The Analysis of some Stylistic Features of English Advertising Slogans

Tatjana Dubovičienė1, Pavel Skorupa2

1 Lithuania University of Educational Sciences, Faculty of Philology, Department of English Language, Studentų g. 39, LT-08106 Vilnius, Lithuania, tatjana.duboviciene@leu.lt
2 Vilnius Gediminas Technical University, Faculty of Creative Industries, Department of Foreign Languages, Saulėtekio al. 11, LT-10223 Vilnius, Lithuania, pavel.skorupa@vgtu.lt

Summary. The current article presents an attempt to provide the definition of advertising slogan as no uniform definition of the slogan exists in scientific literature. The article also gives the definition and analysis of language of advertising from linguistic point of view and specifies linguistic means used in advertising texts. The paper describes the use and purpose of linguistic devices in print advertising. The body of 100 English advertising slogans chosen for the analysis on the random basis were divided into three groups with the focus on the language and rhetorical devices used in them. The most and least often used figurative language, sound techniques and rhetorical devices were identified.

Keywords: slogan, analysis, language devices, figurative language, sound techniques, rhetorical devices

Introduction

Nowadays, people are bombarded with thousands of advertising messages on a daily basis and therefore are unable to remember all the advertisements. In most cases people just tend to ignore the messages they are exposed to. As people have become more sophisticated, fastidious and not easy to convince, marketers have to make advertisements even more capturing the attention and memorable. One of the ways of doing so is a good advertising slogan.

Advertising slogans are an important part of any advertising campaign. Being short and memorable, advertising slogans have been used by large corporations and small
business companies for more than a century. The purpose of these catchy phrases is to draw the attention of a potential customer and help to distinguish a product or service from the majority of others in the market. According to Marketing.Degree.net website, slogans are “the most effective means of drawing the attention of the general public or consumer base to one or more aspects of a product” (http://www.marketingdegree.net/resources/famous-slogans/), while all the visual or audio materials, such as jingles, pictures, video, etc. only help to further consolidate the slogans in the minds of customers.

Some scholars (Myers 1997, Cook 2006, etc.) compare the language of advertising to the poetic language, which is used by authors to create a special effect. Thus, the language of advertising, and especially of slogans, can be called a special language that helps to grab attention and make a person remember the slogan and the brand it advertises.

The object of the research is English advertising slogans of the world’s famous brands. The material of the current research is a body of 100 slogans of different brands, each of them covering one segment of products that satisfy everyday needs. The slogans were sampled for the analysis on the random basis from the Internet sources, TV and radio commercials, newspapers and magazines, and then put in alphabetical order according to the first letter of a brand name. To exemplify the stylistic devices discussed below the slogans are given with the number of the slogan in the sampled slogans list in square brackets, whereas the brand name - in brackets after the slogan.

The aim of the present paper is 1) to define and explain the meaning of advertising slogan, pointing out its characteristics, and 2) to identify and analyze some stylistic features (language and rhetorical devices, figurative language and sound techniques) used in English advertising slogans of the world’s famous brands; to evaluate the frequency of use of the stylistic features in slogans; to identify the most common stylistic devices used in English advertising slogans.

The following methods were used for the current study:
1. The descriptive method was used to define, explain, and clarify the meaning of the slogan.
2. Theoretical literature analysis was used to provide some theoretical background to the problem.
3. The stylistic analysis of slogans was used to identify the stylistic devices used in slogans.

The Definition of Advertising Slogan

There is no uniform definition of the advertising slogan in scientific literature as various authors define the advertising slogan taking into consideration its specific characteristics, or simply present its synonyms.
In his book “English in Advertising: A Linguistic Study of Advertising in Great Britain”, Leech (1972) maintains that the slogan is a short phrase used by the company in its advertisements to reinforce the identity of the brand. In his opinion, slogans are more powerful than companies’ logos and can be easily remembered and recited by people. Also, the scholar states that slogans have to clearly state the main idea of the advertisement, i.e. they have to be easy to understand.

Rein defines an advertising slogan as a “unique phrase identified with a company or brand” (Rein, 1982, 49). The scholar asserts that the slogan, which is kind of a presentation of the main idea of the advertising campaign, has to “command attention, be memorable and be brief” (Rein, 1982, 54).

Godin (2005) refers to the advertising slogan as a “scenario”, which attracts a potential customer.

