated puns” need a broader discourse to convey desired humorous or other (e.g. emotional, persuasive) message. In this case, semantic content is essential for setting the wordplay. The humorous situation arises from previous contextual knowledge given in the text and the resulting pun must be semantically compatible to the semantic content of the discourse (Ritchie 2005).

In contrast to the paradigmatic puns, syntagmatic puns require the existence of the second string of information in the text (Attardo 1994, 115).

3.3 Division of puns in advertisement

Although wordplay of advertising is still based on the linguistic features of language such as homonymy and polysemy and therefore puns in ads can be classified as paradigmatic or syntagmatic ones, they additionally have certain features specific for the purposes of advertising. Following division of puns in advertising is proposed by Tanaka (1999, 61-81).

3.3.1 Nonsense puns

This type of puns is very frequently used among advertisers, because it uses the principle of incongruence in its full extent. The initial meaning of such advertisements is nonsensical; therefore the recipient is forced to come up with another interpretation. In order to understand the intended meaning the recipient needs to have a corresponding encyclopedic knowledge and even then the second interpretation takes a considerably more effort.

3.3.2 Contextual puns

Contextual puns are quite similar to the nonsense puns. Initial meaning is also rejected as wrong, but in this case it still contributes to the overall correct interpretation of pun as a whole. It is sometimes hard to distinguish between contextual puns in advertising and syntagmatic puns in general. However a wordplay can possess both labels, because as mentioned before, puns in advertisement are basically just specifically designed examples of general wordplay.

3.3.3 Sexual innuendos

Usually, these puns are used when the advertiser or communicator tries to conceal the intended meaning into the utterance so it can be retrieved only as a secondary interpretation by insinuations present in the message. This phenomenon usually appears when intended information is too indecent to be said outright, or deliberately to provoke the recipient. Even though it is obvious there is a hidden sexual meaning conveyed in the message it is usually impossible to use it against communicator because it is recognized only through recipient's subject consideration.

3.3.4 Puns with two communicated meanings

This may seem like it applies for all the puns but there is a slight difference. While most puns used in advertising may carry several meanings, only one is usually the intended one. The other meaning, usually the one recognized at first, should not make much sense unless further interpretation takes place. But in this case a pun carries two equally valuable meanings and the strings of information work in parallel. This type of pun is quite valuable because the feeling of overcoming a mental challenge is usually the strongest and not every recipient is able to retrieve the full scope of information located in the pun.

3.4 Wordplay in advertising

Wordplay is a linguistic phenomenon based on structural features of language such as homonymy, literal or figural language, idioms, polysemic words and many others in attempt to create a humorous message. It is often used in advertising of many different products because of its uncanny memorability and also due to the fact that humor works perfectly as a tool of persuasion especially in advertisement. It is no coincidence that the most popular and memorable ads are the ones that make the recipient laugh.

By following a simple principle of marketing called AIDA we can see that a pun is more than qualified to success in advertising. AIDA stands for Attention, Interest, Desire and

Action. These are the 4 stages of persuading costumers through the commercial advertising. First step is to catch the recipient's attention which in case of puns is done by the inconsistency of message followed by the surprise. It is because puns do not usually appear in everyday language very often so the recipient is forced to analyze the unusual phenomenon. When the recipient realizes he or she is dealing with wordplay some certain scenarios can happen. In the second possibility the recipient analyzes the given text, but fails to get the intended meaning by not deciphering the pun (because not all the puns are obvious in their meaning). This recipient will probably continue to think about the pun and whatever the result of his or her effort (understanding the wordplay or not) the effect of the ad is drastically lowered or lost. The third case of understanding wordplay is the initially intended one. The recipient analyzes the message, understands it and a humorous effect is successfully created leaving the recipient happy and satisfied with his or hers own mental performance and capability. Such positive feelings will most probably create a positive connection with the ad and the product it promotes and thus creating a desire of buying the product. Pun is often some sort of puzzle or riddle with great memorability so the recipient who has deciphered the pun correctly is likely to share the pun with his peers (Allday 2011).

3.4.1 The best puns in advertising

Puns used in advertising should always follow certain rules and procedures if they are likely to success their intended purpose of catching costumer-recipient's attention and make him wanting to know more about the product or the company. Getting costumer's attention by a clever slogan or line can be done subtly or less subtly. It always depends on the purpose of an advertisement as well as the reaction of the recipient. Puns, thanks to their ability to both be and not to be subtle at the same time, offers a great opportunity for advertisers to lure customers, but being considered the lowest form of humor or wit, it is essential to know when and how to use puns in advertising a product. Sometimes it can fill the recipient mind for hours, thinking about the pun, but sometimes it can just make the advertiser lose all the respect of the audience.

