

Creativity in Economy: A Linguistic Examination of Some Selected Taglines

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Abstract

This paper examines the creativity expressed in taglines through the lens of the levels of language. The main aim of this paper is to highlight the economic features of language even in creativity. The significance of the study lies in the appreciation of the aesthetics of language. Premised in functionalism with a bias on Zipf's 'Principle of Least Effort' in the linguistic economy, the study amplifies the features of language condensed in the economy of words creatively articulated in taglines. Twenty commercial taglines are selected for this study. The examination of the taglines affirms the feature of language which shows that a speaker selects language items optimally in discourse for a desired communicative effect.

Keywords: associated meaning, communicative effect, creativity, levels of language, taglines, word economy

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1. Introduction

Language creativity is the application of arts in language. It is the artful use of language (Cremin & Maybin, 2013). Linguistic creativity can also be known as verbal arts (Zawada, 2006). Creativity as a concept can be understood in the light of originality. According to Kaufman and Sternberg (2010), creativity has the features of novelty, high quality, and appropriacy. By novelty, creativity must be something new and unique. For high quality, creativity must be good and for appropriacy, creativity must make sense and must be useful for the purpose it is created for. To be creative in language means a person must have linguistic intelligence.

Sternberg et al. (2019) explained that linguistic intelligence makes for accurate and figurative use of words in a language. Linguistic intelligence is therefore needed for the production and comprehension of speech and writing. Linguistic intelligence facilitates the use of language skills in discourse. Especially in linguistic creativity where novel, surprising and compelling ideas are generated (Kaufman & Stenberg 2010). Thus, linguistic intelligence is needed for linguistic creativity.

Gupta (1992) noted that creativity is the ability, ‘to create, to bring into being or to form, to invent or design.’ He notes that creativity is an essential trait of human beings and can be viewed from aesthetic, pragmatic, and philosophical perspectives. As a trait in humans, Chomsky (1996) accounted for linguistic creativity from a generative perspective where he posits that linguistic creativity is the ability to use finite words to generate an infinite stock of words. This trait of creativity is put in the creation of taglines.

Taglines are simply slogans. Slogans are short and memorable. There are different types of slogans. This study is limited to advertisement slogans. When used in advertisements, slogans are meant to persuade consumers to choose a particular brand amongst others. Advertisement directs the mind to the availability and qualities of a specific product (El-Daly, 2011). Given the fact that these advertisement slogans are geared for attention, these slogans are epigrammatic to be impressive and memorable (Xiaosung, 2003).

The requirement for slogans to be short is synonymous with the linguistic economy. Within the confines of linguistic economy, linguistic creativity is applied to making advertisements short, meaningful, and memorable. For an advertisement slogan to have all the above-mentioned qualities, Leech (1972) noted that the language of advertisement is “loaded.” Slogans when used for advertisement are loaded with linguistic devices, graphological resources, figurative language, and sociolinguistic effects which are condensed in the artful use of language.

This paper aims at examining the concept of linguistic creativity achieved through the linguistic economy in some selected taglines from brand advertisements. The significance of the study lies in the appreciation of the aesthetics of language.

The specific research objectives of this paper are to:

- a) analyze the linguistic devices in the selected taglines,
- b) examine the graphological resources in the selected taglines,
- c) highlight the sociolinguistic elements in the selected taglines,
- d) discuss the figurative elements in the selected taglines.

Based on the foregoing, therefore, the following research questions are posed to guide this study.

- a) What linguistic devices are used in the selected taglines?
- b) What are the forms of the graphological resources used in the selected taglines?
- c) What sociolinguistic elements are prominent in the selected taglines?
- d) How are figurative elements used in the selected taglines?

2. Literature Review

Vicentini (2003) recalls the contribution of André Martinet and George Kingsley Zipf in the history of the principle of economy in functionalism. André Martinet defined linguistic economy by noting that human needs in communication are driven by the essential forces for the optimization of the linguistic system. This is manifested in clearness and precision which according to Vicentini produces “effort relaxation, less numerous, less specific and more frequently occurring units” (p. 39). George Kingsley Zipf inspired by Martinet’s work calls linguistic economy “the principle of least effort.” Zipf (1949) describes the principle of least effort as “the primary principle that governs our entire individual and collective behavior of all sorts” (p. vii), including language. Zipf sees the linguistic economy in terms of the shortest possible paths taken by a speaker and an addressee in discourse to achieve a communicative function. To achieve this aim, the speaker maximizes his articulatory energy and clarifies his message to ease the burden of comprehension by the addressee. Kobayashi (2015) illustrated this principle in phonology by explaining that a speaker for the linguistic economy may adopt emphasis, epenthesis, deletion, and stress shift.

