

STYLISTIC DEVICES USED IN ENGLISH ADVERTISING SLOGANS

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Abstract

The submitted paper discusses stylistic devices used in English advertising slogans, both from the theoretical and practical viewpoints. Various approaches of linguists dealing specifically with the issue of stylistic devices used in advertising are discussed in the paper. Furthermore, the necessary attention is devoted to the analysis of stylistic features in English advertising slogans at all language levels.

Keywords: *linguistics, stylistic devices, English advertising slogans, analysis, language levels*

INTRODUCTION

Advertising slogans have specific features which are typical only for the advertisement discourse. However, there is no unique definition of a slogan in academic sources of literature dealing with the issue of advertising slogans. Whittier declares that a slogan "should be a statement of such merit about a product or service that it is worthy of continuous repetition in advertising, is worthwhile for the public to remember, and is phrased in such a way that the public is likely to remember it (<http://www.adslogans.co.uk/ans/>)."

Cook (2001:3) points out that "although the main focus of discourse analysis in advertising slogans is on language, it is not concerned with language alone. It also examines the context of communication: who is communicating with whom and why; in what kind of society and situation; through what medium; how different types and acts of communication are involved, and their relationship to each other."

The submitted paper discusses stylistic devices used in English randomly selected advertising slogans. Special attention is focused on the linguistic analysis of stylistic devices used in the analysed advertising slogans at particular language levels. Crucial attention is devoted to the use of phonological devices in the analysed corpus of advertising slogans. Morphological stylistic devices used in the sampled advertising slogans, namely the use and frequency of adjectives and non-adjectival words used in the functions of adjectives are also discussed and analysed. Furthermore, both advertising slogans realised by phrases and advertising slogans realised by sentences are discussed in the paper. Moreover, distribution of sentence types in the sampled advertising slogans is analysed as well. Stylistic devices used at particular language levels are discussed and analysed within the scope of advertising slogans taken from the Internet sources listed in references.

1. PHONOLOGICAL STYLISTIC DEVICES IN ADVERTISING SLOGANS

Galperin (1997: 26 –28) defines a stylistic device as "a conscious and intentional literary use of some of the facts of the language (including expressive means) in which the most essential features (both structural and semantic) of the language forms are raised to a generalised level and thereby present a generative model."

1.1 *The use of rhyme in advertising slogans*

Rhyme is defined in The Oxford Dictionary as "correspondence of sound between words or the endings of words, especially when these are used at the ends of lines of poetry." According to Merriam – Webster's Dictionary and Thesaurus "rhyme is correspondence in terminal sounds of units of composition or utterance (as two or more words or lines of verse)."

The examples of rhyming advertising slogans are illustrated in:

- [1] *City Linking, smart thinking. (City Link)*
- [2] *Freshen-up with 7-Up. (7-Up)*
- [3] *Savour the flavour of Belgium. (Flanders, Belgium)*
- [4] *The appliance of science. (Zanussi)*
- [5] *Nothing fits like a Ritz. (Ritz Crackers)*
- [6] *Takes a licking and keeps on ticking. (Timex watch)*
- [7] *Milk's gotta lotta bottle. (Milk Marketing Board)*
- [8] *Taste. Not waist. (Weight Watchers Frozen Meals)*
- [9] *The price is dropping on your weekly shopping. (Tesco)*
- [10] *Fly the friendly sky. (United Airlines)*

1.2 The use of alliteration in advertising slogans

Alliteration is the other phonological stylistic device used in advertising slogans. According to Merriam – Webster's Dictionary and Thesaurus "alliteration is the use of words that begin with the same sound near one another (as in *wild and woolly* or *a babbling brook*)." The Oxford Dictionary defines alliteration as "the occurrence of the same letter or sound at the beginning of adjacent or closely connected words."

The examples of advertising slogans in which alliteration is used are illustrated in the following examples:

- [11] *Functional ... Fashionable ... Formidable ... (Fila)*
- [12] *Dream. Dare. Do. (Girl Guides)*
- [13] *I think, therefore. (IBM)*
- [14] *Solutions for a small planet. (IBM)*
- [15] *Keep the flag flying. (British Airways)*

2. MORPHOLOGICAL STYLISTIC DEVICES IN ADVERTISING SLOGANS

There are several stylistic devices used in advertising slogans at the morphological level, e.g. the frequent use of some word classes (adjectives, adverbs, pronouns, numerals), furthermore, an unqualified comparison, the frequent use of the simple present tense and the simple future tense, but also some others. Adjectives were the most frequently used words in our corpus of advertising slogans. Therefore, crucial attention was devoted to their linguistic analysis and frequency in advertising slogans.