The golden rule of using puns in advertising is that the pun itself should be noticeable at first, but become less obtrusive over time. In other words a good pun should make the audience think about the product more that the pun used to advertise the product (Allday 2001).

II. ANALYSIS

4 POLYSEMY

4.1 Moss Security: Alarmed? You should be.

“Morgan O’Connell Security Solutions Ltd (MOSS Ltd) is a professional provider of security services and solutions. Created from a need for a reliable, trustworthy and modern approach to security assessment, provision and application” (Morgan O’Connell Security Solutions 2011).

The core of this pun is the word alarmed. In common English it means cautious or afraid of something so the initial interpretation of this sentence is that the reader should be on the watch for some reason. This sentence also carries a certain prediction of something bad is coming providing the message with slightly negative connotation.

However the intended interpretation is connected to the business of the Moss Security which is security systems. The word “alarmed” carries another and more neutral meaning of simply having sufficient technology of security in order to protect people’s belongings.

Without proper contextual knowledge of the company (for example if the brand name were omitted) this message would still probably spark an interest of the reason why to be afraid. Following the thought of possible danger the recipient of this message might actually start to think about his own security, therefore this pun triggers the processes of AIDA principle.

4.2 Pioneer: Everything you hear is true.

Pioneer is a company focusing on high-quality audio systems. They are well-known for their audio car systems and music reproduction equipment, such as headphones and speakers. In the case of their company line wordplay is used to conceal two different meanings of the message although it is not clear which one of them was meant to be the initial one.

Audio systems are quite sophisticated device and the way they are designed and constructed is essential for their performance. The lesser the quality of the product the more distorted and inaccurate sound it makes. By saying that “everything you hear is true” the company implies that with its products the sound will be as clear as possible. Almost like it is not even a reproduced sound but a real one instead.

Second interpretation is concerning the company’s credibility and renown. They probably consider themselves as a company with the positive image among costumers and by using this company line they try to strengthen their reputation even more. Pioneer simply implies

that all the information about the company (especially being a high-quality firm) is in fact not exaggerated. This may also work in the opposite way, when the company is approached with negative information, but still it carries a more positive connotation than vice versa.

4.3 Adjustamatic Beds: For the rest of your life

Ambiguity of this wordplay is created through the various meanings of the word “rest”. It is a very common word and both of its primary meanings are used equally often – as for the leisure and remainder. Based on the division by Keiko Tanaka in previous chapters, this is a nice example of pun with two communicated meanings. Both meanings work at the same time and together provide a clear and positive polysemic wordplay.

At first, recipient is probably confused which interpretation of the word “rest” is the correct one. By testing both possibilities, recipient of this message realizes it is not only one meaning he or she should obtain, but both at the same time. Such incongruence with previous expectations as well as the intellectual value of the pun should trigger the humorous effect of pun and furthermore grant the recipient with satisfaction of successfully overcoming a mental challenge. It is possible to say this type of punning can be also found in general humorous wordplay and therefore it is not a pun designed specifically and solely for purposes of advertisement.

5 HOMONYMY

5.1 Asda: It 'asda be Asda.

This wordplay is an example of a non-sense pun. As mentioned before, non-sense puns carry only one possible interpretation in form of figurative language. When examining literally the message does not make any sense and it needs to be inserted into a proper context with a corresponding script.

The word “asda” is not defined in any English dictionary. Because no such word exists. Still it is used in a slogan with perfectly clear message. To understand the significance of using a word that does not exist, it is essential to know the context – in this case the name of the company which is Asda. There are many companies with unique names but not all of them are capable of creating such wordplay. For example Pepsi with “It ‘pepsi be Pepsi” is probably out of luck. The reason is that in the case of Pepsi the statement is illogical and does not make any sense on any level of discourse. However Asda Company has an advantage of having a name phonetically similar to another word (more precisely a set of words) which is the verb “has to”.

As an opposite of the Tic Tac slogan (analyzed later in this chapter), this line would probably work better on the level of a verbal joke. It is because some English users tend to pronounce the phrase “has to” in a quite specific way (especially non-formal English), therefore omitting the initial H and also shortening the end of the preposition. As a result “hæs tə” becomes “æz də” which is quite similar to Asda. To stress out the similarity even more the line itself contains the grammatically incorrect version of the verb “has to”.

