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STYLISTIC DEVICES IN SOCIAL ADVERTISING TEXTS IN ENGLISH AND RUSSIAN LANGUAGES

Annotation: *This contrastive analysis examines metaphor, hyperbole, simile, personification, and puns in English and Russian social advertising. It reveals that while both languages use similar rhetorical tools, their application reflects core cultural values: English ads favor individualized narratives and subtle humor, aligned with individualism, while Russian ads employ direct statistical exaggeration, collective appeals, and culturally rooted idioms, reflecting collectivism. The findings emphasize the need for culturally adapted translations and position stylistic devices as vital mediators between linguistic form and persuasive function in shaping public behavior.*

Keywords: *advertising text, social advertising, stylistic devices, metaphor, hyperbole, simile, personification, pun.*

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СТИЛИСТИЧЕСКИЕ СРЕДСТВА В ТЕКСТАХ СОЦИАЛЬНОЙ РЕКЛАМЫ НА АНГЛИЙСКОМ И РУССКОМ ЯЗЫКАХ

Аннотация: *Данное контрастивное исследование анализирует использование метафоры, гиперболы, сравнения, олицетворения и каламбуров в английской и русской социальной рекламе. Выявлено, что, несмотря на применение схожих риторических средств, их функционирование отражает*

ключевые культурные ценности: английская реклама предпочитает индивидуализированные нарративы и тонкий юмор, что соответствует индивидуалистской ориентации, тогда как русская реклама опирается на прямое статистическое преувеличение, коллективные обращения и культурно закреплённые идиомы, отражающие коллективистские установки. Полученные результаты подчёркивают необходимость культурно адаптированных переводов и показывают, что стилистические средства выступают важным посредником между языковой формой и убедительной функцией, влияя на формирование общественного поведения.

Ключевые слова: рекламный текст, социальная реклама, стилистические средства, метафора, гипербола, сравнение, олицетворение, каламбур.

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INGLIZ VA RUS TILLARIDAGI IJTIMOIIY REKLAMA MATNLARIDA STILISTIK VOSITALAR

Annotatsiya: *Ushbu qiyosiy tahlil ingliz va rus ijtimoiy reklama matnlaridagi metafora, giperbola, oʻxshatish, jonlantirish va kalamburni oʻrganadi. Tadqiqot shuni koʻrsatadiki, har ikki tilda bir xil ritorik vositalar qoʻllanilsa-da, ularning qoʻllanish usuli asosiy madaniy qadriyatlarni aks ettiradi: ingliz reklamalarida individualizmga xos boʻlgan individuallashtirilgan hikoyalar va yumorning yumshoq shakllari afzal koʻriladi, rus reklamalarida esa statistik haddan orttirish, jamoaviy murojaatlar va madaniy jihatdan shakllangan idiomalarga tayaniladi. Xulosalar madaniy moslashtirilgan tarjimalar zarurligini taʼkidlaydi va stilistik vositalarni til shakli va taʼsirchanlik funksiyasi oʻrtasidagi muhim vositachi sifatida, jamoat xulqini shakllantirishda muhim omil sifatida koʻrsatadi.*

Kalit soʻzlar: reklama matni, ijtimoiy reklama, stilistik vositalar, metafora, giperbola, oʻxshatish, jonlantirish, kalambur.

Introduction

Social advertising represents a distinct communicative genre focused on fostering positive societal transformation rather than commercial profit. This non-commercial nature often means audiences approach these messages without pre-existing biases, creating a unique context for persuasion. Such campaigns tackle pressing issues including environmental sustainability, public health initiatives, and educational advancement, with the fundamental objective of altering public perceptions and motivating pro-social behavior.

The linguistic construction of these messages proves crucial to their effectiveness. Beyond merely transmitting information, social advertising employs carefully crafted language to shape audience interpretation, enhance message retention, and ultimately drive behavioral change. The strategic selection of linguistic features, particularly stylistic devices, serves dual purposes: ensuring persuasive impact while creating vivid mental imagery that reinforces the campaign's core message. Furthermore, cross-linguistic analysis reveals how these stylistic choices are deeply embedded within specific cultural frameworks, reflecting and leveraging distinct societal values and communicative patterns to maximize resonance with target audiences.

Literature review

Advertising discourse relies on linguistic creativity for its persuasive function, strategically employing stylistic devices to transform messages into memorable narratives (Goddard, 2002; Leech, 1966). However, the application of these devices is not culturally neutral. Their effectiveness is mediated by societal values, such as the individualism-collectivism dichotomy (Hofstede, 2001), which influences whether a message prioritizes personal benefit or communal well-being. This cultural conditioning is further rooted in conceptual metaphor theory (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980), suggesting that persuasive efficacy in social advertising depends on aligning a message's figurative language with the target audience's pre-existing cognitive models.