2.1 The use of adjectives in advertising slogans

The analysis of sampled advertising slogans has shown that the most frequent word class in English advertising slogans are adjectives. Non-adjectival words used in the functions of adjectives are used in the analysed advertising slogans only rarely.

Adjectives typically provide information about quality, size, shape, colour or origin. Adjectives can be used in two positions, in an attributive position (adjectives precede nouns), or in a predicative position (adjectives follow nouns). An adjective as a word class is characterised by at least two of four morphological features: it may be used in an attributive position, it may be used in a predicative position, it can be pre-modified by *very* and it can be graded. An adjective *good* in *You're in good*

hands with Allstate. (*Allstate*) is an adjective because all four morphological features of adjectives can be applied to this adjective. In the analysed corpus of advertising slogans both positions of adjectives, an attributive position and a predicative position, are used, e.g. *The quick picker upper.* (*Bounty*), *Guinness is good for you.* (*Guinness*).

Consider the following examples:

- [16] *You're in good hands with Allstate.* (*Allstate*)
- [17] *It's good to talk.* (*British Telecom/BT*)
- [18] *Guinness is good for you.* (*Guinness*)
- [19] *Tastes so good cats ask for it by name.* (*Meow Mix*)
- [20] *It's the real thing.* (*Coca Cola*)
- [21] *The quick picker upper.* (*Bounty*)
- [22] *It's what your right arm's for.* (*Courage Tavern Ale*)
- [23] *Raise your hand if you're Sure.* (*Sure*).

As it can be seen, adjectives are used in an attributive position in [16], [20], [21], [22]. On the other hand, adjectives are used predicatively in [17], [18], [19], [23]. Downing – Locke (2006:477) declare that "the most frequently used adjectives in English are monosyllabic or bisyllabic adjectives of native origin such as *good, bad, big, small, little, tall, short, black, white, easy, hard* which have no distinctive form to mark them as adjectives." We can support Downing – Locke's claim that the most frequently used adjectives in English are monosyllabic or bisyllabic adjectives because adjectives in [16] - [23] are also either monosyllabic or bisyllabic.

The sampled advertising slogans contain not only simple monosyllabic or bisyllabic adjectives of native origin, but also adjectives derived from other word classes by the addition of certain characteristic prefixes or suffixes, as illustrated in:

- [24] *Impossible is nothing.* (*Adidas*)
- [25] *Preparing to be a beautiful lady.* (*Pear's Soap*)

In [24] an adjective *impossible* is derived from an adjective *possible*, in [25] an adjective *beautiful* is derived from a noun *beauty*.

The other structural types of adjectives are participial *-ing* adjectives, participial *-en* adjectives and compound adjectives. Both participial adjectives and also compound adjectives were identified in our corpus of advertising slogans, as illustrated in:

- [26] *Drivers wanted.* (*Volkswagen*)
- [27] *Hand-built by robots.* (*Fiat Strada*)
- [28] *Enjoyed for centuries straight.* (*Wyborova vodka*)
- [29] *Pleasing people the world over.* (*Holiday Inn*)
- [30] *Lowering prices forever, that's Comet sense.* (*Comet Electrical Stores*)

Advertising slogans in [26] and [28] contain participial *-en* adjectives, however, advertising slogans in [29] and [30] contain participial *-ing* adjectives. In [27] a compound adjective consists of a noun and a participial *-en* adjective.

Non-adjectival words used in the functions of adjectives do not share all the features that are typical for adjectives. They provide information about nouns and they can be used only attributively. However, all the other features of adjectives cannot be applied to them. In *The milk chocolate melts in your mouth, not in your hand. (M&Ms)*, a non-adjectival word used in the function of an adjective (*milk*) cannot be used predicatively, it cannot be pre-modified by *very* and it cannot be graded.

From the sampled advertising slogans can be deduced that not only simple, derived and compound adjectives have the place in advertising slogans, but non-adjectival words used in the functions of adjectives do as well, as illustrated in:

[31] *It's Miller time! (Miller)*

[32] *And all because the lady loves Milk Tray. (Cadbury's Milk Tray)*

[33] *Capitalist tool. (Forbes)*

[34] *The milk chocolate melts in your mouth, not in your hand. (M&Ms)*

In [31] a proper noun is used in the function of an adjective. On the other hand, in [32], [33] and [34] common nouns are used in the functions of adjectives.

