

The Deviant Features of Trade Advertising Register in Arabic

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Abstract—Arabic, like all the world languages, has different regional varieties (dialects). Ferguson puts such dialects under the term *LOW VARIETY* of a language which generally deviates from the standard language model. The language of advertising, for example, deviates from the standard language. It has fore-grounded linguistic features and carries a style of language characterized by being persuasive and attractive. The linguists formulate a systematic and scientific model for this highly idiosyncratic use of language. In this paper, I collected some planned linguistic deviations in the written form of trade advertising in Arabic. These advertising expressions are analyzed at different linguistic levels; namely, phonological, morphological, syntactical and semantical. This study aims to throw lights on: 1- How the language of trade advertising in Arabic is constructed. 2- The extent in which the trade advertising variety in Arabic is different from the standard variety. 3- The purpose and role of inviting the trade advertising register. 4- Whether we can use the register of trade advertising in any other register.

Index Terms—advertising register, deviation, nonce- word, fore-grounding

I. INTRODUCTION

Needless to say, language is the best way to convey messages either through written or spoken forms. The written form (standard) is generally based on the high variety of language. However, the low variety is often accompanied by the spoken form (dialects). The literate native speakers of a language are able to cope with the spoken and written forms of the high variety of that language while those who are illiterate can communicate through only the spoken form of that variety. The low variety of Arabic, for example, has different regional dialects. Each dialect has linguistic features which differ from those of the others. This sociolinguistic phenomenon makes the people who belong to different geographical areas unable to fully cope with some linguistic items of the other communities. This, as I guess, is attributed to the peculiarities of those varieties and their being linguistically away from the norms of the standard (High Variety).

Institutional linguistics has witnessed a great development in realizing that the study of sub-languages and registers deserves greater scholarly attention than ever. Mehrotra (2000) says:

It is particularly so when the stylistic, pedagogical and descriptive views are involved. This clearly indicates a shift of emphasis from the "universalist tradition" to the tradition often termed as "particularist" stressing variation and change within a language in accordance with the divergences in communicative situations. (p. 18)

Crandall (1992) mentions that in the field of professional use of languages, each profession has its own code that has some items which cannot be easily deciphered by some people who are outside the circle of that profession. i.e., the members of each profession use a variety of a language which may not be understood by the hearer/addressee. The farmers of specific region, for instance, have some linguistic items understood by them exclusively because these items are circulated among them only. The same idea applies to physicians, businessmen, journalists, politicians, etc. The reason behind the difficulty in understanding the linguistic items by lay-persons is due to their deviation from the standard norms. In other words, the members of each profession communicate with each other by using a specific linguistic repertoire. This observable fact is not a defect in a lingo but I consider it a healthy phenomenon for any living language.

Linguists have examined communication among members of the same profession as well as between professionals and laypersons. They analyze the special register, discourse or speech involved. Generally speaking, members of different professions focus on content in a message, while linguists are more often interested in the language used in conveying messages. However, in those professions where a major objective is persuasion, language and techniques of communication are as important as the content of the message (ibid).

What concerns me here is the planned deviation, as Chapman (1987) calls it, in the written form of trade advertising. First, let us define the term "advertising". According to the definition of the Committee of the American Marketing Association (CAMA) advertising is non personal communication of information usually paid for and usually persuasive in nature about product, services or ideas by identified sponsors through the various media. Advertising is a style of immediate impact and rapid persuasion. The word "advertise" originates from the Latin word "advertere", which means "to turn one's attention to". The point of an advertisement is to persuade you of the merit of a particular product or

service, in order that you will part with some of your money. In general, whether the medium is print, radio or television, the advertiser can rely on your attention for only a very short time, and therefore the sales message must be short, clear, distinctive and memorable (Gove, 1976). Accordingly, linguists concentrate on studying the linguistic features that add power to the language of advertising. The producers and sellers of goods linguistically use a fore-grounded language to market their products. Such a language is not understood by only a specific group of people, but the advertisers try to select a style of a language that makes all people with their different classes, cultural backgrounds, and education levels understand it to buy those products. Leech (1966) says that the linguists who analyze the language of advertising point out to some features of the language of advertising. They share the same impression about it as simple and contain a strong verb. Advertising often pretends to be talking to the prospective customers. There is, therefore a heavy use of second person pronoun (you), especially at the beginning of clauses (imperative clauses). Others like Bollinger (1979) note the use of metaphors to unite product with admired concepts and of creative spelling and prosodic cues. Ogilvy (1983) points that the advertisers advise adhering to similar principles: holding attention, involving the audience in the message, and using language which is edited, purposeful, simple, direct and rich. The visible meaning of that advertisement sounds strange, bizarre and amazing. The advertisers have potential ability to depend on shared assumptions and expectations. The investigation of these two senses supports us with some insight into how to be more communicated with the hidden meaning than what is written. Pragmatically speaking, the invisible meaning is the cornerstone in the trade advertising. That is to say, when we read a trade text, we think about what is meant even when it is not actually written (Yule, 1997).