By the principle of least effort, a non-economical change that may bring an extraneous cost in communication production thereby causing a hindrance to communication is removed or avoided. By this optimization in communication discourse, through the dynamic process of the preservation of economy, words are “shortened, permuted, eliminated, borrowed and altered in meaning” (Vicentini 2003, p. 40). This study sought to find out the creativity achieved with few words in taglines, and slogans used in brand advertisements.

3. Methodology

In this study, twenty-seven taglines are randomly collected from billboards and commercial posters in the Port Harcourt metropolis. The study analyses these taglines based on the qualitative approach. The taglines are all first presented on a table. Thereafter, the taglines are categorized and interpreted based on linguistic levels to provide answers to the research questions that guide this study. For data analysis, the taglines are underlined and thereafter italicized.

3.1 Data Presentation and Analysis

The table below shows the taglines of selected brands used in this paper.

Table 1. Selected Taglines Used from Brand Advertisement

S No.	Brand Name	Product	Tagline
1.	Market Square	Supermarket	find more, pay less
2.	Legend	Beer	stout weydey flow
3.	Kotex	sanitary pad	Zero leaks, 100% comfort
4.	Hero	Beer	The beer for heroes
5.	Tiger	Beer	Uncage refreshment. the beer with bite
6.	Guinness	Beer	1759. Let the magic begin
7.	Heineken	Beer	The chairman can
8.	Checkers Custard	Food	Hmmm...now, that's custard
9.	Scanfrost	Cooker	keeps on going on
10.	Cake Haven	Eatery	...always a delight
11.	OPPO RENO	Phone	Picture life together
12.	Kilerah	Cosmetics	for soft, smooth, and healthy skin
13.	Linkage Assurance PLC	Company	Bigger, bolder, better Protection has a new face
14.	33	Beer	Enjoy the beer of choice rich, smooth, satisfying
15.	BNC	Mosquito spray	100% kill off
16.	Omega Aromatic Schnapps	Gin	...spirit of excellence
17.	GLO	Telecommunication	Na here enjoyment berekete
18.	GO TV	Telecommunication	Na only you waka com!
19.	Hero	Beer	Brewed with strength just for you Ahagiefula
20.	Beauty Palace	Salon	...your reliable hair plug
21.	DHL	Delivery	Excellence. Simply delivered.
22.	Mouka	Foam	Get the mouka for you
23.	Simba Den	Inverter	Power outage? No wahala.
24.	4 Horses	Liqueur	Release the power of four
25.	Vista Maxx	Pen	Grip better. Write better.
26.	Radler	Drinks	Enjoy twice the refreshment for a double jolly!
27.	Veleta	Fruit drink	Love at first sip

4. Data Analysis

Linguistic Devices

The linguistic devices in these taglines are analyzed through the levels of language.

Morphological Features- The morphological features in these taglines show the forms of words used in these taglines. In datum 13, Bigger, bolder, better, the comparative form of the words is used to compare the advertised brand and others. The comparatives used are open-ended. Mbazie (2004) notes that ‘the second referent is ignored because of legal and ethical considerations.’ The second referent is ignored as seen in datum 25, Grip better. Write better. The unmentioned brands are other types or similar brands.

