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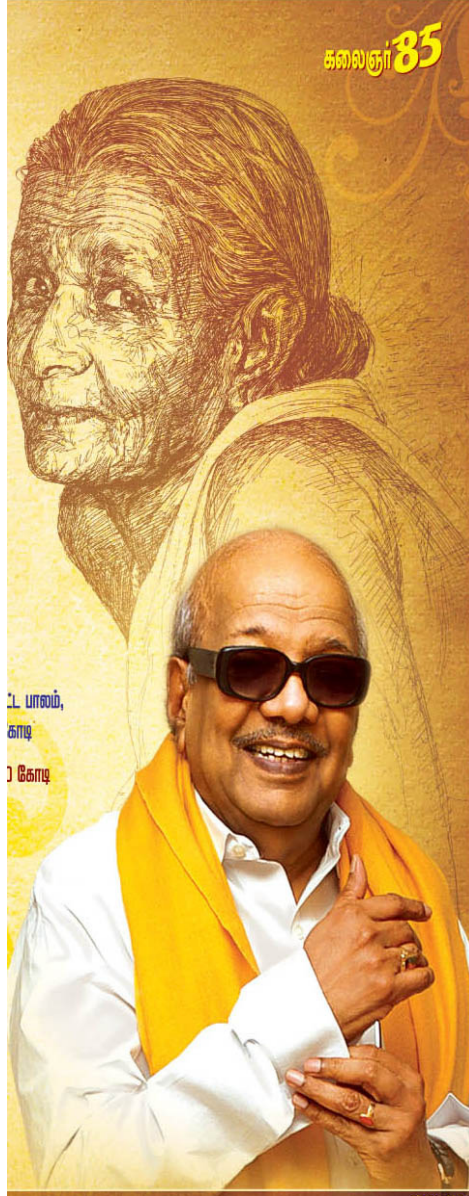
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Tamil Advertisements in Television

A. Boologa Rambai, Ph.D.

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A DMK Party Ad celebrating the 85th Birthday of M. Karunanidhi, the Chief Minister of Tamilnadu. The visual offers many layers of meaning interpretation.

Introduction

Advertisements facilitate the advertiser to seek the needed publicity for his or her products. Advertisements promote the sale of the products and educate or inform the

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customers about the products offered to them on sale, and then, in some manner, help the customers to evaluate and choose from the many choices before them for the best price possible.

Advertisements find expressions through mass media, such as Radio, Television, Newspaper and Weekly and/or Monthly magazines, etc. Apart from these, we find advertisement in wall posters and in handbills distributed door to door.

One of the most widely used and easily accessible medium for advertisement is the television. TV advertisements provide powerful visual associations using both linguistic and non-linguistic or extra-linguistic representations, through the use of bodily movements, frowns, shrugs, head-shakings and so on.

The linguistic or the language part of it an advertisement is supported usually by the extra- or the non-linguistic features in most cases. There is a very interesting “dialogue” between the two in every TV advertisement.

The Focus of This Article



This article deals with the linguistic features of Tamil advertisements found in TV advertisements. I analyze the deviations (from the norm in Tamil usage) found in the language of these advertisements and correlate these with the types of advertisements in which these deviations are introduced and used in different contexts.

Norm and Deviance in Ads

Creativity is very important for an advertisement. Like poets the creators of advertisements also take liberties with the use of the language structure whenever necessary to attract the attention of the consumer. Advertisements should catch the attention of the consumer; otherwise they fail. Ads should also incite curiosity without affecting the subject matter, and develop interest about the product in the consumer. Ads should attract the consumers’ attention and engage them. To achieve this, creators of ads take liberty to violate some of the rules and conventions of the language.

Language use is the proper subject matter of Sociolinguistics and can be studied taking into account the different social contexts found in the society. These contexts may be related to social factors such as commercial problem, trade and commerce, mass contact, public announcement etc. We find variations occurring in form, expressions and content from one usage to the other and most of the usages exhibit structural variations also. So as language use varies we find language structure also varies accordingly.