The idea that the slogan is a tool that helps a customer to identify the brand is also maintained by Dowling and Kabanoff who state that advertising slogans are a few words that “appear beneath or beside the corporate name at the bottom of a print advertisement and are separated from the body copy for easy recognition” (Dowling and Kabanoff 1996: 64). According to these authors, the advertising slogan is not only memorable itself, but also helps to memorize the brand or company.

Similarly, in her article, Smetonienė states that advertising slogans can help memorize the advertisement itself, because “they remind of and consolidate ideas presented in the introduction” or “clearly express the main idea of the advertisement” (Smetonienė 2001: 83).

Kohli et al (2007) define the advertising slogan as one of the three elements of brand identity.

In Clow and Baack’s (2012) view, the advertising slogan is an easily remembered catchy phrase that makes a key point about the company’s image to the customer.

In the article “The Importance of Ad Slogans”, Hamlin describes the advertising slogans as “catchy, declarative phrases that use devices such as metaphors, alliteration or rhymes with simple, vibrant language” (http://smallbusiness.chron.com/importance-ad-slogans-31343.html), which, even without mentioning the company’s name or product, help people remember the brand.

Various authors define the advertising slogan taking into consideration its specific characteristics, or simply present its synonyms. Although there is no uniform definition in the scientific literature that would include all the characteristics and functions of the advertising slogan, all the above mentioned definitions share a common idea. Thus, we would define the advertising slogan as a short catchy phrase related to a specific brand, which defines, presents, and helps customers remember the key concepts of a brand or advertising campaign itself.
Linguistic Aspects in Advertising Slogans

Many scholars, such as Leech (1972), Myers (1997), Foster (2001), Ding (2003), Kohli et al (2007), Christopher (2012), etc. point out a number of language and rhetorical devices typical for advertising slogans: capitalization, rhyme, alliteration, repetition, word play (pun), metaphor, etc. and analyze slogans at the graphical, phonological, lexical, syntactic and semantic levels.

According to the mentioned scholars, at the graphic level slogans demonstrate the usage of full or partial capitalization as well as unconventional spelling, while at the phonological level the extensive use of rhyme, alliteration, assonance and (less often) onomatopoeia can be observed. At the lexical level scholars point out the use of pronouns, unqualified comparison, coined words, numerals, adjectives and verbs. Everyday sentences/phrases, imperative sentences, questions, tense, idioms or proverbs, ellipsis, parallelism, repetition (anaphora, epiphora) are used at the syntactic level. Puns, metonymy, metaphor, synecdoche, personification, simile, hyperbole, antithesis can often be identified at the semantic level.

In our analysis of advertising slogans we will focus on language and rhetorical devices, i.e. figurative language and sound techniques that are used for effective slogans at the phonological, lexical, syntactic and semantic levels.

1. Figurative language

The analysis of sampled slogans has shown that the most often used examples of figurative language in English advertising slogans are: simile, metonymy, metaphor, pun (word play), personification, apostrophe, symbol, and paradox.

**Simile** is “a figure of speech in which one thing is likened to another, in such a way as to clarify and enhance an image. It is an explicit comparison (as opposed to the metaphor, q.v., where the comparison is implicit) recognizable by the use of the words ‘like’ or ‘as’” (Cuddon, 1999, 830). According to Ding (2003), simile usually helps to promote some positive characteristics of the advertised product (or service) and/or highlight and strengthen emotional representation of its features:

[30] Easy as Dell (Dell)
[38] Now hands that do dishes can feel soft as your face (Fairy Washing Liquid)

Cuddon defines **metonymy** as “a figure of speech in which the name of an attribute or a thing is substituted for the thing itself” (Cuddon, 1999, 510).

[34] Do you have the bunny inside? (Energizer)
[80] You never actually own a Patek Philippe. You merely look after it for the next generation (Patek Philippe watch)
[96] I like Volvo (Volvo)

Myers states that metonymy is commonly found in advertisements “where the product is associated with some person or surroundings” (Myers, 1997, 127-8).

During the analysis, in a number of advertising slogans **metaphor** was identified. Metaphor contributes to the aesthetics of the message and emphasizes the main idea, describing one object in terms of another, usually by means of implicit comparison. When using a metaphor, two seemingly unrelated things are compared by stating that one is the same as the other; this helps to see the similarities or connections which would remain unrevealed if not by the metaphor:

[5] It just feels right to hold the internet in your hands (Apple iPad)
[12] Bounty- the taste of paradise (Bounty candy bar)
[23] Open Happiness (Coca Cola)
[36] Put a tiger in your tank (Esso)
[85] It gives you wings (Red Bull)

Leech maintains that metaphors are valuable in the advertising language as they “suggest the right kind of emotive associations for the product” (Leech, 1972, 182).