In order to work as wordplay properly, the mispronunciation is not enough and the slogan has to contain the actual name Asda as well. If it were just “It ‘asda be our company” it would not make much sense either. Therefore this is a case of syntagmatic pun.

5.2 Weight Watchers Frozen Meals: Taste. Not waist.

In this case wordplay in this slogan is formed by homonymic features of the words waist/waste and additionally with the usage of rhyme.

Weightwatchers is an international company in the field of dieting products. Their main core of business is simply to assist people to lose weight. Weightwatchers claim they base their programs and products on modern scientific methods that should be efficient in reducing body fat and weight. General idea about losing weight is that it is something very hard to achieve. Most people probably imagine hours of workout in a gym accompanied by

rather small portions of probably not very tasteful meal. Also it is quite time consuming and the results are unclear at best.

Initial interpretation probably occurs on the first intended level of communication. This means that by understanding the text as it is written the recipient gets a positive message about Weightwatchers products. The word waist works as a synecdoche for the whole figure – slimmer the waist, fitter the whole body. It implies that the company offers food that is tasteful and yet it actively assists with losing weight.

Second interpretation occurs after realizing the sound similarity of the words waist and waste. By offering a product without waste, a few ideas may emerge. In this case waste may mean waste of food, money, time or effort. Weightwatchers products could come in small portions so there is no need to get rid of leftovers because there simply are none. It may also be cheaper than regular food, easier to get/cook/eat and the effect of losing weight could also be more permanent so there is no need to undergo any diet for a longer period of time.

Generally, this slogan uses short and simple sentences, rhyming and homophonic wordplay. Overall it provides the recipient with a positive message about the product and the company. In this case wordplay is used effectively and it probably contributes to the success of the advertisement. If used individually, the phrase “no waist” is not bound to trigger the deciphering cognitive processes, but being a full homophone, it can be probably used in connection with other utterance, so this is the case of paradigmatic pun.

5.3 Take a Thomas Cook at our prices!

This is technically also a homonym, but unlike in previous cases, this one is a bit harder to comprehend. In this case, the recipient is somehow forced to figure out the original word in order to make a logical outcome of the pun. The recipient will analyze this sentence from multiple points of view.

To narrow down the possibilities of original word, the recipient must find some sort of connection between the exchanged words and one of the first options may be use of rhymes. This gives the recipient many possibilities, such as book, cook, hook, look, took, etc. But only one of them is the intended one so when simple contextual analysis is not enough, the recipient may use his syntactical knowledge of language.

Syntactically speaking, every language has a certain set of rules and regulations that tell the users how to use the language in a proper way. Every syntactical unit has some restrictions and possibilities of usage in a sentence, e.g. word order, matching prepositions,

phrasal verbs, etc. In this case, the recipient is likely to analyze the surroundings of the phrase “Thomas Cook” to figure out what was the original word. Immediately, two results emerge – a phrasal verb “take a look” and prepositional phrase “look at”. First, phrasal verbs are restricted with by limited amount of combinations. Therefore it is not grammatically correct to combine the word “look” with verbs like *steal*, *throw*, *add*, etc. However, the possible and most common combinations are “take a look” and “have a look” (which is still the same in meaning, they only differ in the region where they are used). The same rule applies for possible prepositions. Recipient’s previous knowledge of language allows him to narrow down the possibilities, leading him to only one possible result – “Take a look at our prices”.

This case of wordplay is popular not only among advertisers, but in fact it serves as a basis for a whole English dialect called Cockney. This originally London dialect exchanges originally common English words with their rhymed alternatives, based on a specific context. Without proper explanations of Cockney’s language deviations, the puns included in the dialect are almost impossible to decipher.

It is obvious, that various types of homonyms serve frequently as a basis for wordplay in many cases of both common language and advertising. In most cases, puns specifically designed for advertisement use the factual name of the company to attract customers and make them interested in advertised product, while common homonymic puns primarily focus on creating a humorous effect of language deviations and these puns can be very contextually dependant.

6 IDIOMS

6.1 Mumm's Champagne: One word captures the moment. Mumm's the word.

Mum's the word is an English idiom. Its definition is to keep silent about something. The word "mum's" is based on the sound when someone is trying to talk with their lips closed. Instead of creating language they just make the "mmm" sound.

Mumm's on the other hand is a well-known company producing champagne wine. They focus on creating an image of luxury and exclusivity. It also applies to their brand line.