A brief attempt is made in this paper to find out the various linguistic techniques used by the creators of ads and some of the linguistic features/structures commonly used in the language of Tamil advertisements.

Linguistic Features



Alliteration

Alliteration is the repetition of the same sound usually in the initial position in a word although it can be in the other parts of the words. However, alliteration occurs within a phrase or sentence with multiple words beginning with or repeating the same sound.

uukkam piRakkutu cuvaiyinilee; uLLam lakizhuthu vilaiyinilee (Akni Tea)
“The strength is found with the taste; the heart rejoices with the price.”

In the above example the vowel phoneme ‘u’ in the initial position is repeated. Like this in the following example:

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vilaiyoo kuRaivu; veNmaiyoO niRaivu (Niima detergent cake)
“The price is less and the whiteness is much”

In this example the consonant phoneme ‘v’ in the initial position is repeated.

Inverted Order

Advertisements provide the inverted order of nominal groups. This type proves to be one of the most popular methods to draw the attention of the customers.

vantu viTTatu suupper 501 – vitthu oyiTTaansuTan (Super 501)
“Super 501 is coming with whiteness”.

This is more effective than the normal sentence suupper 501 oyiTTaansuTan vanthu viTTatu. – “Super 501 is coming with whiteness.”

Elliptical Construction

In almost all the headlines and the signature lines, elliptical sentences are used. This is very common in Tamil advertisements.

viraivaana nivaaraNatthikku viksu veepparabu upayookiyunkaL (Vicks vaporub)
viraivaana nivaaranattirkku viksu veepparab –“to overcome the pain (use) Vicks Vaporub”.

ciRanta vazhi pentiim upayookippathu – ciRantha vazhi pentiim
“The best way is to use Pantem Bampoo.”

Use of Double Adjectives

This kind of usage modifies the noun and it helps to project the quality of the products.

nalla azhakaana taramuLLa lakshu anTarveer (Lux Underwear)
“Good beautiful standard Lux Underwear”

aarookiyamaana paadhukaappaana meenikku.....(Hamam)
“For the healthy and the safety body.....”

Use of Passive Sentences

Passive sentences are used in order to project the quality of the product.

laifubaai pilus – IMA – vaal angiikarikkappaTTadhu (Lifebuoy+)
“Life Buoy+ was accepted by IMA”

niiNTa naaL uzhaikka piratthiyeekhamaaka tayaarikkappaTTadhu (Paragon)
“It was manufactured for long standing”.

Illogical but Idiomatic Constructions?



தமிழ்நாடு 10ம் வகுப்பு தேர்வு முடிவுகள் அறிவிக்கப்பட உள்ளன

“எக்ஸாம் குரூ” விற்கு 53030 303 என்று டயல் செய்யுங்கள், கீழ்க்கண்டவற்றை பெறுங்கள்

- ❑ எக்ஸாம் ரிசல்ட்ஸ்
- ❑ யோட்டு எக்ஸாம்ஸ் மாக் டெஸ்ட்
- ❑ கேரியர் கவுன்சலிங் மற்றும் டிப்ஸ்
- ❑ காம்பெடிடிவ் எக்ஸாம் டெய்ஸ்
- ❑ டாப் யுனிவர்டிடிடிடிடி / காலேஜ்ஸ் மற்றும் பல

தேரடி கவுன்சலிங்கிற்கு டயல் செய்யவும் 51234 810

RELIANCE Mobile

It is always true that the semantic deviations like illogicality of advertisements have a remarkable effect on the consumers. It is a special technique to catch the consumers.

toozhan raalco tayers (Ralco Tyres)
Ralco tyres (your) friend”.

Here ‘Ralco tyres’ is an inanimate noun. *toozhan* means friend which is an animate noun. How can an inanimate noun be a “friend”? This is an idiomatic expression.