Semantic Features- The semantic features in these taglines exploit the associated meaning of words for striking effects.

a) **Word net-** A word net shows the semantic relations a word holds with other words. In datum five, Uncage refreshment. the beer with bite. the tagline is for a product named ‘Tiger’. A tiger is a wild animal that if seen with humans is likely to be caged. The words ‘cage’ and ‘bite’ holds a certain semantic relation with tigers. Here they are used in the sense that these words- uncage, bite- conjure a cognitive cord that relates to tigers – the name of the advertised product.

c) **Ambiguity-** An ambiguous statement has more than one interpretation (Finegan 2012). In datum seven, The chairman can, there is a play on words where the tagline is used to advertise a can of Heineken beer. In the use of ‘can’ there is a meaning shift. One, there is the meaning of ‘can’ as used or owned by the chairman. Here a Heineken ‘can’ is associated with the chairman or a person of influence. Two, ‘can’ in this tagline could mean the English modal verb that expresses ability. *The Chairman Can* mean the ability to do something.

d) **Antonymy** denotes opposition in meaning (Finegan 2012). In datum 1, find more, pay less, antonymy is portrayed in the use of more and less. The use of *more* in the tagline contrasts with *less*.

e) **Implied Meaning-** In datum 26, Enjoy twice the refreshment for a double jolly! the concept *twice* used in the first part of the tagline implies *double* put in the second part of the tagline.

Syntactic Features

a) **Pro drop-** In a pro-drop, a covert subject, as an empty category in the subject position in a sentence is understood which controls the verbal element. In datum 1, find more, pay less, the unstated subject which is not mentioned in the second person singular pronoun, *you*. This is an element of the linguistic economy where few words are used instead of more words to achieve the same communicative purpose.

b) **Tense Form –** Most taglines are in the present tense to make the information on the tagline not lose relevance. In datum 6, 1759. Let the magic begin, the sentence is formed as an imperative that demands the addressee to take on the activities addressed in the tagline. In datum 9, the present continuous tense is used and keeps on going on, which would mean the advertised product is durable and has longevity.

c) Noun Phrases- The noun class is basically for naming. In taglines, noun phrases are used to function as complements to the brands advertised. In the data that follow, the brands advertised are omitted. Where they are placed instead of the ellipsis, the taglines would now function as nouns in subject complement- datum 10, ...always a delight, datum 16, ...spirit of excellence, datum 20, ...your reliable hair plug. A reconstruction of these taglines without the ellipsis would be:

- Cake heaven is always a delight.
- Omega Aromatic Schnapps is the spirit of excellence.
- Beauty salon is your reliable hair plug.

In this illustration, the taglines are anaphors where their unstated brands which are known through context serve as the antecedents.

d) Parallelism shows the parallel placement of similar phrases in a sentence - datum 1-find more, pay less. Parallelism can also be observed in datum 25, Grip Better. Write better.

e) Modifiers- Adverbs and adjectives are modifiers that qualify verbs and nouns. Modifiers are used to draw the attention of the addressee to the qualities derivable from the patronage or use of the advertised products- datum 12, for a soft, smooth, and healthy skin, datum 13, Protection has a new face, datum 14, Enjoy the beer of choice, rich, smooth, satisfying. The modifiers are in bold.

f) Deixis- Deixis is context dependent. The deictic expression-here- used in datum17, Na here enjoyment berekete refers to the advertised brand. Being a place deixis, the sentence can be reconstructed as- Na *inside GLO* enjoyment berekete.

g) Sentence Formation- A sentence usually has at least two elements, the subject and the predicate. These elements are expressed in a group of words that make sense. Forlinguistic economy, a tagline can have just one word as a sentence. The one word also makes sense based on context. Consider datum 21, Excellence. Simply delivered., there are two sentences formed by three words. The first sentence, *Excellence* and the second, *Simply delivered*. This means the advertised product is the epitome of excellence when it comes to delivery services. Datum 23, also has two sentences, Power outage? No wahala. The first is a question, and the second, the answer. The problem posed in question which might be a source of worry to someone is solved by using the advertised product, hence the response, *No wahala*. In datum 25, four words are used to produce two sentences, Grip better. Write better.