Many of the analyzed slogans are based on **pun** that involves a play on words. According to Cuddon (1999, 711), puns are often used for humorous effect. Consider the following examples:

[1] Absolut magic (Absolut Vodka)
[2] Empowering people (Acer)
[6] iThink, therefore iMac (Apple)
[22] Because the Citi never sleeps (Citibank)
[40] Brilliant cleaning starts with Finish (Finish Detergent)
[50] Better gas mileage. A Civic responsibility (Honda Civic)
[52] I think, therefore IBM (IBM)
[58] Nothing runs like a Deere (John Deere)
[59] If you want to impress someone, put him on your Black list (Johnnie Walker Black Whiskey)
[60] Get Rich quick (Kenco Really Rich Coffee)
[72] Have you met life today? (Metropolitan Life (MetLife))
[73] Alarmed? You should be (Moss Security)
[83] Do me a Quaver (Quavers Snacks)
Pun or word play is often used by advertisers because they rely on lexical items with more than one meaning; sometimes a word play occurs when the different words are homophones or homonyms. The pun/word play is based on ambiguity, although, according to Leech, in advertising language ambiguity “hinges on the orthography rather than on pronunciation” (Leech, 1972, 184). Ding (2003) suggests that puns “can work miracles”, especially when advertising slogans help build brand identity by using the brand name as a part of word play, which can “can interest and impress the people with its smartness and its novelty”.

**Personification** is “the impersonation or embodiment of some quality or abstraction; the attribution of human qualities to inanimate objects. Personification is inherent in many languages through the use of gender” (Cuddon, 1999, 661). Advertisements can often use personifications when inanimate objects or abstractions are endowed with human qualities to make it more dramatic, interesting and more attractive, because we can better relate to the objects which are personified.

A number of the analyzed advertising slogans use the figurative language device called **apostrophe** in which “a thing, a place, an abstract quality, an idea, a dead or absent person, is addressed as if present and capable of understanding” (Cuddon, 1999, 51).

**Symbol** “is an object, animate or inanimate, which represents or ‘stands for’ something else” (Cuddon, 1999, 885). In the examples below a diamond is a symbol of love and commitment, and a ring is a symbol of continuing affection and appreciation, while the trilogy ring is the representation of the past, present and future of a relationship:

[26] Hot’n juicy (Dave’s cheeseburgers)
[48] “Bring out the best” Hellmann’s real mayonnaise (Hellmann’s mayonnaise)
[61] Finger lickin’ good (KFC)
[65] Because you’re worth it (L’oreal)
[67] I’m lovin’ it (MacDonals’s)
[95] You’ve never seen “Bodie’s” like this! (Victoria Secret)
[98] **Where’s the beef?** (Wendy’s)

[27] A Diamond is Forever (DeBeers diamonds)
As can be seen from the corpus of the sampled slogans, one of the rarest devices is **paradox**. Paradox is based on “an apparently self-contradictory (even absurd) statement which, on closer inspection, is found to contain a truth reconciling the conflicting opposites. Basically, two kinds may be distinguished: (a) particular or ‘local’; (b) general or ‘structural’” (Cuddon, 1999, 634).

[33] Nothing sucks like an Electrolux (Electrolux)

### 2. Sound techniques

Among the sound techniques most often used in English advertising slogans the following can be observed: rhyme, alliteration, assonance, consonance, rhythm, and onomatopoeia.

One of the dominant sound techniques in English advertising slogans is **rhyme**, which, according to Cuddon, is “the formalized consonance of syllables” (1999, 750). It should be noted that rhyme refers to the way the word is pronounced, not spelled. In Leech’s (1972) view, rhyme makes the slogans and headlines appear striking and easier to remember. Consider the following examples:

[10] Flick your Bic (Bic)
[20] Eye it - try it - buy it! (Chevrolet)
[41] Everything We Do Is Driven By You (Ford)
[45] Gilette - the best a man can get (Gillette)
[68] A Mars a day helps you work, rest and play (Mars candy bar)
[74] The “Wow” starts now (Microsoft Vista)
[87] Freshen-up with 7-Up (7-Up)
[92] Twix it’s all in the mix (Twix)
[93] Fly the friendly sky (United Airlines)
[99] Do you … Yahoo!? (Yahoo!)

