GRAPHOLOGICAL DEVIATIONS IN SELECTED SMALL AND MEDIUM-SCALE ENTERPRISES’ ADVERTS

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Abstract

It is an established fact that stylistics focuses on the preponderant use of language in series of texts and the unusualness in language to communicate specific messages to the readers of the texts. The purpose of this study was to exclusively investigate selected signboards of small and medium-scale enterprises from a stylistic perspective. Thirty signboards were selected and analysed at the graphological level. Photographs of the selected signboards were taken and transformed into prints for ease of interpretation. It was discovered that there were graphological deviations such as punctuations, varying fonts and sizes, mixed cases, colour, number, etc. usedto captivate the attention of prospective customers; to indicate the choice of the advertisers; to distinguish one enterprise from the other; and to list the services offered by the enterprise. The use of stylistics as an approach for the analysis of the selected signboards has unravelled the underlying meaning of the graphological features in the data.

Introduction

Basically, language is a medium of human communication; it has a number of characteristics,among which are dynamism, universality, conventionality, and ruleorientation. Dynamism is a constant parameter for describing human language. Linguistic variation is inevitable as a result of the contextual variables. Even though language is governed by specific rules, the context of language use dictates linguistic choices that might deviate from the existing norm of language use in a given speech community. Deviation is when there is a shift or movement from the normal process of doing things, especially with language. When language is not expended in correlation with the conventional way of usage, then, we say there is a deviation. The deviation could be morphological, graphological, lexico-semantic, and lexico-syntactic, or pragmatic. Stylistics helps to identify how and why a text has deviated from the norm. Among the determinants of linguistic variation is the occupational parameter. The language deviation in advertisement, especially signboard adverts of small and medium-scale enterprises are the tools of interest in this study. This study investigated graphological deviations in signboard advertisements drawing illustrations and evidences from the selected small- and medium- scale enterprises (SME) adverts.

Review of Literature and Theoretical Consideration

The concept of style deviation is used traditionally in literary stylistics, regarding literary language as more deviant than non-literary language use. It means that the use of deviation is mostly applicable when the flexibility of the language is maximally employed. Language as aforementioned, is guided by rules and it is conventional. That is, it should be understood by people who use the same language. Trangott and Pratt (1980) believe that the idea of style as deviance is favoured by the “generative frame of reference (p.31)”.

The main interest of stylistics is the use of language of a writer. The style of a writer could inform the use of deviation in his writing. Stylistics focus on the unusual use of words and the unusualness is the deviation. Deviation has to do with departure from the common way of doing something. Deviating does not imply that readers (listener) would not grasp the message you are passing across, rather, writers (speakers) deviate for certain purposes. Despite the deviance, it does not in any way make the message incomprehensible. Enkvist (1978) asserts that ‘the style of a discourse is the message carried by the frequency distributions and transitional probabilities of its linguistic features, especially as they differ from those of the same features in the language as a whole’(p.25).

Other aspects of style such as style as man, style as conformity, style as choice, all come under style as deviation. The deviation maybe seenat once while sometimes, one needs to take his time to notice the deviance. Ebeogu stated that “In stylistics, deviation has come to occupy a prominent place as a creative linguistic process that gives life to the use of language” (1998:218). Deviations are mostly found in literary texts such as drama, prose and poetry. They also can be found in other non-literary texts. Deviation in the use of language does not mean that it will alter the meaning of the message to the extent of making it incomprehensible;rather, it shows the creativity of the writer and how he wishes to communicate his ideas.

Graphological Devices

According to Crystal & Davy (1969) cited in Alabi (2007) “Graphology is the analogous study of a language’s writing system or orthography as seen in the various kinds of handwriting or topography” (p.18). Leech believes that graphology transcends orthography: “It refers to the whole writing system, such as punctuation and paragraphing as well as spacing” (p.39). Alabi adds that a graphological discussion of style among other features entails the foregrounding of quotation marks, ellipses, periods, hyphens, contracted forms, special structures, the full stop, the colon, the comma, the semicolon, the question mark, the dash, lower case letters, gothic and bold prints, capitalization, small print, spacing, italics etc. (p.170).

* Capitalization: it aids the words to stand out in the linguistic context in which they occur. The words are in upper, lower and title case. It is used to catch attention.
* Italics: italics is used to lay emphasis or distinguish the words from other words in the sentence. The printing of the words italicized are always in a different character from the other words in the text.
* Colour: it has high communicative value as it serves the purpose of social communication. Colours are used to pass across a message to the audience.
* Punctuation: it is usually used to represent the suprasegmental features like the intensity, intonation, tempo, stress, etc. It is also used to express one’s emotion depending on the amount of punctuation used.
* Numbering: This is a feature of graphology that entails the sequence of numbers indicating order or otherwise used for identification.

To carry out an objective analysis of the selected SME adverts, a theoretical model has been developed. Bloch (1953) has been chosen based on his assertion that style as “the message carried by the frequency distributions and transitional probabilities of linguistic features, especially as they differ from those of the same features in the language as a whole”. It is on this note that he has been chosen as the analytical model for this study.