The example below is a name of a store written in the English language. It shows how the clear meaning in the language of advertising is not as vital as the invisible one.

A- *BABY AND TODDLER SALE*

Pragmatically, the advertiser here wants us to think not only about what words mean, but also about what he intends them to mean. In the normal context of our present society, we suppose that this store did not go into the business of selling young children from the store, but rather, it advertises clothes for babies. In short, this sentence is semantically deviant, because there is no collocation between **BABY, TODDLER** and **SALE** and surely babies can not be sold. This deviation lets the readers think about the invisible meaning.

Interestingly, I may say this sentence is also syntactically fore-grounded. The advertiser violates the rules of grammar by omitting the possessive phrase (**'s & clothes**) and the form of the sentence would be:

B- *BABY AND TODDLERS' CLOTHES SALE.*

This form is still odd grammatically because the subject of the sentence is missing. The correct form of the sentence according to the rule of grammar is:

C- WE SELL BABY AND TODDLER'S CLOTHES.
 S V O

The sentence in the correct form (C) looks normal because it follows the grammatical norm of English language. The advertisers think that this method of constructing the language does not suit the advertising register because it has no power to attract the customers. However, the form (A) is more persuasive and suits the trade register. Trade advertising belongs to the category of short-text registers where a mere peripheral glance can put forward the form and the content of the message (Mehrotra, 2000). The analysis of this blurb¹ shows that writers normally make their style conform to the social function and formal conventions of a particular text type or genre. They do that because they want the readers to be socially tuned in to them.

Trade advertising in Arabic is the same. The advertisers make an effort to choose a peculiar register of language that persuades, attracts and magnetizes the customers for the purpose of marketing the products. Such a register which comes under the low variety is linguistically fore-grounded.

II. METHODOLOGY

In this paper, I present some samples out of a huge number of planned deviant trade advertising texts which are used in Arabic. They are analyzed at various levels of linguistics namely; phonology, morphology, syntax, semantics and stylistics to identify the extent they are against the language norms of Arabic.

¹- A blurb is a text the publisher prints on the jacket or cover of a book or name of trade houses to give the potential readers an idea of what it is about, though obviously its primary purpose is to stimulate sale.

III. DATA ANALYSIS

	Arabic	transcription	English
1	طع 100 على كيفك	Ta'amiah ala kifek	Ta'amiah suits your mood
2	طخ X ضات	Takhfidha	discounts
3	قرص لوفر والحب يكبر اسرع بدايه ابطنى نهايه اجمل حكاية	qurs lover walhub yekber. Asraa bidaiah, abtaa nihayah, ajmel hikaiah	Lover tablet and the love grow. Quick start, slow end and the best tale
4	شوارما على كيفك جربها مره, تجينا كل مره	(Shawarma ala kifek. Jerrebha marrah, tijina kul marrah)	Shawarma suits your mood Try it once, you will come always)
5	دلوني عليك	Dalluny alayk	They guided me to you
6	هو ده شعبان يتاع السمك اللي بيقلوا عليه	hwua dah Shaaban bitaa assamak elly bi-yuqlu alih	Is this Shaaban's fish store the people talk about?
7	الورشه الفنية لتشخيص واصلاح امراض السيارات	Alwarshah alfanyiah litashkhis wa islah amradh assaiyarat	The workshop for diagnosing and repairing the cars' diseases
8	سمينا بنفسك	Sammina binafsak	you name us
9	بدون اسم	Bidun ism	without a name
10	اخي السائق: اطفال ليس لنديمهم فرامل وهذه مسؤوليتك	Akhi assa'eq: Ala'atfal bidoon faramel, hathihi mas'olietak)	Brother Driver: The children are without brake, this is your responsibility
11	سيتي ماكس	City Max	City Max
12	ماجك لاند	Magic land	Magic land
13	وينج لاند	Wedding land	Wedding land
14	سيتي سموك	City Smoke	City Smoke
15	براندز فور لس	Brands for Less	Brands for Less

These data of trade advertising will be investigated linguistically as follows:

1- (طع 100 على كيفك - Ta'amiah suits your mood).