The comparative and the superlative forms of adjectives are frequently used in the sampled advertising slogans, as in:

[35] *We answer to a higher authority. (Hebrew National)*

[36] *The Best a Man Can Get. (Gillette)*

[37] *The best way to get music out of your system. (Philips)*

[38] *Better things for better living. (Dupont)*

[39] *Disease has no greater enemy. (Glaxo/Welcome)*

As it can be seen from the mentioned examples, the comparative degree of adjectives is used in [35], [38] and [39]. On the other hand, the superlative degree of adjectives is used in [36] and [37].

3. SYNTACTIC STYLISTIC DEVICES IN ADVERTISING SLOGANS

3.1 Advertising slogans expressed by phrases

One of the most important features of advertising slogans is their simple structure. Advertising slogans in our corpus had either a phrase structure or a sentence structure. A phrase can be defined as the smallest syntactic unit. There are five types of phrases in English, namely noun phrases, verb phrases, adjective phrases, adverb phrases and prepositional phrases. The analysed advertising slogans had the structure of noun phrases, verb phrases, adjective phrases and prepositional phrases. However, advertising slogans with an adverb phrase structure were not found in the analysed corpus of advertising slogans. Both structural types of phrases, simple phrases and complex phrases, were found in the analysed corpus.

A noun phrase consists of a noun or any group of words that can substitute for a noun. A simple noun phrase consists only of the head, e.g. *Grace ... Space ... Pace. (Jaguar)*. There are three simple noun phrases in the mentioned advertising slogan. A complex noun phrase contains the head and the other phrase elements, namely determiners, complements and modifiers. Complements and modifiers complete or modify the information about the noun phrase head, e.g. *The richest coffee in the world. (Colombian Coffee)*. In this advertising slogan the noun phrase head is pre-modified by an adjective phrase *richest* and post-modified by a prepositional phrase *in the world*.

A verb phrase contains a lexical verb, or it may consist of a lexical verb that is preceded by one or more auxiliary verbs. A simple verb phrase consists only of the head, e.g. *Think. (IBM)*. An extended verb phrase contains a lexical verb as its head and this lexical verb may be preceded by up to four auxiliary verbs.

An adjective phrase consists of an adjective or any group of words that can substitute for an adjective. A simple adjective phrase contains a single adjective which is termed the head of an adjective phrase, e.g. *True. (Budweiser)*, *Driven. (Hankook Tyres)*, *Different. (Irn-Bru)*. A complex adjective phrase consists of the head and the other phrase elements that complement or modify the head of an adjective phrase, e.g. *Distilled in hell. (Bacardi Spice)*.

An adverb phrase consists of an adverb or any group of words that can substitute for an adverb. A simple adverb phrase contains a single adverb, however, a complex adverb phrase contains the head and the other phrase elements that complement or modify the head of an adverb phrase. Any examples of advertising slogans expressed by simple or complex adverb phrases were not found in the analysed corpus of advertising slogans.

A prepositional phrase consists of two obligatory elements, a preposition and a prepositional complement which is usually expressed by a noun phrase, e.g. *Beyond expectation. (Malaysia Airlines)*.

Advertising slogans expressed by simple noun phrases, simple adjective phrases and simple prepositional phrases were found in the analysed corpus of advertising slogans. Advertising slogans expressed by simple verb phrases were also identified in the analysed corpus. However, advertising slogans expressed by extended verb phrases and also by simple and complex adverb phrases did not occur in the analysed corpus.

Consider the following examples:

[40] *Energy. Efficiency. Advice. (British Gas)*

[41] *New. Fast. Efficient. (Air France)*

[42] *Beyond expectation. (Malaysia Airlines)*

[43] *Grace ... Space Pace. (Jaguar)*

[44] *Think. (IBM)*.

[45] *True. (Budweiser)*

[46] *Driven. (Hankook Tyres)*

[47] *Different. (Irn-Bru)*.

The sampled advertising slogans have the structure of three simple noun phrases, as in [40], [43], three simple adjective phrases, as in [41], [45], [46], [47] and the structure of a simple verb phrase, as in [44]. Advertising slogans with the prepositional phrase structure were also found in the analysed corpus, as illustrated in [42].