According to Ding (2003), rhyme is most probably the best sound technique used for the introduction of the brand name. If the brand name is not used in the slogan, the slogan, as Ding puts it, “is likely to lose its identity, because similar products can use the same ad slogan with a simple change of the product name”. As suggested by the scholar, the function of rhymes in the form of slogans is the transmission of simple information. Rhyme also allows better memorization of the slogan, as it resonates in one’s mind.
Another dominant sound technique identified in the body of the sampled slogans is **alliteration.** In his book, Cuddon defines alliteration as "a figure of speech in which consonants, especially at the beginning of words, or stressed syllables, are repeated" (1999, 23). In his work, Myers (1997) states that in slogans alliteration with its similarity in sound often plays against dissimilarity in meaning and makes the listener more aware of the contrast.

[8] Fluent in finance (Barclays Bank)  
[11] Push button publishing (Blogger)  
[13] Keep the flag flying (British Airways)  
[18] That calls for a Carlsberg (Carlsberg)  
[39] Functional… Fashionable…Formidable… (Fila)  
[43] For the men in charge of change (Fortune)  
[49] Pleasing people the world over (Holiday Inn)  
[53] Solutions for a smart planet (IBM)  
[56] Don't dream it. Drive it! (Jaguar)  
[66] Melts in your mouth, not in your hands (M&Ms)  
[97] Make the most of now (Vodafone)

Sometimes referred to as “vocalic rhyme”, **assonance** “consists of the repetition of similar vowel sounds, usually close together, to achieve a particular effect of euphony” (Cuddon, 1999, 58). As compared with alliteration, assonance is not very obvious in advertising slogans and is harder to identify:

[16] See what we mean (Canon)  
[55] Intel inside (Intel)  
[90] Outwit. Outplay. Outlast. (Survivor TV series)  
[94] Smooth Move (Veet)

Some of the analyzed slogans are based on the sound technique called **consonance,** which is defined by Cuddon as “the close repetition of identical consonant sounds before and after different vowels” (1999, 176).

[7] Ariston…and on…and on… (Ariston)  
[15] Washing machines live longer with Calgon (Calgon)  
[21] The bright lights taste! (Cinzano)  
[57] Grace, space, pace (Jaguar)

Alliteration, assonance and consonance are meant to be attention-grabbing. These sound techniques make a piece of writing memorable and provide the slogans with the
strong beating rhythm. Also, as Ding (2003) suggests, these devices have an emphatic effect of the meaning.

Rhythm is “the movement or sense of movement communicated by the arrangement of stressed and unstressed syllables and by the duration of the syllables” (Cuddon, 1999, 753). Rhythm is usually perceived on a subconscious level and makes the slogan a memorable, repeatable sentence. Neat rhythmical passages are referred to as meter, and the metrical scheme, as Leech puts it, “may easily pass unnoticed” (Leech, 1972, 186).

[54] Live your life, love your home (IKEA)

Another sound technique found in only two analyzed slogans is onomatopoeia. Onomatopoeia is based on “the formation and use of words to imitate sounds. It is a figure of speech in which the sound reflects the sense. As a rule it is deliberately used to achieve a special effect” (Cuddon, 1999, 614–615). Moreover, it makes the idea more expressive, interesting and it has an effect on the readers’ senses.

[14] WASSSSSUP?! (Budweiser)  
[71] Zoom-Zoom (Mazda)

3. Other rhetorical devices

Among other rhetorical devices often used in slogans the following can be observed: repetition (anaphora, epiphora), comparison (unqualified comparison), parallelism, antithesis, and hyperbole.