This advertisement language is written in this way so as to attract the viewers. One should read it three or four times with concentration to decipher and understand its invisible meaning. If we analyze it morphologically, we note that this blurb violates the word formation norms. The writer invents orthographically a new word by combining the numerical item with alphabetical letters to create a new word (طع 100). Wales (1989) in his Dictionary of Stylistics calls this process "NONCE-WORD" where the writer coins a word which is used only once and never accepted through wider circulation. Here for a commercial purpose, the new orthographical shape of the word (طعمية) is replaced by another attractive and funny one which is (طع 100).

Syntactically, this advertisement breaks down the structure of the language. Only the object of the sentence is mentioned. The other parts of the sentence (subject + verb) are deleted for the advertising purpose. The correct form would be:

نحن نقدم طعمية على كيفك

-We provide Ta'amiah suits your mood.
S V O

Stylistically this planned fore-grounding is called ellipsis. It helps to focus on new or more important information. It is common in registers where economy is highly needed.



2- طخ X ضات (Discounts)

Morphologically this word is coined in a deviant way. It is formed against the rules of word formation. The writer intentionally inserts the mathematical sign (X) in the middle of the word to stand for the deleted letters (in-في) to create a nonce word called (discount- طخ X ضات). Phonologically, the correct word is تخفيضات not طخفيضات i.e., (ت) sound, which is plain alveolar, is the correct one instead of (ط) which is emphatic alveolar. However, the writer violates the phonological norms of the word by using the low phonological variety of Arabic instead of the high one.

Syntactically, only the object of the sentence is mentioned. The subject and the verb are deleted because such blurbs belong to the category of short-text registers where a mere word can put forward the form and content of the message (see the advertisement No. 1)

قرص لوفرف والحب يكبر اسرع بدايه ابطنى نهايه اجمل حكاية (*Lover tablet, and the love grows. Quick start, slow end, best tale.*)
(*qurs lover walhub yekber. Asraa bidaiah, abttaa nihayah, ajmel hikaiah-*)

Phonologically, this advertisement has the final rhymes with the words (لوفرف *lover* - يكبر *yekber*) and (حكاية *hikaiah* - *nihayah* -بدايه *bidaiah* -نهايه). The phoneme /r/ is repeated finally in the words (lover- yakber). Similarly, the words (حكاية *hikaiah* -*nihayah* -بدايه *bidaiah* -نهايه) have the same final sound /-aiah/. The advertiser makes creative use of language by using the phonological possibility of a language to serve his business purposes.

Syntactically, this blurb has parallelism where the texts (اجمل حكاية - ابطنى نهايه - اسرع بدايه *Asraa bidaiah, abttaa nihayah, ajmel hikaiah-*) are all noun phrases. The syntactic structure of the parts of the sentence is identical. These parts are in close sequence and their structure is (Adj + N). Leech (1969) defines this register which carries an emotive function as a kind of fore-grounded regularity.

Semantically, the metaphorical design is impeded where the tablet (لوفرف - *lover*) has the super power to give quick start slow end and good tale. Form the pragmatic point of view this visible meaning carries another invisible meaning that can be deciphered if it is purchased or asked about.

4- شوارما على كيفك جربها مره, تجينا كل مره (*Good Shawarma... Try it once, you/shawarma always will come.*)

From the syntactic point of view, the final part of this blurb is ambiguous. It accepts two subjects (YOU and SHAWARMA). The first sentence (A) shows that the subject of the sentence is YOU, whereas the second one (B) shows that SHAWARMA is the subject of the sentence. See the sentences below:

A- شوارما على كيفك جربها مره, انت تجينا كل مره

-Good Shawarma, try it once, YOU will always come.

B- شوارما على كيفك جربها مره. الشوارما تجينا كل مره

-Good Shawarma, try it once, SHAWARMA will always come

Of course sentence (A) is more acceptable but the way in which the text is written gives the possibility to accept sentence (B) as well. This linguistic deviation, which is used to create the advertisement targets, the customers' attention to try that food item.

The use of second person addressee “you” tends to shorten the distance between the product or the producer and consumers, as if the producer or the advertisement is speaking to you face to face and making sincere promises and honest recommendations. In so doing, the advertisement slogans stand a better chance to move the receiver or customers to action. Because the receiver feels that he is being thought of and taken care of and he is the center point of the producers.

5- دلوني عليك (*They guided me to you.*)

The advertiser sees that these two words are enough to be the name of a very big store. Semantically, the writer here uses a deliberate overstatement or exaggeration to an illogical degree. This process is called hyperbole. Galperin (1977) defines hyperbole as a device which prevents people from explaining things in their true dimensions. The advertiser uses the plural pronoun (they) as the subject of the sentence to tell the readers that a huge number of people, with their different social backgrounds, always visit this shop and are interested in buying its items. In short, this place is known to all and all people advise me to go to see it. Metaphorically, we infer that the writer of this advertisement depicts the store as a man we are talking to and telling him that “they guided me to you”

6- هو ده شعبان بتاع السمك اللي بيقلوا عليه (*Is this Shaaban's fish store people talk about?*).