While stylistic analysis within individual languages is well-established, notably through Leech's (1966) work on English and Galperin's (1977) stylistics relevant to Russian language, still a significant scholarly gap exists. A systematic, cross-linguistic comparison of stylistic devices in English and Russian social advertising remains underdeveloped. This study aims to address this gap by conducting a contrastive analysis of parallel corpora. Through this analysis, the research clarifies the precise ways in which cultural values find expression through linguistic form

Research Methodology

This study employs a qualitative contrastive analysis to examine the manifestation and function of stylistic devices in English and Russian social advertising. The research is designed as a multiple case study, where each "case" is a specific stylistic device analyzed across two linguistic and cultural contexts.

Analysis and results

Metaphor operates as a cornerstone of advertising rhetoric, functioning through the strategic mapping of one conceptual domain onto another to generate potent emotive and cognitive associations. As noted by Leech, the device's value lies in its capacity to evoke precisely calibrated emotional responses toward a product or idea [6]. This aligns with Selivanova's conceptualization of metaphor as a fundamental mechanism of linguistic economy and semiotic creativity, where the symbolic framework of a familiar source domain is employed to structure understanding of a more abstract target domain [8]. The persuasive efficacy of metaphor stems from its ability to convey complex messages with immediacy and expressive power, thereby prompting the audience toward a more engaged and conscious decoding of the advertisement's core argument. For instance, the anti-smoking slogan, "*You would not stay in a relationship that lies to you. Why stay with tobacco?*" effectively reframes nicotine addiction as a toxic partnership, leveraging shared cultural understandings of betrayal to cast the habit in a damning new light. Similarly, the ecological metaphor identifying forests as "the Earth's lungs," powerfully realized in the slogan "*When forests burn, the planet can't breathe,*" translates the abstract

process of photosynthesis into the vital, visceral function of respiration, making the threat of deforestation tangibly urgent.

This technique is deployed with particular force in Russian social advertising, often through the strategic juxtaposition of established cultural metaphors with stark statistical reality. A poignant example is the use of the classic metaphor «Дети — цветы жизни». This benign, almost proverbial image is frequently followed by a devastating factual counterpoint: «По статистике после абортов около 8 % женщин остаются бесплодными. В настоящее время 7 миллионов россиян не могут испытать счастья материнства». Advertising text «Пьяный за рулём — убийца. Не включай режим убийцы» employs a direct metaphor by explicitly equating a “drunk driver” with a “killer,” stripping away any abstraction to frame the act not as an accident, but as premeditated homicide. This harsh identification is then intensified by the phrase “killer mode,” which metaphorically portrays alcohol consumption before driving as the conscious activation of a deadly function, much like switching on a machine.

Hyperbole is a stylistic device characterized by deliberate exaggeration, where the extent of amplification renders the expressed idea unlikely or even impossible from a realistic perspective [1]. In social advertising the statement: “*Smoking kills one person every six seconds,*” used in World Health Organization (WHO) campaigns is based on global smoking-related mortality statistics. However, its phrasing intensifies the immediacy of the issue, creating a heightened sense of urgency and alarm to persuade the audience to take action against smoking. Similarly, the claim “*Drive 5 mph over the limit and you could kill someone’s child,*” it exaggerates the probabilistic risk into a definitive, catastrophic outcome to instill extreme caution.

This rhetorical strategy is equally potent in Russian public service campaigns. A slogan like «Не выучил ЖИ, ШИ — живи на гроши» employs hyperbolic cause-and-effect. It humorously yet starkly exaggerates the long-term socioeconomic consequences of poor literacy, linking a childhood lesson to a lifetime of poverty to emphasize the critical importance of education. A more direct, statistical hyperbole is

found in the warning: «Человек курящий за 30 лет выкуривает 200 000 папирос, или 160 кг табаку, в котором содержится 800 грамм никотина». While fact-based for a heavy smoker, the cumulative figures are presented in a staggering, almost unimaginable quantity, visualizing 800 grams of a potent poison, to create a visceral sense of self-harm that a simple “smoking is bad” could never achieve. In all cases, hyperbole transforms abstract risks into tangible, immediate, and unforgettable dangers. Another examples of hyperbole: «Сбрось скорость, или ты убьёшь ребёнка», «Каждая сигарета отнимает 15 минут жизни», «Тысячи смертей от курения каждый день», «Рак груди убивает больше женщин, чем автокатастрофы». All these examples employ hyperbole by presenting stark, exaggerated worst-case scenarios to create immediate fear and urgency.

Simile is a figure of speech whereby two concepts are imaginatively and descriptively compared [9]. Simile used when two essentially unlike things are compared, often in a phrase introduced by “like” or “as”. Examples of simile in social advertising in English: “Driving tired is like driving drunk”, “Ignoring climate change is like ignoring a tornado warning”, “Littering is like throwing trash in your own backyard”, “Texting while driving is like closing your eyes for 5 seconds on the highway”, “Not wearing a mask is like driving without a seatbelt”, “Using drugs is like playing Russian roulette with your life”, “Plastic in the ocean is like a ticking time bomb for marine life”.