Use of Unqualified Comparatives

Unqualified comparatives are used in order to project the image of the product. These are helpful in considering the product as the best and superior to similar products.

paLapaLannu minnikkiTTee irukkum (Clinic Powder)
“It is always glittering like the lightning.”

minnalaTikkum veNmai tarum (Rin Sakthi) (the soap New Rin Sakthi)
“washes the clothes with whiteness and glittering”.

Here minnalaTikkum ‘glittering like lightning’ veNmai – ‘whiteness’. paLapaLannu – ‘glittering’. But with what this glittering like lightning and whiteness is contrasted?

Use of Onomatopoeia

Onomatopoeic words are frequently used in Tamil ads. These words are rich in audio imagery and their associations reverberate in the mind of the consumers or readers.

paLapaLakkum “glitering” (Clinic Plus)
KiRukiRunnu “rounding” (Surf Excel)
Karakarappaana “roughness” (Colgate powder)
CuTaccuTac ceythi “Fresh news” (Moov)

Use of Reduplication

Reduplication is a very productive process in Tamil and other Indian languages. Reduplicated words are frequently used in Tamil ads. Reduplication is used for emphasis and assertion, among other functions. Reduplication takes advantage of the phonological characteristics of the root.

sooppaitteey tirumpa tirumpa; tirumpa tirumpa veeNDaam ore muRai poodhum
“Use the Soap again and again; don’t use again and again; one time is enough”
(Rin Supreme)

muzhukka muzhukka paarampariyam mikkha “full and full orthodox”

These repetitions may be in phrase level or sentence level.

Rhymes

Rhyme is also exploited to the maximum in Tamil advertisements. It is succinct and it catches the consumer’s attention. It is one of the popular features in Tamil advertisements. Rhyming is somewhat musical, and is an essential element in Tamil poetry. It was introduced into political speeches by the leaders of the Dravidian movement, which, in due course, has become an essential element in all speech-making.

Rhyming of Nouns

uukkam piRakkudhu cuvaiyinilee “The strength is found in taste”
uLLam makzhudhu vilaiyinilee “The heart rejoices with the price”

Rhyming of Verbs

paRcitaivai etirppiiir “fight with Tooth decoy”
vaaythurnaaRRathait tavirppiiir “Remove your tooth’s bad smell”

(Please use Colgate)

nanku caappiTu; naalai vallavanaaki viTu “Eat well and become strong tomorrow (in future)”

Rhyming of Adjectives

vilaiyoo kuRaivu; veNmaiyoo niRaivu “The price is very less; but the whiteness is Satisfactory”

Rhyming of Relative Participles

uzhaikkhum kaalkaLai uyarthum kaalaNi “The Footwear which raise the laborers Legs”

Linguistic Structures

i) The most general structure of the advertisement is in the NP+NP type.

DabulminT suvingam; niimaa tiTargent keek; sarpu excel vitthu aakTiiv aaksan; Raalco saikil maRRum riksha tyres.

ii) Imperatives are used freely in the Tamil advertisements.

rucithup paarunkha “Try to taste” (Akni Tea)

jaNDhu Baam taTavunkha ; UTampu valiyai niikkhunga
“Use Zandhubaam and remove your body pain”

nankhu caappiTu; naaLai vallavanaakhiviTu
“Eat well and become strong” (Tiger Biscuits).

iii) Negative Imperatives are also used as given below and they also attract the consumer’s attention.

paRcitaivai etirppir; vaaytthurnaaRRattait tavirppir
“Fight with tooth decay; remove your tooth’s bad smell”
(Colgate dental cream)

unkaL veNmaikku aLippiir puthiya Rin Sakthi
“Please wash your clothes with the soap Rin Sakthi”

curakjaavin jiiro B illaama taNNiir kuTikkaatiinkha
“Don’t drink water without Surakjal Zero B”

iv) Interrogatives are used extensively in Tamil advertisements and they seem to be working well to keep the product in the minds of the consumers.