The analysed advertising slogans were expressed not only by simple noun phrases, simple adjective phrases and simple prepositional phrases, but also by different structural types of complex noun phrases and adjective phrases, as illustrated in:

[48] *Better beans. Better coffee. (Nabob)*

[49] *Imagination at work. (General Electric)*

[50] *The richest coffee in the world. (Colombian Coffee)*

[51] *Good to the last drop. (Maxwell House)*.

[52] *The happiest place on earth. (Disneyland)*.

[53] *Distilled in hell. (Bacardi Spice)*

Advertising slogans can consist of two complex noun phrases in which the noun phrase heads are pre-modified by adjective phrases, as in [48]. The other structural type of a complex noun phrase is the phrase in which the noun phrase head is post-modified by a prepositional phrase, as illustrated in [49]. The phrase type in which the noun phrase head is pre-modified by an adjective phrase and post-modified by a prepositional phrase is illustrated in [50] and [52]. Complex adjective phrases used in the sampled advertising slogans had the structure consisting of the head of an adjective phrase and a post-modifier expressed by a prepositional phrase, as illustrated in [51] and [53].

3.2 Advertising slogans expressed by sentences

There are four sentence types in English: declaratives, interrogatives, imperatives and exclamatives.

Greenbaum – Quirk (1990:231) state that: "Declaratives are sentences in which it is normal for the subject to be present and to precede the verb. Interrogatives are sentences which are formally marked in one of two ways: a) yes-no interrogatives: an operator is placed in front of the subject; b) *wh*-interrogatives: an interrogative *wh*-element is positioned initially and there is generally subject-operator inversion. Imperatives are sentences which normally have no overt grammatical subject, and whose verb has the base form. Exclamatives are sentences which have an initial phrase introduced by *what* or *how*, usually with subject -verb order."

The sentence types used in our sampled corpus of advertising slogans were imperative sentences, declarative sentences and interrogative sentences, as illustrated in:

[54] *Think big. (IMAX)*

[55] *Just do it. (Nike)*

[56] *Share moments. Share life. (Kodak)*

[57] *Buy it . Sell it. Love it. (Ebay)*

[58] *Take Toshiba, Take the World. (Toshiba)*

[59] *Discover the Doral difference. (Doral)*

Imperative sentences in the sampled advertising slogans consist of two words, as in [54], three words, as in [55] or four words, as in [59]. However, the analysed slogans had also the structure of two imperative sentences, as in [56] or three imperative sentences, as in [57]. Advertising slogans can be also expressed by a compound sentence consisting of two independent clauses joined *asyndetically*, as in [58].

Both types of declarative sentences, simple declarative sentences and complex declarative sentences occurred in the corpus of advertising slogans.

Consider the following examples:

[60] *The greatest tragedy is indifference. (Red Cross)*

[61] *Brilliant cleaning starts with Finish. (Finish Detergent)*

[62] *It's the Viakal fizz that does the bizz. (Viakal)*

[63] *You'll love the way we fly. (Delta Airlines)*

Advertising slogans in [60], [61] have the structure of simple sentences. On the other hand, advertising slogans in [62] and [63] have the structure of complex sentences.

There are two types of interrogative sentences in English, simple interrogative sentences and complex interrogative sentences. Simple interrogative sentences, as it has been already mentioned, are divided into yes/no interrogatives and *wh*-interrogatives. Both types of simple interrogative sentences, yes/no interrogatives and *wh*-interrogatives, were found in the sampled advertising slogans. However, advertising slogans expressed by complex interrogative sentences were not found in the analysed corpus.

Consider the following examples:

[64] *Did somebody say McDonald's? YES (McDonald's)*

[65] *Did you Maclean your teeth today?*

[66] *Where's the beef? (Wendy's)*

[67] *Where do you want to go today?(Microsoft)*

[68] *Does she or doesn't she? (Clairol)*

[69] *Have you had your break today? (McDonald's)*

As can be seen, advertising slogans in [64], [65], [68] and [69] have the structure of yes/no interrogatives, however, advertising slogans in [66] and [67] have the structure of *wh*-interrogatives.

4. SEMANTIC STYLISTIC DEVICES IN ADVERTISING SLOGANS

4.1 *The use of personification in advertising slogans*

"Personification is a figure of speech in which a thing, an idea or an animal is given human attributes. The non-human objects are portrayed in such a way that we feel they have the ability to act like human beings (<http://www.literarydevices.net/>)."

