

Reframing Womanhood: Linguistic Creativity in Advertising Discourse

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Abstract

This study explores linguistic creativity within English-language advertising discourse, focusing on the representation of the linguocultural concept 'woman.' Analyzing 350 advertisements from diverse magazines and online platforms, the research employs cognitive modeling to dissect the conceptual structure of 'woman,' utilizing associative dictionaries, thesauruses, and various encyclopedic sources. The methodology integrates anthropocentrism, interdisciplinarity, and integrality principles, highlighting the pivotal role of linguistic creativity in unveiling the semantics embedded in advertising messages. Contrary to prior research, our findings indicate a predominance of positive conceptual portrayals of women, suggesting a significant semantic expansion in the conceptualization of womanhood within advertising narratives. This underscores the transformative potential of linguistic creativity in shaping societal perceptions and advancing gender discourse.

Keywords: advertising discourse, linguistic creativity, anthropocentrism, cognitive modeling, womanhood

Introduction

The cognitive areas in discursive research are actively developing in the present period. Thus, concepts provide a basis for modeling national worldviews and provide a window into the culture at a particular point. One of the most important notions in cognitive linguistics, as well as in linguocultural studies, is the concept. We have analyzed the linguacultural concepts Woman. The study of cultural concepts has in turn caused the emergence of a new direction of linguistics – linguoconceptology (Vorkachev, 2004), which was separated from linguacultural studies and focused on the study of the interaction of the triad “language - culture – personality” (Vorkachev, 2005). According to this scientist, “human personality” in the foreground position, equated to “consciousness” and formed through “clumps of meaning” - concepts, the distinctive feature of which is ethno-cultural labeling (Vorkachyov, 2005).

It should also be highlighted here that among the many interpretations of the concept, we chose the most acceptable definition for the purposes of our study; that is to say, the definition of the linguacultural concept as “a mental unit aimed at a comprehensive study of language, consciousness and culture” (Benveniste, 1974). In other words, the linguacultural concept is a basic unit of the conceptual, linguistic and national picture of the world which can fix the values of this or that linguacultural society.

Under the normative guidelines, each branch of linguistics should have its own subject, goals, and methods of analysis (Benhima dkk., 2021) . Only then it acquires the status of an independent

science. In cognitive linguistics the problem of methodology and methods of analysis attracts considerable attention of many scholars, such as N.D. Arutyunova, E.S. Kubryakova, D.U. Ashurova, Sh. Safarov, Y.S. Stepanov, R.M. Frumkina, M.V. Pimenova, Z.D. Popova, I.A. Sternin, V.I. Karasik, M. Galieva, N. Normuroda, etc. It should be noted that along with the traditional methods of analysis accepted in cognitive linguistics (etymological, definitional, component, contextual and textual analysis), new methods of conceptual analysis are being developed: *cognitive mapping*, *frame analysis*, and *cognitive metaphor analysis*. The origins of conceptual analysis lie in the theoretical framework proposed by M. Minsky. This method is based on the assumption that a person's perception of reality is carried out by comparing frames, data structures associated with conceptual objects that are stored in memory and are necessary for the representation of some stereotypical situations. A frame is understood as "a unit of knowledge organized around a certain concept, but unlike associations, containing data about the essential, typical and possible for this concept", i.e., distinguished by their conventional character, they specify what is characteristic for a certain culture and what is not (Karasik & Slyshkin, 2001). As a result of frame analysis, it is possible to structure notions of the frame existing in the consciousness of speakers of this or that language, as well as to identify similar and differential elements in the perception of the studied frame by representatives of the compared linguocultures (Abdullaeva, 2021).