kalaippu unkali vaaTTukinRataa “Are you suffered by tireeness?”
iTuppu valiyaa? Appa moov taTavu “Is it pain in the hip; use Moov”

v) **Emphatics** are used in order to show that their products can give what the consumers need.

itaRkku tiirvu laifubaay pilasu “For this Lifebuoy is the remedy.”

vi) **Infinitives** are used in the purposive sense.

unkaL viiTTai karappaan puucchikaLirunthu paadhukaakka
“to get (full) safe from the cockroach” (Cockroach gem)

vii) **Datives** are used in the purposive sense.

atunkaLa varaTTruratukku namma kaayil.....
“in order to get rid of the Mosquito” (Use Raid Mosquito Coil)

viii) **Optatives** are used in the imperative sense.

nankhu caappiDu; naaLai vallavanaakhiviDu (Horlicks Biscuits)
“Eat well and become strong tomorrow”

ix) **Use of Hortative** It is used in the imperative sense in Tamil advertisements.

unkal mutal TV unkaLukkhu perumai taruvataakha irukkaTTum
“Your first TV will give prestige to you” (Onida IGO)

x) The **adjectives** modify the nominal groups as follows:

acal straan akni tii “The real Akni Tea” (Agni Tea)
Inta chappal mikavum straang “This chappal is really strong” (Paragon)

As there is no equivalent adjective in Tamil for concentrated Tea in first example. The English “strong” is made use and also it is found more effective. In this connection it must be pointed out and the adjectives such as ciRanta “best”, ariya “rare”, niiTittha “Long standing”, aRputhamaana “Wonderful,” niiNTa “Long”, kuTTai “short”, periya “Big”, Pazhaiya “Old” etc are made use of extensively in Tamil advertisements.

xi) **Derived adjectives** play an important role in the advertisements of Tamil. The adjectives are derived from English and other languages like Sanskrit words.

jaaliyaana vazhi “easy way” (Double mint chewing gum)
aRpudhamaana sparisa anupavam “Wonderful body experience”
(Ponds Dream Talc)

(xii) Use of Adverbs: It must be mentioned that the adverbs such as *nicchyamaakha* “definitely”, *unmaiyaakha* “truly”, *nambakamaakha* “Believably”, *piratthiyeeegamaaka* “specially” etc are used wherever and whenever necessary to highlight the products. The adverbs of time also play an important role. Some of them are *inRee* “today itself” *ciRitu neeratthil* “with in few seconds” *cilanimTankaLil* “with in few minutes” *viraiivil* “quickly” *uTanee* “immediately,” etc.

xiii) Analogical creation is also found to occur in Tamil advertisements. For example, in the Pears soap advertisements:

Child: *ammaa evlav saafTu saafTu* “Amma how soft you are?”

Mother: *en chellkkuTTi poola* “Like my pet baby”

Child: *nii enna pooTrammaa?* “What are you using?”

Mother: *onnumillee* (Nothing)

Child: *pieersulee enna irukku?* “what is there in pears?”

Mother: *onnumillee* (Nothing)

Background voice: *pearsille niinga nenaikkiRa maathiri onnumeillee*
“There is nothing in pears as you think”

Mother: *aapisukku enna pooDalaam?* “What shall I wear to the office?”

Child: *onnumillee* (Nothing)

xiv) Morphological Marketing is using catchy phrases: It is used in the TV advertisements in Tamil. It helps the advertisers to attract the consumers. By using this marketing, the advertisement becomes a catchy one.

tangamaana pongal nalvaazhthukkaL “Golden Pongal Greetings”
(Chakkara Gold Tea)

ninaivu tarum vaNNakkanavukaL “Colorful Dreams” (Asian paints)

atirsTam minnum (Clinic Plus)

xv) Use of Loan Words: In the language of Tamil advertisements we do come across loan usages which are nativized in the native system.

sooppu villai “Soap cake” (Ariel compact) Loan blend: soap + *villai* (“cake” or “tablet”)

xvi) Code switching: It is commonly found in Tamil advertisements. For example, in the Raid Mosquito Coil advertisement:

Lady: vazhiyilee keTakkiRa kuppai “The garbage that lies on the path” kaTikkanuminnaa ennaik kaDi why my baby?