The following examples of personification were found in randomly selected advertising slogans:

[70] *Access. Your flexible friend. (Access credit card)*

[71] *The first cream that renews your skin during the night. (Nivea)*

[72] *The Citi never sleeps. (Citibank)*

[73] *Have you met life today? (Metropolitan Life)*

[74] *Fall in love with coffee all over again. (High Point Coffee)*

[75] *Imagination at work. (General Electric)*

4.2 *The use of puns in advertsing slogans*

"A pun is a play on words in which a humorous effect is produced by using a word that suggests two or more meanings or by exploiting similar sounding words having different meanings (<http://www.literarydevices.net/>)."

The following examples of puns were found in randomly selected advertising slogans:

[76] *British Steel: British mettle. (British Stelle)*

[77] *Get rich quick. (Kenco Reality Rich Coffee)*

[78] *Alarmed? You should be. (Moss Security)*

[79] *Always pick flowers. (Flower Fine Arts)*

[80] *First relationship last. (First National Bank of Chicago)*

5. METHOD

5.1 The aim of the research

The aim of the research is the linguistic analysis of stylistic devices used in randomly selected advertising slogans. The most frequent stylistic devices and their use at the phonological, morphological, syntactic and semantic levels are discussed in the submitted paper.

5.2 The research sample

The research sample consisted of 80 randomly selected advertising slogans. The examples of advertising slogans were taken from the following Internet sources:

<http://www.adslogans.co.uk/ans/adslogansartscience.php>

<http://www.adslogans.co.uk/site/pages/home/hall-of-fame.php>

5.3 Research hypotheses

H 1: We suppose that rhyme will occur in our corpus of advertising slogans more frequently than other phonological stylistic devices.

H 2: We assume that derived adjectives will occur in the sampled advertising slogans more frequently than simple and compound adjectives.

H 3: We suppose that the percentage of advertising slogans with the phrase structure will be higher than the percentage of advertising slogans with the sentence structure.

H 4: We assume that imperative sentences will be used in the sampled advertising slogans more frequently than declarative sentences.

H 5: We suppose that semantic stylistic devices will be used in the analysed advertising slogans less frequently than stylistic devices at the other language levels.

6. RESULTS OF THE RESEARCH

Hypothesis 1 was proved. 15% of 80 sampled advertising slogans contained rhymes. The other frequently used phonological stylistic device in the analysed corpus of advertising slogans was alliteration. This stylistic device was used in 14% of all randomly selected advertising slogans.

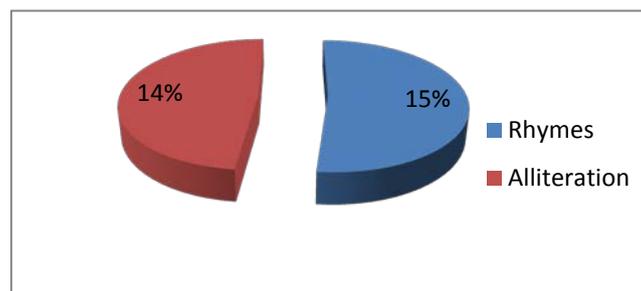


Figure 1. Phonological stylistic devices in the analysed advertising slogans

Hypothesis 2 was also proved. Derived adjectives occurred in 36% of 80 analysed advertising slogans. On the other hand, simple adjectives occurred in 24% of the analysed advertising slogans and compound adjectives occurred only in 1% of the analysed advertising slogans.

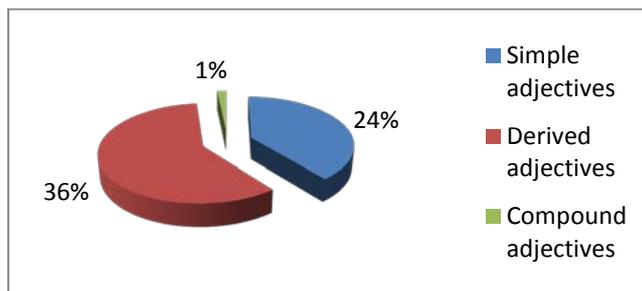


Figure 2. Frequency of adjectives in the analysed advertising slogans

Hypothesis 3 was not proved. The percentage of advertising slogans with the sentence structure was higher than the percentage of advertising slogans with the phrase structure. 54% of 80 advertising slogans had a sentence structure. On the other hand, 46% of the analysed advertising slogans had a phrase structure.