Methods

Further development of conceptual analysis, based on the framework method, based on the idea of scientists (Kubryakova dkk., 1991), who offered the method of constructing a cognitive map. The cognitive map is constructed on the basis of the lexicographic definitions of the term, associative relations, combinational characteristics of the term, the most used contexts. The lexicographic presentation is carried out on the basis of definitions of explanatory, phraseological, etymological dictionaries, as well as data from dictionaries of synonyms (Ozhegov & Shvedova, 2008). Associative components are revealed with the help of associative dictionaries and thesauruses. Various kinds of knowledge structures, extracted from encyclopedic, mythological, historical, philosophical and cultural sources, have great importance in the interpretation of the concept. One of the most important stages of the methodology of concept research is to address the most typical contexts of word-concept usage. To this end, paremiological units are analyzed, in particular proverbs, precedent and aphoristic texts, quotations, sayings (Kubryakova dkk., 1996). The final stage of the proposed method is an appeal to various genres of the fiction text, which largely predetermines human knowledge about the world, as the conceptual analysis is text-centered primarily (Alefirenko, 2002).

The method of conceptual analysis offered by E. C. Kubryakova is based on a more comprehensive, extended analysis of a word's semantics, that being in the center of the scheme, becomes "a generating mechanism, the source of its various 'ramifications' and makes it possible to present further derivations from the points on this scheme" (Kubryakova dkk., 1996). For the purpose of our work, a detailed analysis of the linguistic literature on the methodology of the concept description is justified by the methods and techniques of analysis, which contribute to the most adequate description of concepts in advertising discourse (AD) (Pashina, 2006).

Result and Discussion

A. Advertising discourse and its implications

Basing on the above, it should be noted that in our work the cognitive and stylistic analysis of concepts in the AD is built with the allocation of stages of AD interpretations, involving the identification and analysis of a number of linguistic and extralinguistic factors directly related to the concept Woman in

the advertising discourse. Thus, the problem of cultural values and their reflection in the language is considered in the work of N.F. Alefirenko (Alefirenko, 2002), who subdivides cultural values into vital, social, political, moral, aesthetic, and religious dimensions. To illustrate the cultural significance of AD, we can give a number of examples expressing the above-mentioned significant cultural values of the concept Woman. The vital cultural value of the concept Woman is clearly observed in given AD “Association of Business Women”, since the image of a strong woman is perceived by society both from the positive and negative sides, which the woman relies on in developing her life following on her own worldview principles.

One of the most distinctive features of the linguistic creativity of the AD “Sometimes an Angel, Sometimes a Hell Raiser, Always a Strong” is its stylistic marking, most often expressed by convergence. Convergence, in its turn, contributes to the fact that Linguistic Creativity acts in the position of advancement, thereby marking the most significant information. Let us illustrate this using the following example:



Figure 1: Linguistic creativity through the convergence of stylistic devices

In this case, the stylistic marking of Linguistic Creativity is achieved by the convergence of multilevel stylistic devices: antitheses - *angels* - *a hell raiser*, *sometimes* - *always*; metaphors - *strong woman is an angel and a hell raiser*; repetitions - *sometimes...*, *sometimes ...*;

It is interesting to note that the conceptual features, included in the semantics of the lexeme Woman, are implicitly expressed in the context of the AD, forming a set of opposed essences. On the one hand, the AD presents evaluative characteristics of positive orientation (angel), and on the other - negative characteristics (a hell raiser), the interaction of which creates the ambivalence of the given Linguistic Creativity. In other words, a woman who shows herself from both sides is a strong woman. Regardless of whether she shows her weakness or her toughness. The intentional use of the convergence of stylistic devices contributes to the nomination of Linguistic Creativity, indicating its conceptual significance, the pragmatic setting of which is the recipient's perlocutionary effect to the AD (Arnold, 1974).

The social attribute of the success of the concept Woman is represented in the following AD example of the Mercedes-Benz “Men Talk About Women, Sports, and Cars. Women Talk About Men Inside Sports Cars”.



Figure 2: Linguistic creativity through the contamination

It is necessary to mention that the society holds an opinion only to the image of a man as a wealthy, successful man, and the main attribute of success is his reliable car. However, in this AD we can observe the opposite, as the text in the advertisement states that “Men talk about women, sports and cars. Women talk about men inside sports cars”, women can drive these cars not only men. A characteristic feature of linguistic creativity in this AD is the extensive use of the stylistic device - *contamination*. As can be seen from the example, “.....*sports and cars*.*sports cars*” was formed by an occasionalism through omitting the conjunction “and” in the place of their connection.