This is in fact a very interesting slogan because it carries many possible interpretations. The first sentence talks about one word that captures the moment. This may be a case of an event that is so emotionally strong it is too hard to describe in a complex way because it might lose its essence. The line then goes on with suggestion to actually keep the word to oneself. It probably contributes to the idea of an extraordinary moment. A description would probably not describe it accurately so it is better to not even try.

From another point of view using the intentionally hidden message of the name of the company we can see the word Mumm's to actually be the one accurate word that describes the sensation of a strong moment. That means it is in fact a synonym for something very extraordinary or special.

A nice example of exchanging a part of an idiom with the factual name of the company for purposes of advertising. Furthermore, this is the case of homonymic resemblance between the words "mum's" and "Mumm's", so ambiguity is clear and possibly considered as witty.

6.2 Farley's Baby Food: So Farley's, so good.

"So far so good" is an English idiom. It basically says that everything goes as planned in a good way. There is however a subtle tone of caution and realistic expectations. It can be rephrased as "Everything has been going well but there is always an option of something bad happen". Still it has a more positive meaning than negative.

Farley is a company that makes dry baby products. The company based their slogan on phonetic and to some extent visual resemblance to the mentioned idiom.

Initial interpretation of this slogan is not completely positive because it creates a feeling of moderation and limits. It is similar to saying "No baby has ever died from our products so

technically we are ok” which does not contribute to the overall image of the company. And also in case babies are involved the reputation of the company is even more crucial.

But the initial meaning is not the desired one. It is the second interpretation that uses wordplay in attempt to attract attention and create a humorous effect. Based on the resemblance to the popular English idiom, the second meaning carries out a far more positive feeling. The idiomatic content is rejected or at least diminished for the sake of more literal meaning which in this case is a synonym for the word “good”. It is a result of an anaphora (a repetition of a word or phrase at the beginning of every clause) of preposition “so”. The same structure of sentences, each beginning with the same preposition, with two alternative adjectives (Farley’s, good) creates an image of equality between them ultimately suggesting that the word “good” can be paraphrased as “Farley’s” which is much more positive than the first interpretation.

Again, similar to the previous slogan, this company uses its name as a working part of a well-known idiom, thus creating a humorous and witty message.

7 OTHER

7.1 Tic Tac Candy: Tic Tac. Surely the best tactic.

This is one of the rare cases of using intentional exchange of syllables, in order to create a word with another meaning, in an advertisement. Tic Tac is a very popular candy all over the world with the ability to freshen one's breath while containing just a marginal amount of fat. It seems that this advertisement is based primarily on the combination of these two factors while using a clever wordplay in the same time.

The origin of the name Tic Tac is unknown. It may be a sound of ticking hours or just a made-up name. Whatever the reason the name of the product is very suitable for advertising because it is short and easy to remember. It may be only a coincidence that when exchanging the two syllables it in fact creates another word but in this case Tic Tac uses it as a core of their line.

First meaning contained in this line is simply to use Tic Tac in case of need to refresh. Whether it is a business meeting, a date or any other event, Tic Tac claims to be the best choice because it is fast, reliable and light. The mints are also small sized so they are sold in small containers that can be carried around in a pocket. It also should be better than a gum because it dissolves quite fast leaving only a fresh feeling in mouth. That is perfectly sufficient list of reasons why to buy it and therefore it would be enough information to create an effective commercial. But when the company decided to include the name of the product itself it created another level of message – wordplay.

To start a slogan with the name of the product has two primary reasons. First of all, the one that is common in the majority of advertisement (based on a wordplay or not) is simply to introduce the name and make it more memorable. In this case however it serves another very important reason.

The name itself is in fact made of the same syllables as the word “tactic”. The only difference is with the sequence of syllables. Therefore, exchanging syllables create a different word every time. This metathesis however would not have to be completely obvious because the recipient may be fully satisfied with only the first spotted meaning which does not use wordplay. By adding the name of the candy in front of the actual wordplay it increases the chances of spotting the pun.

In addition, wordplay in this case works more on a graphical level more than verbal mainly because of the inconsistency of putting stress on individual syllables i.e. Tic Tac carries

two stresses, each on one syllable whereas in case of tactic, stress is put only on the initial syllable.

7.2 Absolut Vodka: Absolut magic.

Absolut Vodka is a Swedish company that uses some of the greatest and simplest puns in their lines. Their main field of business is apparently making vodka. From the historical point of view Swedish tradition of making vodka is roughly 200 years older than the whole United States of America.