Similes are relatively rare in Russian social advertising compared to other stylistic devices. For example, «Вы не бережёте своё здоровье, потому что здоровы как лошадь. Но это до поры до времени.» This social advertisement uses the simile «здоровы как лошадь» (“healthy as a horse”) to ironically subvert a common cultural idiom. It acknowledges the user’s current feeling of robust health only to immediately undermine it with the warning «Но это до поры до времени» (“But this is only for now”), arguing that such proverbial strength is temporary and will be eroded by poor health choices.

Personification is a stylistic device that attributes human characteristics, such as actions, emotions or intentions, to inanimate objects, non-human entities, or abstract

concepts [9]. This technique is highly effective in advertising and public service announcements as it captures attention by creating a relatable and memorable image of otherwise impersonal ideas. By giving a voice or agency to the non-human, personification makes messages more visceral and engaging. For instance, health warnings like *“Smoking kills”* or environmental appeals like *“Mother Earth is crying”* and *“The Ocean speaks”* personify abstract dangers or natural elements to evoke a stronger emotional response. Similarly, the Russian environmental slogan *«Природа это не переварит»* (Nature won't digest this) powerfully personifies nature as a living entity with physical limitations, vividly illustrating the concept of non-biodegradable waste. Another example is the road safety warning *«Асфальт, я тебе не по зубам. Едешь на велосипеде — надевай шлем!»* (Asphalt, you can't chew me up. Riding a bike - wear a helmet!), which frames the asphalt as a predatory creature with teeth. Often, this device operates on a subconscious level, where the audience grasps the intended meaning without explicitly registering the personification itself. There is an advertising text *«Семья из 2-х банок снимет мусорный бак. Чистоту гарантируем»*. This message personifies two cleaning product containers as a “family” that can “handle” an entire trash bin. This attribution of human, collaborative qualities transforms an arduous chore into a simple, manageable task, making the solution feel more relatable and trustworthy.

Puns, defined by Morner and Rausch as the witty use of words to suggest multiple meanings, are a prevalent rhetorical device in advertising [7]. As Goddard notes, their application is highly deliberate, serving as an effective tool for capturing audience attention, particularly in headlines [3]. The persuasive power of puns often resides at the lexical level, where a single word activates two distinct conceptual frames. This is evident in environmental campaigns like *“Don't be trashy - recycle,”* where “trashy” conflates literal littering with socially undesirable behavior, and *“Don't be fossil-fueled - go green,”* which links reliance on polluting energy to an outdated mindset. By leveraging humor and semantic duality, these slogans critique harmful practices while promoting sustainable alternatives. Similarly, the AdoptUSKids campaign, *“What to expect when you're expecting,”* operates by

repurposing a culturally familiar phrase associated with pregnancy. This lexical repurposing deftly redirects the audience's focus toward the concept of adoption, forging an engaging connection by building upon shared cultural knowledge.

The use of puns in Russian social advertising represents a sophisticated linguistic strategy that transcends mere wordplay. By leveraging homophony and semantic polysemy, these campaigns create a cognitive “click” that forces active audience engagement, thereby enhancing message retention. For instance, the anti-smoking advertising text *«Родите ли? Курение вызывает бесплодие»* exploits the homophonic similarity to *«Родители?»* to pivot from a general health warning to a jarring, personal question about infertility. Similarly, *«Вы хотите передохнуть? Курение вносит свои коррективы»* uses the pun, plays on the near-identical Russian verbs *«передохнУть»* (to take a break) and *«передОхнуть»* (to die). By asking “Do you want to take a break?” and it shockingly suggests that a smoking break could become your final one. The road safety ad *«Зебра главнее всех лошадей. Сбавь скорость на дороге»* cleverly polysemous, using the dual meaning of *«зебра»* (animal/pedestrian crossing) to create a memorable hierarchy that privileges safety over speed. Another example is *«Деньги утекают как вода. Закрой кран, установи счетчик»*, that activates the idiom for wasting money and then makes it literal by immediately connecting it to a physical tap. This deliberate linguistic ambiguity transforms standard directives into intellectually stimulating and culturally resonant messages, ensuring that the core public service advice is not only understood but internalized through the very act of decoding the pun.

Conclusion and Recommendations

This contrastive analysis reveals that while English and Russian social advertising share a common rhetorical repertoire, their deployment of stylistic devices reflects deep-seated cultural differences. English texts favor individualistic framing, absurd humor, and subtle wordplay, whereas Russian campaigns demonstrate preference for direct statistical hyperbole, collective responsibility themes, and culturally-embedded idiomatic puns.

Three key findings emerge: First, metaphor functions as a universal persuasive tool but differs in cultural grounding. English metaphors leverage personal experience narratives while Russian metaphors often merge proverbial wisdom with statistical authority. Second, hyperbole's effectiveness depends on cultural tolerance for direct fear appeals, which appears higher in Russian contexts. Third, the relative scarcity of similes in Russian advertising suggests cultural preferences for more explicit, direct comparisons over figurative analogies.

These findings have practical implications for transnational social advertising campaigns: direct translation of rhetorical strategies without cultural adaptation risks reduced efficacy. Future research should expand corpus size, incorporate audience reception studies, and extend analysis to other languages to validate these patterns.

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