Methodology

The selected SMEs for analysis were chosen randomly from Ilorin, Kwara state. They are thirty in number. The selection of these enterprises is based on the unique features of each enterprise. The procedure of data collection isbased on taking the pictures of selected SME signboards.

Data Analysis

Graphological features are evident in the selected signboards, which constitute the data for this study. Graphological features in the data include mixed case, capitalization, the use of comma, varying fonts and size, numbering, colour and italics.

1. Mixed case

 Mixed case is the combination of both upper and lower cases lexically or syntactically. There are marked instances of upper andlower cases in the SME adverts under investigation.Examples include:

Table 1: Illustrations of Mixed Cases in the Data Datum Sample

1 2s Restaurant& CATERING SERVICE

1. EXCEL BEAUTY SALON &MaKe UP
2. KWEEN’S Couture CONTEMPORARY UNISEX FASHION HOUSE
3. MUMMY JOY BEAUTY salon
4. Unik wear

Normally, people use either the lower case or upper case when writing but in SME adverts, as illustrated above, both lower and upper cases are mixed. The use of mixed cases here serves as a means of captivating the attention of prospective customers.For instance, in Datum 1, the name of the enterprise is carefully written in a bigger font but in lower case. This is a means of drawing attention to the words especially as the other service rendered. Datum 5 is written in a mixed case which is quite different from Datum 1, here. Make up has to do with beautification of the face, not only that, it also deals with transformation; so, it is written in such a way to indicate that the enterprise can transform a person to suit any occasion. Data 6, 11 and 12 have the same characteristics, the names of the enterprises are written in upper case while the services the enterprises offer are written in lower case. After knowing the name of the enterprise people would want to know what services the enterprise renders. These deviations are not only meant to draw the attention of customers, but also to show creativity on the part of the designers and to convey specific messages to potential customers.

2. Capitalization

 Apart from the mixture of cases, capitalization is also foregrounded in the data as it is used to lay emphasis on words or expressions.

Table 2: Foregrounded Instances of Capitalization

Datum Sample

2 MONDAY – MONDAY ENT. BOOK SHOP

6 KWEEN’S Couture CONTEMPORARY UNISEX FASHION HOUSE

13 Y LAGOS ? COMMUNICATION LTD PHONE REPAIRS,

UNLOCKING,

 UPGRADING, TRAINING

16 AFRIKANA PRESS

1. TOLAV GIFT
2. Demmy K BEAUTY SALON

Capitalization is deliberately used to captivate customers’ attention since capital letters are eye-catchy, they attract attention and therefore signify the importance of the words or structures in upper cases. In the data, some of the adverts only have the names of the enterprises in upper-case. Few capitalize what the enterprise does while others capitalize the name of the enterprise and what it does. These are all for stylistic implications, they also indicate the choice of the advertisers to ensure high turn-over.

3. Varying Font and Size

Fonts variations are used to lay emphasis on the text, aid readability and interpretation of the text by potential customers. Instances of varying font in the data are illustrated thus:

Table 3: Examples of Font and Size Variations

Datum Sample

1 2s Restaurant& CATERING SERVICES

1. EXCEL BEAUTY SALON &MaKe UP
2. KWEEN’S Couture CONTEMPORARY UNISEX FASHION HOUSE
3. Head 2 Toe Clothing & Makeover
4. 1st LADY SUPER STORES
5. COMFORT NIG. ENTERPRISES BEADS

ACCESSORIES

 WHOLESALES

1. MUMMY JOYBEAUTY salon
2. Unik wears
3. Y LAGOS? COMMUNICATION LTD PHONE REPAIRS,

UNLOCKING,

 UPGRADING, TRAINING

1. BreadplusMart
2. FRESHAIR Clean Cuts Clear Shave Hair Treatment Fresh

Air

1. AFRIKANA PRESS 19 Demmy K BEAUTY SALON 20 IJ & OMA’S KITCHEN INDOOR & OUTDOOR SERVICES

M,;23 L.S. CUTZ’ BARBER SHOP

 In the illustrations above, there are variations in the fonts and sizes of the text, including those that are of the same adverts. In Data

5,6,7,8,11,12,13,16,17,20,23and 30, the names of the enterprises are written in larger fontto aid customers’ memorability and enable them distinguish one enterprise from another since nomenclature is used to differentiate among entities in the world. The enterprises nomenclatures reflect the goods sold or services rendered. Data 1, 10, 14 and 19 are quite different from the others. In these adverts, emphasis is placed on what the enterprises do. There are numerous enterprises and what they do distinguishes them from others. This is a means of persuading prospective customers to ensure high turnover.