(Tamil & English mixing)

Ralco Cycle maRRum Rickshaw tyres Paadhai miidhu paRRudhal paadhukaappaana payaNamee (Literary Tamil)

xvii) Colloquial Tamil Morphology: Words using colloquial endings are used in Tamil advertisements. These seem to reach out to the consumers quickly.

kaTikkaNuminnaa (colloquial) – kaTikkaveeNTum enRal... (written or formal)
”if you want to bite...”

pericaa irukkueenumillee (colloquial) – peritaakhairukkaveeNTumallavaa? (written or formal)

“Should it be large?”

xviii) Binary operation: In Tamil, it is called as irumai muraN. This form contains two parts. The first part contains a word and the second part contains the opposite of the first part in form and content. This is in a succinct form and it will cover the consumers very quickly.

vilaiyoo kuRaivu “The price is less.”

veNmaiyo niRaivu “The whiteness is much.”

niilamaana kuuntalukku taaraaLam “For the long hair it is more.”

kuTTaiyaana kuuntalukku eeraaLam “For the short hair it is plenty.”

xix) Adaptation: Using English expression straight is one way of adaptation.

As Ramamoorthy (2003) points out, (<http://www.languageinindia.com/march2003/globaltamiladv.html>), the advertisement for ‘coke’ shows another type of adaptation. As cited in Ramamoorthy (2003), Eco (1986) explained that Coca-cola is the symbol of affluence for Americans, from the use of the word ‘more’ in their advertisements, “more Coke” as in other usages like some more coffee, more to come. When Coke was introduced in India, the traders took the same symbol for Indian consumers also. The phrase ‘Dil monge more’ in Hindi, and ‘inta uLLam keTkumee’ in Tamil are good examples.

xx) Product-oriented Translation Advertisement (Ramamoorthy 2003): This type of advertisement is very interesting as well as important for market economy. The character of the product is mixed with the offer or price. Thereby new types of constructions in Tamil are created.

paLiciTum calavai..... “Brilliant washing” (Washing Machine)

peeciTum calukai..... “Brilliant discount in price”

Inter-Connectivity is one of the types of advertisements, which connects three or four items together and advertised.

xxi. Transcreation: In this type of advertisement there will be a connection between English text and the translated text.

The storm in your palm..... idu enna instant puyalaa? (Ramamoorthy 2003)

xxii) Use of Colloquial variety: In this type of advertisements the use depends upon the nature of products. These advertisements carry many spelling mistakes, and syntactic errors.

kaTikkanuminnaa ennaik kaTi een en kozhandhaiyai een
“If you want to bite, bite me why my baby?”

xxiii) Globalization aspects: Advertisements reveal the ongoing processes of globalization. The free flow of foreign-made goods into India is shown in three advertisements by the following phrases (Ramamoorthy 2003).

Intiyaavil mutal muRaiyaaka , ulakat taram vaaynta Jappaaniyat tozhinuTpam
“The first time in India, the product of Japan’s technology, the world level quality.”

Conclusion

1. Tamil advertisements in TV use various linguistic techniques and styles in order to attract the customers.
2. Advertisements revolve around market economy and information technology. In this context, the control over the language is not in the hands of Tamil scholars or academic institutions. Language is shaped by the traders and marketing agencies based on their conception of what works well for the sale of their products in the market. The traders give contextual and localized flavor to the foreign products and hence new types of collocation are created in the regional languages of India.

Note that the visuals presented in the article are taken from print ads which appeared in the leading daily newspaper in Tamil **Dinakaran** www.dinakaran.com.

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