This is the name of a fish store written in the Egyptian dialect. It is constructed in a conversational way. Semantically, as Ullman (1951) mentions that this text contains an interjection which acquires emotive meaning to arouse emotion. There is also metonymy in this text. The writer displays the abstract notion (the fame and reputation this store has all over the town) by using a concrete deviant linguistic register that is represented in the name of the shop.

7- الورشة الفنية لتشخيص واصلاح امراض السيارات (*The workshop for diagnosing and repairing cars diseases*)



Semantically, this funny name is deviant where the writer uses the device of metaphor. He transfers the quality from one object to another. He displays the cars as if they were human beings suffering from diseases and characterizes the mechanic as a physician who diagnoses and treats the illness of the cars. Such linguistic deviation is intended to serve the business interest.

8- سمينا بنفسك (you name us)



Stylistically, the advertiser here uses a psychological method to catch the customers' attention. He asks the sightseers to visit the store first and then select a name for it. Though the store is one, the object of the sentence is written as a second person plural (you name us) to show that there are many branches for this shop. He bets that the visitors will be highly attracted and will be regular visitors to that store.

The use of first person addresser “we” and “us” is the most direct way to inform the receiver about the ideas, views and credit of the sponsor of an advertisement. It is a little bit like a self-introduction to the potential customers to let them know you, recognize you, believe you and trust you.

9- بدون اسم (without a name)



The title above, semantically, indicates that no name can rank their position. They are above all names.

10- *اخي السائق: الاطفال ليس لديهم فرامل وهذه مسؤوليتك* (*Brother Driver: The children are without brake, this is your responsibility*).



Semantically, this text carries an ironic meaning. It addresses the driver to take care when driving nearby children's school. The words **CHILDREN** and **BRAKE** have no collocation because it is the cars not the children who have brake. Metaphorically, the text means that the children do not take care when crossing the streets. However, the driver himself should be highly alert and careful about kids when they are crossing the streets.

- 11- سيتي مارت (City Mart)
 12- ماجك لاند (Magic land)
 13- ويننج لاند (Wedding land)
 14- سيتي سموك (City Smoke)
 15- براندرز فور لس (Brands for Less)
 16- هوني مون (Honeymoon)

The trade names (10-15) are English names written in Arabic letters without mentioning any more details. The meanings of these names are not known among, at least, 85% of the visitors. However, those names are talked about and visited by many people with their different educational backgrounds. Only one curious visit for each store will give impression about its contents. The visitors will understand that **CITY MART** is a supermarket that contains all household items. **MAGIC LAND** is a garden for children to play therein. **WEDDING LAND** is a store from where you can buy all wedding requirements. **CITY SMOKE** sells smokers' supplies. **BRANDS FOR LESS** gives discount. **HONEYMOON** is a store that sells all marriage accessories. The orthographic code switching of the shops names is a kind of language register that is used for persuasion and a reference to a sophisticated place for prestigious people. The owners of these stores are highly convinced that using the English names for their shops is the best way to sound unique and attract the customers, though this western tendency in advertising is not appreciated by some Arab ethnic groups.

IV. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

Every profession has its unique register. Each register is characterized by having linguistic items. These items have no model in the high variety of a language and linguistically do not follow the norms of the standard variety. The language of advertisement in Arabic, which is the main concern of this paper, is alike. It is featured by being unique and constructed in a way that serves the business purposes. It is fore-grounded and it deviates from the rules of the standard Arabic as well. The linguists call this "planned deviation". Without being deviant, the language of advertisement would never be suitable to be used as an advertising register. Accordingly, they try to make a scientific study for the advertising register. Scientific study means to study the language of advertisement at different levels of linguistics particularly; phonologically, morphologically, syntactically semantically and stylistically. We try to shed light on the extent the language of advertisement deviates from the system of Arabic. The researcher finds that, the language of advertising in Arabic is constructed in an idiosyncratic way suits the marketing purposes only. This register is only used in advertising. We cannot use it in other purposes because it is not applicable. That is why the linguists agree on the idea that each profession has a specific, unique and exclusive register. The language of literature, for example, is different from the language of elections, and the language of religion is different from the language of policy, etc. That means we cannot use the linguistic features of advertising in any other profession because the linguistic features of the language of advertisement is totally different from the linguistic features of other registers. Accordingly, the gate of research is open to make linguistic studies on the deviant registeral features of each profession individually.

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