In this group of rhetorical devices repetition is the most frequently used. Repetition according to Cuddon is “an essential unifying element in nearly all poetry and much prose. It may consist of sounds, particular syllables and words, phrases, stanzas, metrical patterns, ideas, allusions and shapes” (1999, 742). The type of repetition when words or groups of words in successive clauses are repeated, this is a rhetorical device called anaphora (Cuddon, 1999, 37). It is used to appeal to the emotions of the audience in order to persuade, inspire, motivate and encourage them. In case each sentence or clause ends with the same word, this type of repetition is called epiphora/epistrophe (Cuddon, 1999, 279). All these types of repetition lay emphasis on a particular idea. Consider the following examples:

[9] Get to the very top with the very best (Barclays)  
[17] If anyone can, Canon can (Canon)  
[24] It cleans your breath while it cleans your teeth (Colgate Toothpaste)  
[32] Buy it. Sell it. Love it (Ebay)  
[35] It keeps going, and going, and going (Energizer Batteries)
Comparison is a rhetorical or literary device in which a writer compares or contrasts two people, places, things, or ideas. In advertising, the second term of comparison is hardly ever stated; it is left to the audience to decide, thus comparison is unqualified. By using comparison, writers increase their chance of catching the attention and interest of the audience. (http://literarydevices.net/comparison/).

Parallelism “consists of phrases or sentences of similar construction and meaning placed side by side, balancing each other” (Cuddon, 1999, 637). It creates a balanced flow of ideas and can be employed as a tool for persuasion because it uses repetition.

Antithesis is “fundamentally, contrasting ideas sharpened by the use of opposite or noticeably different meanings” (Cuddon, 1999, 46). Antithesis is often used in prose to telling effects. Consider the following:

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[51] Heavy industries. Happy industries (Hyundai)
[62] Share moments. Share life (Kodak)
[70] Maybe she’s born with it. Maybe it’s Maybelline. (Maybelline)
[75] Have a break. Have a Kit-Kat (Nestle- Kit-Kat)
[76] Give me a break, give me a break; break me off a piece of that Kit Kat bar (Nestle- Kit-Kat)
[77] Get N or get out (Nintendo 64)
[79] See new. Hear new. Feel new (Nokia)
[86] I am what I am (Reebok)

[4] Stronger than dirt (Ajax)
[19] Probably the best beer in the world (Carlsberg)
[31] The happiest place on earth (Disneyland)
[47] When you care enough to send the very best (Hallmark)
[69] We sell more cars than Ford, Chrysler, Chevrolet, and Buick combined (Matchbox)

[46] My Goodness. My Guinness (Guinness)
[89] Sony recommends Windows XP for Business. More than you’d expect. Less than you thought (Sony)

[25] Small seeds generate big ideas (CNN)
[88] Imagine a mini phone with maximum style and design (Samsung)
Hyperbole is “a figure of speech which contains an exaggeration for emphasis” (Cuddon, 1999, 406). In the examples below, hyperbole is used to emphasize the best features of the advertised objects:

[63] Fight wrinkles! Renew collagen in just 48 hours (Lancôme)
[64] Takes You Miles Away in Seconds (Lexus)
[81] Everything you hear is true (Pioneer)
[82] The Closest Your Dog Will Ever Get To Being A Dragon (Purina Dog Food)

Discussion and results

The list of 100 sampled English advertising slogans was divided into three groups with the focus on the language and rhetorical devices used in them: 1) figurative language, 2) sound techniques, 3) other rhetorical devices. The first group contains the slogans that exemplify the use of figurative language (simile, metonymy, metaphor, pun (word play), personification, apostrophe, symbol, and paradox) and makes up 40% of all the analyzed slogans, i.e. 40 slogans. The second group contains slogans based on various sound techniques (rhyme, alliteration, assonance, consonance, rhythm, and onomatopoeia) and makes up 32% of all the analyzed slogans, i.e. 32 slogans. The third group contains slogans with other rhetorical devices (repetition (anaphora, epiphora), comparison (unqualified comparison), parallelism, antithesis, and hyperbole) and makes up 28% of all the analyzed slogans, i.e. 28 slogans. The distribution of language and rhetorical devices in slogans is shown in Fig. 1.

![Distribution of language and rhetorical devices in slogans.](image-url)
The distribution of figurative language in the first group of slogans is presented in Fig. 2. As it can be seen from Fig. 2, paradox is used in 1% (1 slogan), simile is used in 2% (2 slogans), personification in 2% (2 slogans), metonymy in 3% (3 slogans), symbol in 3% (3 slogans), metaphor in 6% (6 slogans), apostrophe in 7% (7 slogans), and pun in 16% (16 slogans) of all the sampled slogans. The most often used device in this group is pun, which occurs in 16% of slogans. The rarest language device in this group is paradox, which was identified in 1 slogan.