During the analysis, the social value of the concept Woman was revealed, as the utterance represents a break with the stereotypes of society that a good car is created only for men, and only men can be successful. Thanks to the stylistic figure of antithesis the AD gets a special dynamic and semantic load, which sharpens the recipient's attention to the sharp contrast of concepts and images, in this case “man and woman”. It is also possible to meet such a figure as lexical repetition “... Talk About... Sports and Cars.... Talk About.... Sports Cars”, focus the attention on the conceptual image of a woman. Moreover, the principle of presenting the linguistic material with the help of repetition gives the idea completeness, cyclicity, expressiveness of the AD. At the same time, a clear ideological function is represented, as the RAD is aimed at decoding the conceptual information of a successful woman, which determines the cognitive principles of organization and presentation of cultural information, the driving force of which is the intentional promotion of goods as indicators of social status.

Frequently, advertisements targeting female audiences include famous actresses, top models and female athletes. As an example of such an AD for women is the advertising of “Elegance is an a Attitude,” a famous brand of watches “Longman,” where the aesthetic value of the cultural concept Womanis demonstrated (Conradie, 2013).



Figure 3: Linguistic creativity through the metaphor

Consequently, the social and aesthetic value of the concept is clearly demonstrated here, since a woman can be simply aesthetically beautiful and still perform her direct function. It should be noted that the expressive function also predominates here, as the main element considered to be the “face” of the brand. In the analyzed AD the phrase “Elegance is an attitude” and the signature of the actress herself are observed, which allows the addressee to conclude that the statement is original. In addition, the representation of linguistic creativity in the aforementioned utterance is observed stylistic marking - metaphor. It is the use of metaphor in this AD that brings diversity, making the perception of the woman more figurative and stronger, not only forming an idea, but also predetermining the way and style of thinking about her. It is precisely the metaphor feature that plays a crucial role in creating the aesthetic and social value of the concept Woman, enhancing the effect of the purpose of the information contained in the AD.



Figure 4: Linguistic creativity through the metaphor

The moral cultural value of the woman is observed in this AD by means of the captivating image of the woman, who has an extraordinary inner strength and brings life, hope and beauty into the world, using the unlimited power of her tenderness and kindness. Moreover, a clear realization of the

influencing function is observed, as the pragmatic function of Linguistic Creativity in this AD, the organization of the text, which appeals to the spiritual, cultural, moral stereotypes of women, the mentality of the target audience, assigned to it, is seen. In other words, the concept woman carries a universal message about a better world, where all humanity is in harmony with nature and receptive to the spiritual experience, where everyone has a powerful inner core, generosity and infinite creative potential. The explication of this slogan in the AD represents Linguistic Creativity through a stylistic figure - the metaphor Alien Goddess. Here we can notice the implicit meaning of the woman from the strong, multi-faceted and life-affirming side, i.e. it is equated with the goddess. Another interesting fact is that the face of Alien Goddess fragrance is the charming Willow Smith, the icon of a new generation of motivated people. This fact also contributes to the demonstration of another function, i.e., the expressive one. Hence, the images of legendary persons promote trust and stimulate the influence on the purchase of the product. It should be emphasized that the linguocreative verbalization of this AD is realized through graphic means, due to the peculiarities of font writing and color separation. It is worth noting that the color separation carries a conceptually rich message of AD, as the mystical “golden” flower fills with its energy, calling everyone to touch it, thus manipulating to purchase the product.

Let us examine another AD “Pro-Life is Pro-Woman!” of the largest American global movement for the protection of the right to life, The March for Life. The analysis revealed the political significance of the concept Woman, as it advocates the beauty and dignity of every human life, seeking to end abortion, uniting, educating and engaging pro-life people in the public and political arenas. The implicit message of this AD is expressed as abortion is emotionally damaging to the mother and deadly to the child. The reflection of the concept Woman in the analyzed AD is semantically rich, interpreting the concept of woman as a gift of God, and abortion takes away this gift. We can also observe in the AD linguocreative expression through the prism of stylistic figures such as metaphor, repetition and graphic means. The used metaphor allows to make the AD more vivid and emotional, transferring the life properties to the image of a woman, as the dominant function of woman means the continuation of the human race on earth. As can be seen from the AD, there is also a stylistic device of repetition – “PRO-... is PRO-...!”, thereby guiding the intension on the addressee.