The man responsible for the name Absolut was Lars Olsen Smith who revolutionized the process of purifying vodka in the late 1800's. His new product was called simply "Absolut rent Bränvin" which in Swedish means "absolutely pure vodka". In 1879 L.O.Smith registered the name Absolut, realizing its great marketing potential. Along with a unique bottle design, Absolut has become of one the most valuable trademarks in the world.

Technically speaking because the word "absolut" is of a Swedish origin it should not probably count as a play on words. Even the original line was just a clear and simple statement with some well-chosen words. The reason is it is no longer an exclusively Swedish product but as mentioned before a world-wide spread trademark.

During the company's long history they made a quite extensive list of brand lines (300 posters with different lines) – some are just simple statements as just like with their original line and some a bit more thoughtful. But there is always a link between them – wordplay.

The greatest power of the word "absolut" is its unique versatility. It can be simply put in front of anything. For example if the company claims it makes vodka with absolute raspberry one might ask what is an absolute raspberry? But in case of saying "Absolut raspberry" probably no one will wonder about that. It is just a flavor typical for the Absolut company. What people probably do not realize is the wordplay in this case works in a more subtle way. Just unconsciously so to say. Because as mentioned before, there is probably nothing like an absolute raspberry, only regular raspberry. Or even better and worse raspberries but certainly no absolute one. But still "absolute" is a mighty word. Anything connected with "absolute" is just the top. Nothing can be more definite than absolute. It is just the highest threshold. In this case, the adjective can be put in front of probably everything and if used correctly, it can add an extra value to the word it precedes.

So if a company decides to name itself Absolut and then to label all its products Absolut it is just a name just like any other name on the market. But the factual similarity both

phonetic and visual to the word “absolute” provides a free-to-use wordplay in form of a homonym with great positive connotation.

7.3 IBM: I think, therefore IBM.

I think therefore I am. Originally a Latin phrase “cogito, ergo sum” is a famous philosophical statement by René Descartes. It has been translated to many languages and it became an essential element of Western philosophy. Basically it claims that wondering about one’s existence is itself a proof of existence. So the question is also an answer.

This quote became so popular probably because its simplicity (and also because it is in Latin which sounds quite fancy). It is a short sentence with no big words; nothing difficult to understand yet it still answers a quite complex question. Using this quote (yet slightly altered) with combination of the company name as a slogan surely seems like a good way how to create a desired wordplay.

First encounter with this line would most probably trigger a script containing just the original quote itself. Everybody familiar with Descartes’s statement is likely to recognize it instantly even though it has been altered slightly. But after following the proper script of famous philosophical quotes the recipient hits a contradiction in form of exchanging the verb “I am” with the name of the company IBM.

Then after searching for a more suitable interpretation another ending should appear. It is in fact a meaning more plain statement that simply says “who is smart enough to think about the mysteries of universe will surely choose an IBM product”. It is also a logical trap unconsciously provoking the recipient because if IBM = thinking, anything else = not thinking. And even though it is just a circumstantial consequence it actually might contribute to the desired promotional effect.

7.4 Holiday Inn: Pleasing people the world over

This wordplay of Holiday Inn company is an example of a sexual innuendo, mentioned in chapter three. The base of this pun is an ambiguity of a polysemic word “pleasing” which offers (at least) two basic meanings.

First, it is a verb meaning “to make someone happy or grateful”. This can be achieved in various ways, e.g. by telling a compliment, giving a present and so on. Because Holiday Inn is a company that runs a world-wide net of hotels of a high standard, it may be assumed that pleasing in this context means comfort and satisfied customers.

On the other hand, “pleasing” may, under certain circumstances, mean “giving pleasure or satisfaction” with a more or less obvious sexual connotation. Sexual innuendos are always fully dependant on the recipient subjective judgment, although the core of a sexual innuendo is to be subtle, yet suggestive enough to create a provocative pun.

CONCLUSION

The aim of this thesis was to focus on wordplay in advertising with respect to how puns differ if used solely for purposes of humor and for purposes of persuading a customer.

At first a theoretical background has been established and divided into three categories. First chapter investigated certain linguistic properties of English language, with focus on its figurative part. Elemental terminology of figures of speech in connection to wordplay has been set by identifying basic units of puns – homonymy, polysemy and idioms. Also a basic introduction to the function of puns in advertising has been made.

Second chapter focused on understanding semantic properties of humor. Several relevant scientific theories were provided in order to understand the effects of humor in the field of advertising and especially with respect to use of wordplay.