II. Graphological Resources- Graphology in linguistic analysis entails the study of the graphics of language. Graphological resources refer to the spelling, punctuation marks, and formatting style of written discourse. The following graphological resources are used in the taglines selected for this study.

a) Question Mark- The punctuation mark at the end of an interrogative sentence is a question mark. The basis for an interrogative sentence is to get information. This function is put to use in taglines that pose a question that might be a common problem. The answer to the question or the

problem would be the advertised product. In datum 23, the tagline takes care of the problem of power outage: Power outage? No wahala. No wahala means the problem of a power outage can be solved through the use of Simba Den inverters, the brand advertised by the tagline.

b) Ellipses are used in taglines to achieve linguistic economy. The presence of an ellipsis in a tagline points to the omission of that part of the tagline which is retrievable from context. In other words, an ellipsis in a tagline is used to avoid unnecessary repetition of a known fact, and in taglines, the known fact most times is the advertised brand- in datum eight, Hmmm...now, that's custard, datum 10, ...always a delight, datum 16, ...spirit of excellence, datum 20, ...your reliable hair plug.

c) Exclamation marks on taglines are used to draw the attention and emotions of the reader. For example in datum 18, Na only you waka com!, an exclamation mark is used to direct the reader to the intended meaning of the tagline. The use of the other end marks like the full stop or the question mark for this tagline provides a meaning that is different from the meaning intended with an exclamation mark. The possible meanings are illustrated below.

i. Full Stop – Na only you waka com. With a full stop, this statement is a declarative which affirms that a person came along alone.

ii. Question Mark – Na only you waka com? With a question mark, this statement is an interrogative that expresses surprise.

iii. Exclamation Mark – Na only you waka com! With an exclamation mark, this statement emphasizes the word –you- meaning the addressee should consider self-indulgence to benefit from the entertainment advertised by the tagline. The emphasis on *you* in the tagline is philosophical in making the reader understand that life is a sole journey.

d) Spelling– In this datum, Na only you waka com!, the last word *come* is spelled without the letter *e* based on the Nigeria Pidgin.

e) Small letters- Most taglines do not adhere to the rules of capitalization and so small letters are used. Small letters are used to foreground the advertisement slogans. The essence is to draw the attention of the addressee through a deviation from the norm to the advertised brand.

f) The Use of Numerals- In datum 24, Release the power of 4, the numeral four is used in place of the letters of the alphabet for four. For economy, the numeral takes one letter space instead of four-letter spaces which would have been required for *four*.

g) Font Size- In datum 26, Enjoy twice the refreshment for a double jolly! the tagline is written in capital letters. The capital letters would mean the tagline is stressed. The second part of the tagline is bigger than the first part of the tagline and in line with the theme or concept expressed in the tagline.

ENJOY TWICE THE REFRESHMENT
FOR DOUBLE JOLLY!

III. Sociolinguistic Elements

The sociolinguistic elements in the selected taglines show how language reflects the happenings in a given society. Nigeria is a multilingual nation. The dominant national language in the Southern part of the country where this tagline is displayed is the Igbo language. This fact

is portrayed in datum 19, Brewed with strength just for you Ahagiefula where there is code-mixing. The term *Ahiagiefula* is inserted at the end of the sentence which is in English.

The use of the term *Ahiagiefulais* for localization. Localization aligns a tagline with the culture of the target language. Declercq (2012) explains that ‘localization refers to taking a product and making it linguistically and culturally appropriate to the target locale where it will be used or sold.’ It would therefore be inappropriate to situate this tagline in Northern Nigeria where the predominant language is Hausa.

Another sociolinguistic element that pervades this study is the use of Nigerian pidgin. The Nigerian Pidgin is a language that has attained the status of a creole in Nigeria. It is therefore not uncommon to see pidgin being used in slogans. The Nigeria Pidgin can be taken as a case of diglossia, seen as a low variety of the English language which is a second language in Nigeria. The Nigerian Pidgin is the most used variety for communication except in formal settings. The following data are expressed in the Nigerian Pidgin-datum two, stout weydey flow, datum 17, Na here enjoyment berekete, datum 18, Na only you waka com!

Beyond being used as an example of the Nigerian Pidgin, datum 17, Na here enjoyment berekete serves as an example of transcreation in tagline creation. The term *berekete* in the datum means enough and plenty. The English version of this word would not be as impactful as it is so used. A meaningful engagement is achieved when a brand connects with a target audience. This connection is possible through the localization and recreation of brands to reach the target audience (Mcleod, 2017).

A tagline can be written in two languages to address more target population. In the tagline for Vista Maxx, a name for a ballpoint pen, the tagline reads GRIP BETTER. WRITE BETTER., *Meilleur adherence bonne ecriture*. The second part of this tagline is in the French language. Bilingualism comes to play. The tagline addresses speakers of English and French. The addition of French means the target population is increased.