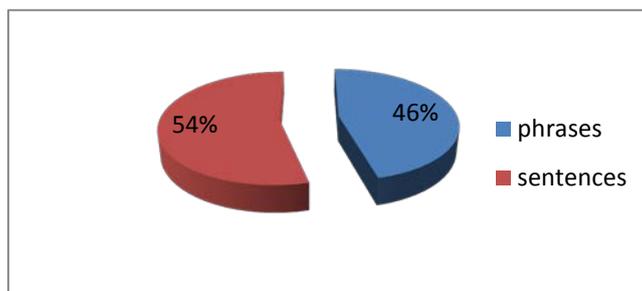


Figure 3. Syntactic stylistic devices in the analysed advertising slogans

Hypothesis 4 was not proved either. Imperative sentences were used less frequently than declarative sentences in the sampled advertising slogans. Imperatives occurred in 20% of 80 sampled advertising slogans. However, declaratives occurred in 26% of the analysed advertising slogans and interrogatives occurred only in 8% of the analysed advertising slogans.

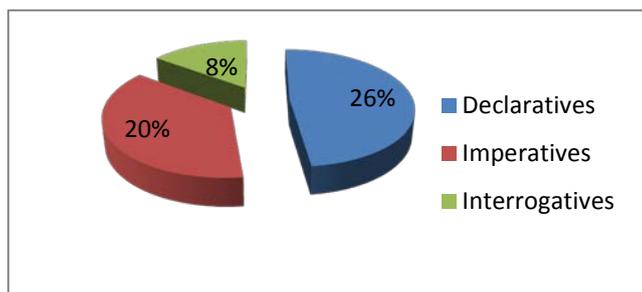


Figure 4. The sentence types in the analysed advertising slogans

Lastly, hypothesis 5 was proved. Semantic stylistic devices were used in the analysed advertising slogans less frequently than stylistic devices at the other language levels. Personification was used in 7% of the analysed advertising slogans and puns were used in 6% of 80 advertising slogans.

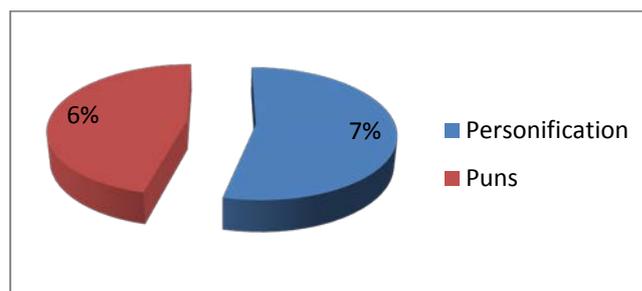


Figure 5. Semantic stylistic devices in the analysed advertising slogans

7. CONCLUSION

Firstly, it can be concluded that the linguistic analysis of 80 randomly selected advertising slogans showed that the most frequently used phonological stylistic devices were rhyme and alliteration. Rhyme was used in 15% of 80 analysed advertising slogans. Alliteration, on the other hand, was used in 14% of the analysed advertising slogans.

Secondly, the linguistic analysis of the research sample showed that adjectives were the most frequently used word class in the analysed corpus. Simple adjectives occurred in 24% of the analysed advertising slogans, derived adjectives in 36% of advertising slogans and, finally, compound adjectives were used only in 1% of the analysed research sample. Non-adjectival words used in the functions of adjectives were used in the analysed advertising slogans only rarely.

Thirdly, the analysis of the sampled advertising slogans proved that the simple structure was one of the most important features of the analysed advertising slogans. 54% of the analysed advertising slogans were expressed by the sentence structure. On the other hand, the phrase structure was used in 46% of the analysed advertising slogans.

Fourthly, it was proved that a declarative sentence was the most frequently used sentence type in the analysed advertising slogans. Declaratives occurred in 26% of the analysed corpus slogans. However, imperatives were used in 20% of the analysed advertising slogans and, finally, interrogatives were used in 8% of the analysed corpus of advertising slogans. Last sentence type, an exclamative sentence, was not indicated in the analysed corpus at all.

Lastly, it was shown that semantic stylistic devices were used in the analysed corpus of advertising slogans only very rarely. Personification was used in 7% of the analysed advertising slogans. On the other hand, puns were used in 6% of the analysed corpus. The examples of analysed advertising slogans with their brand names in brackets were taken from the Internet sources listed in references.

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