The last chapter of theory contains more detailed analysis of pun as a rhetorical device of humor. In this chapter, puns are divided into two groups – according to their linguistic features and their function and form specifically in advertisement.

The theoretical part should provide the reader with enough basic information, to be able to understand the principle of humor generated through wordplay and its significance in advertising. Furthermore, it is essential to evaluate the outcome of the thesis statement formulated in the beginning of this work – whether puns in advertisement differ from puns with solely humorous purposes, or not.

The analytical part tried to use the previously obtained theoretical knowledge in a practical way by examining a set of specific puns in lines. Several areas were covered, based on the figures of language, properties of humor and divisions of puns.

The result of this work shows that puns in advertising share many common aspects of puns designed solely for creating humor. However, there are certain specific differences, showing that puns in ads follow different goals and therefore preferring some types of wordplay over others. It is obvious, that puns in ads try to convey the name of the company into the wordplay itself. This result is achieved primarily by using homophones. Polysemic puns seem to be chosen in case no suitable homonym for the company name is available. That way, the company is still able to attract a potential customer, especially by using polysemy with two (or more) communicated strings of information at the same time. It almost looks like one communicated meaning is simply a waste of money and time. This does not apply for puns with solely humorous effect, that are often willing to sacrifice one meaning for the sake of the second one (the punch line). In addition, this analysis contains

several slogans that do not fit completely into any previously stated category. This shows that companies, in pursuit of attracting costumers, can be very creative and again, their main concern is to incorporate the company name into the factual wordplay.

In conclusion, wordplay and advertising are two complex fields that cannot be possibly examined in a whole extent. However, this work proves that wordplay is in fact a popular tool among advertisers and although puns in advertisement share certain linguistic features with puns in non-advertising, there are some specific ways and forms of using them in ads.

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APPENDICES

P I Corpus of ads

APPENDIX P I: CORPUS OF ADS

Moss Security: Alarmed? You should be.

Wyborowa Vodka: Enjoyed for centuries straight.

Pioneer: Everything you hear is true.

The Economist: For top laps.

Range Rover: It's how the smooth take the rough.

Holiday Inn: Pleasing people the world over.

Casio: Precisely what you're looking for.

Weight Watchers Frozen Meals: Taste. Not waist.

Northern Telecom: Technology the world calls on.

Zanussi: The appliance of science.

Lea & Perrins: The Worcester Saucerer.

Bendix Appliances: We'll do the homework.

Flowers Fine Ales: Always pick Flowers.

Barbados: Barbados. Goodness. Gracious.

Finish Detergent: Brilliant cleaning starts with Finish.

British Steel: British Steel: British mettle.

First National Bank of Chicago: First relationships last.

Kenco Really Rich Coffee: Get Rich quick.

St. Ivel Shape Yogurt: Get your family into Shape, without them even noticing.

Kodak Gold: Is your film as good as Gold?

Asda: It 'asda be Asda.

HMV: No HMV, no video.

Ritz Crackers: Nothing fitz like a Ritz.

John Deere Tractors: Nothing runs like a Deere

Mumm's Champagne: One word captures the moment. Mumm's the word.

Money Magazine: Reap the rewards of Money.

Red Star: Send your parcels Red Star and pull out all the stops.

Tetley Tea: Tetley make teabags make tea.

Tic Tac Candy: Tic Tac. Surely the best tactic.

Impulse Deodorant: You just can't help acting on Impulse.

Absolut Vodka: Absolut magic.

Citibank: Because the Citi never sleeps.

Frosted Chex: Chexcellent, or what?

Quavers Snacks: Do me a Quaver.

Thomas Cook: Don't just book it, Thomas Cook it.

Nytol Sleeping Pills: Good mornings follow a good Nytol.

IBM: I think, therefore IBM.

Abbey National Building Society: Investments with Abbey endings.

Cutty Sark Whisky: Live a Cutty above.

Comet Electrical Stores: Lowering prices forever, that's Comet sense.

Arthur's Cat Food: Nothing else is Arthur's good.

Skoda Favorit: Put your money on the Favorit.

Farley's Baby Food: So Farley's, so good.

Thomas Cook Travel: Take a Thomas Cook at our prices!

Immac Depilatory: The look is Immac-ulate

Visa Delta Debit Card: Visa's Delta blow to cheques

Cadbury's Wispa Candy: You can't keep quiet about a Wispa

Campari Aperitif: You'll find there is no Camparison.

Wike Farms Cheese: You'll Wike it too.