![Figure 2. Distribution of figurative language in slogans.](image2)

The distribution of sound techniques in the second group of slogans is presented in Fig. 3. As it can be seen in Fig. 3, rhythm is used in 1% (1 slogan), onomatopoeia in 2% (2 slogans), consonance in 4% (4 slogans), assonance in 4% (4 slogans), rhyme in 10% (10 slogans), and alliteration in 11% (11 slogans) of all the sampled English advertising slogans. The most frequently used sound technique in this group of slogans is alliteration that occurs in 11% of all the analyzed slogans, while the rarest sound technique is onomatopoeia (only 2 slogans, which make 2% in the list).

![Figure 3. Distribution of sound techniques in slogans.](image3)
The distribution of other rhetorical devices in the third group of the analyzed slogans is presented in Fig. 4. As it can be seen from Fig. 4, antithesis is used in 2% (2 slogans), hyperbole in 4% (4 slogans), parallelism in 4% (4 slogans), comparison in 5% (5 slogans), and repetition in 13% (13 slogans) of all the sampled slogans. The most frequently used device in this group is repetition, which makes up 13% of all the analyzed slogans, and the rarest device is antithesis, which was identified in 2% of all the sampled slogans.

To sum up the results of the research, three language devices most often used in English advertising slogans are pun (16% of the analyzed slogans), repetition (13% of the analyzed slogans), and alliteration (11% of the analyzed slogans), while the rarest language devices used in English advertising slogans are: paradox (1% of the analyzed slogans), rhythm (1% of the analyzed slogans), personification (2% of the analyzed slogans), onomatopoeia (2% of the analyzed slogans), antithesis (2% of the analyzed slogans), symbol (3% of the analyzed slogans), and metonymy (3% of the analyzed slogans).

**Conclusions**

1. Though the definition of advertising slogan varies from author to author, all the definitions share a common idea that the advertising slogan is a short catchy phrase related to a specific brand and defines, presents and helps customers remember the key concepts of a brand or advertising campaign.

2. The analysis demonstrated that 40% of the sampled slogans contained figurative language, 32% of slogans used sound techniques, and 28% of the analyzed slogans were made using other rhetorical devices (repetition, comparison, parallelism, antithesis, and hyperbole).

3. The tendency is that 16% of all the sampled English advertising slogans exhibit the usage of pun (word play), while simile, personification, and paradox are the rarest
examples of figurative language and make up 2%, 2%, and 1% of all the analyzed slogans respectively.

4. The most often used sound technique in English advertising slogans is alliteration, which was identified in 11% of the sampled slogans, while rhythm and onomatopoeia can be considered the rarest sound techniques used in slogans as they were found in 1% and 2% of the analyzed slogans respectively.

5. The most often used rhetorical device in the other rhetorical devices list is repetition, which was observed in 13% of all the sampled slogans, while the rarest is antithesis, which was identified in 2% of the analyzed slogans.

References


<http://literarydevices.net/comparison/>  
<http://www.marketingdegree.net/about/>
Angliški reklaminiai šūkiai: kai kurių stilistinių priemonių analizė

Tatjana Dubovičienė¹, Pavel Skorupa²

¹ Lietuvos edukologijos universitetas, Filologijos fakultetas, Anglų kalbos katedra, Studentų 39, 08106 Vilnius, Lietuva, tatjana.duboviciene@leu.lt
² Vilniaus Gedimino technikos universitetas, Kūrybinių industrijų fakultetas, Užsienio kalbų katedra, Saulėtekio al. 11, 10223 Vilnius, Lietuva, pavel.skorupa@vgtu.lt

Santrauka

Straipsnyje yra bandoma apibrėžti reklaminio šūkio sąvoką, kuri šiuo metu neturi unifikuoto šios sąvokos apibrėžimo mokslinėje literatūroje. Taip pat straipsnyje pateikiami reklaminių šūkių kalbos analizė lingvistiniu poziūriu, nurodomos kalbinės priemonės, kurios yra taikomos reklamos tekstuose. Atsitiktiniu būdu analizei buvo atrinkti 100 angliškų reklamos šūkių, kurie buvo suskirstyti į grupes pagal vartojamas kalbos ir retorines priemonės. Analizės metu buvo nustatytos dažniausiai ir rečiausiai naudojamos vaizdinės, garsinės ir retorinės priemonės.

Esminiai žodziai: šūkis, analizė, kalbos priemonė, vaizdinė (perkeltinė) kalba, garsinės priemonės, retorinės priemonės.