Figure 5: Linguistic creativity through the metaphor

It is worth noting that in the above AD we observe an attractive function, as the addressee tries to focus the addressee's attention with “eye-stoppers” - fixing the attention on the elements, in the role of which the linguocreative phenomenon plays through the principle of “advancing” the graphic typography – “...-Life is ...-Woman!” This method implies semantic richness of the conceptual content of the lexeme Woman, thereby involving the society in active participation in the American world movement on the political level.

Conclusion

All the above examples are characterized by semantic capacity, which is determined by the conceptual content of AD, in the deep structure which reveals a number of conceptual attributes. These conceptual features emphasize the social understanding of the concept, reflecting its discursive status, i.e., the representation of the attitude to the woman of the people. Below we will study the conceptual features of the analyzed AD on the basis of the cognitive mapping.

The conceptual significance of the aforementioned AD is determined, on the one hand, by their referential correlation with the linguocultural concept Woman, represented in these AD by a whole set of conceptual attributes identified in the cognitive map, on the other hand, by correlation with the conceptual information of the whole AD. The conceptual structure of the given AD can be visualized as a picture having, first of all, spatial coordinates where separate perceived objects around the concept Woman localized, allowing in the process of analysis to reproduce a complete mental image of the studied concept in the AD.

Hence, we identified all the cultural values of the concept Woman in the AD, except for the religious one, since the analysis of the linguistic material showed that religious values of this concept are not represented among selected materials.

In this way, the deep and conceptual level of the concept Woman consists of explicit and implicit conceptual attributes. The explicit attributes include the attributes identified in the AD - *Goddess, idol, celeb, ideal woman, perfect, shining, icon, ideal, equality, freedom, angel, innocent, naïve, kind, achiever, winner, go-getter, prosperity, wealth, a hell raiser, elegance, success, life, vital force*. The implicit features, which we identified through contextual analysis and associative dictionaries, include *icon, anesthetic beauty, harmony with nature, a powerful inner core, limitless creativity, generosity, inspiration, gift*. The conceptual structure of the linguocultural concept Woman can be presented in the scheme of cognitive modeling:

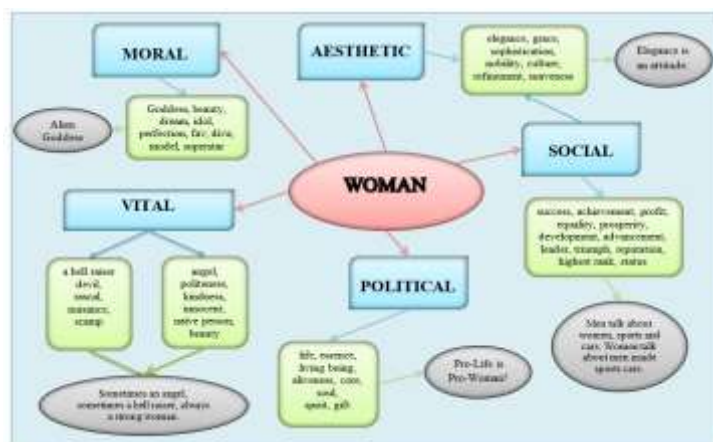


Figure 6: The conceptual structure of the linguocultural concept woman

The analysis of the above-mentioned features allows revealing conceptual features, having more positive value (angel, strong, confident, passionate, sentimental), and the opposite negative value (a hell raiser).

Therefore, the conceptual structure of the concept Woman is quite extended in terms of semantic content (semantic capacity). The analysis of AD shows not only the semantic capacity of these linguistic phenomena, but also their conceptual and cultural significance, which, in our opinion, constitutes the essential linguistic and creative characteristics of AD.

Originality Statement

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