IV. Figurative Language

The figurative use of language in taglines is for creativity. From the data presented, the following examples exemplify the figurative use of language. The explanations of figurative language used in this paper are drawn from Wrenand Martin (2009).

a) Antithesis shows striking opposition or contrast of words made in a sentence. Antithesis is used in the following- datum 1, find more, pay less, more, and less are in contrast. datum four, Zeroleaks, 100% comfort, where zero contrast with 100%.

b) Hyberbole is a statement that is made emphatic by exaggeration or overstatement. Datum 4 Zero leaks, 100% comfort, it is not possible to get 100% comfort. In datum 15, there is 100 %kill off, 100% kill-off is an overstatement.

c) Metaphor. In a metaphor, there is an implied comparison. In datum 20, the beauty salon is seen as a plug,...your reliable hair plug. In this example, the referred beauty salon serves as a place to fix hair. Implied comparison can also be observed in datum4, The beer for heroes , the name of the product is projected in the tagline. In datum 11, the tagline which is a slogan for a phone can be used to Picture life together.

d) Onomatopoeia is formed from a sound that is associated with what it refers to. Datum 8, Hmmm...now, that's custard. The sound *Hmmm* in the datum eight is associated with satisfaction.

e) Personification. In personification, inanimate objects or abstract notions are given human qualities as if they have life and intelligence. In the data presented below, the beer cannot bite and protection cannot have a face.

Datum 5, the beer with bite

Datum 13, Protection has a new face

f) Metonymy- In metonymy, an object is designated by the name of something which is usually associated with it. In datum 6, 1759. Let the magic begin., the year which in the tagline is used symbolically as a referent to time of relaxation. In this tagline, 1759 means 17.59 pm, a supposed time for meeting with family and friends for relaxation.

g) Self-Indulgence – The use of the second person singular pronoun, *you* is usually for self-indulgence. In datum 22, Get the mouka for you, promises the advertised product is suitable for everyone. So, there is a mouka for *you*. The use of *you* here means that there is a mouka that fits the reader. The concept of self-indulgence also explains datum 18, Na only you waka com!

h) Repetition- In datum 25, Grip better. Write better. For linguistic economy, the word *better* is repeated for emphasis and to make it more memorable. The quality of *better* is projected through this repetition so that a reader remembers that the advertised product is better than other brands and should be preferred.

I) Idioms – Idioms are formulaic expressions with figurative or non-literal meanings. For economy, a tagline can be derived from a known idiom. Datum 27, Love at first sip, is derived from the figurative expression, *love at first sight*. In the tagline, through creativity, *sight* is replaced with *sip*, a word that starts with *slike* sight and shares a word net with *drinks* which the advertised product represents.

5. Discussion of Findings

The data analysis shows how creativity is achieved with few words as shown in the selected taglines used in this study. Creativity in word economy is achieved through the employment of linguistic devices, graphological resources, sociolinguistic elements, and figurative language. Creativity in word economy as presented in this study shows the aesthetics of language.

The linguistic devices shown by the analysis of the selected taglines are morphological features, semantic features, and syntactic features. The inherent linguistic features in the language are used to create aesthetics in taglines. Apart from the linguistic devices graphological resources which are mainly punctuation marks are utilized to achieve creativity in taglines. Language is best understood in the context of use. Sociolinguistic elements are drawn from the setting of Nigerian society to give flavors to the language used in taglines. Lastly, creativity in word economy in the examination of the selected taglines used in this study shows the effects of figurative language where the interpretation of the words used in the taglines goes beyond the denotation of the words used in the taglines studied.

The findings of this study corroborate the assertion that creativity in language is used to foster engagement with a desired audience (Cremin & Reedy, 2015). In the case of this study, the desired audience is the target population of the brand advertisement. The findings of this study are relevant as it examines the content of selected taglines used in the brand advertisement which are expressed in witty forms to achieve creativity.

6. Conclusion

Through linguistic economy, meaning is condensed in taglines. These taglines are memorable and impactful due to the linguistic creativity applied in their creation. This study examined the linguistic devices, figurative effects, graphological resources, and sociolinguistic pointers which are fused in the creation of taglines. The study corroborates the fact that language is generative and creativity is possible in the linguistic economy.

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