4. The Use of Comma

Comma is deliberately used in the data. Asyndeton is the deliberate omission of the conjunction ‘and’ in a sentence, therefore comma is used continuously and in place of ‘and’. Instances of asyndeton are highlighted below:

Table 4: Tabular Presentation of Comma as Evident in the Data

Datum Sample

2 MONDAY MONDAY ENT. BOOK SHOP

13 Y LAGOS? COMMUNICATION LTD PHONE REPAIRS,

UNLOCKING,

 UPGRADING, TRAINING

20 IJ & OMA’S KITCHEN INDOOR & OUTDOOR SERVICES – food,

snacks, drinks, barbecue fish, popcorn, Nkwobi, Ise-Ewu

The deliberate use of comma in the data is also used to indicate continuity. The advertisers omit ‘and’ while listing the services they render because the enterprise may decide to add more to the list of services rendered or some services rendered are not included in the adverts. The omission of ‘and’ also indicates an afterthought.

5. Italics

 There are recurrent instances of the use of italics in the data. In most cases, the first words of the adverts are in italics. This is exemplified as follows:

Table 5: Examples of Italization

Datum Sample

1 2s Restaurant & CATERING SERVICES

5 EXCEL BEAUTY SALON &MaKe UP

12 Unik wear

14 BreadplusMart

19 Demmy K BEAUTY SALON HAIR GELE PEDICURE & MANICURE

TRAINING

26 Signature Clothing: class & style

29 Ashakerewa Unisex Corporate Casual & Children Wears Fabrics; Shoes Bags & Accessories

In typography, italics type is a cursive font based on a stylized form of calligraphic handwriting. Owing to the influence from calligraphy, italics normally slant slightly to the right. Generally, italics functions as a way of laying emphasis on points or parts of words in a printed text. It is also used when quoting a speaker. Hence, in the above examples, the use of italics allows the advert take on a look of uniqueness; one that draws the attention of passers-by as the names of the enterprises are written using this special font.

6. Numbering

Numbering is an important characteristic of Small and Medium-Scale Enterprises’ Adverts. There are marked instances of the use of number in the data and these are exemplified as follows:

Table: Numbering and its Markedness in the Text Datum Sample

1 2s Restaurant & CATERING SERVICES

1. Head 2 Toe CORPORATE CHIC Kids Clothes
2. 1st LADY SUPER STORES

 As a feature of graphology, normally, numbering simply implies order, especially a means of stating, naming or listing information. In the first data, the use of the number2 functions as a replacement to the word two.Similar to this, the second example has the number 1 alongside the ‘st’ to replace the actual word ‘first’. The third example, however, uses the number 2 as the name of the restaurant –this is done with the suffix ‘-s’. Hence, the use of numbering functions as a means of making the advert less formal and fun to behold. Apart from this, numbers are used to save time and minimize space.

7. Colour

Specific words and or expressions of the small scale and medium enterprises’ signboards which are the analytical data for this study are coloured. Colours are used for communicating specific intentions of the business administrators to their prospective customers. The colours used vary from yellow to red, blue, and so on.

The use of colours is presented in Table 7 and discussed below. Table 7: Colour Variation in the SME Adverts

Colour Variation in SME Adverts

Yellow Pink White

Head 2 Toe Clothing & FRESHAIR Clean Cuts AshakerewaUnisex Corporate

Makeover CORPORATE Clear Shave Hair Treatment Casual & Children Wears

CHIC Kids Clothes Fresh Air

EXCEL BEAUTY Ashakerewa Unisex OKEY KEVINS INT’L NIG.

SALON&MaKe UP Corporate Casual & TEXTILE& FASHION

Children Wears; Fabrics CENTER

Shoes Bags & Accessories

|  |
| --- |
| & TEXTILE  |

KWEEN’S Couture Annes Classic Boutique ROHABOTH INT’L CONTEMPORARY UNISEX NIG.FASHION

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| FASHION HOUSE  | PLAZA  |

Annes Classic Boutique AFRICANA PRESS

ROHABOTH INT’L NIG. L.S. CUTZ’ BARBER SHOP

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| FASHION & TEXTILE PLAZA  |  |
| L.S. CUTZ’ BARBER SHOP  | CUMI HAIR HAVEN  |

|  |
| --- |
| DE-BRIGH  |

Signature Clothing class & VIDEO

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| style  | COVERAGE SALON VIDEO  | BARBING  |

De-Rich Barbing Salon& De-Rich Barbing Salon & Video Coverage BARBING Video Coverage:BARBING

ACCESSORIES CLIPPERS ACCESSORIES

COVERING CLOTHS CLIPPERS COVERING

BRUSH AFTER SHAVE CLOTHS BRUSH AFTER

SHAVE

Demmy KBEAUTY SALON: FRESHAIR Clean Cuts Clear HAIR GELE PEDICURE & Shave Hair Treatment Fresh

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| MANICURE TRAINING  | Air  |
| FRESHAIR Clean Cuts Clear Shave Hair Treatment Fresh Air  | Demmy K BEAUTY SALON HAIR GELE PEDICURE & MANICURE TRAINING  |

IJ & OMA’S KITCHEN: TOLAVGIFT

INDOOR & OUTDOOR

SERVICES CALL FOR

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| BreadplusMart  | Y LAGOS? COMMUNICATION LTD PHONE REPAIRS, UNLOCKING, UPGRADING, TRAINING  |

 MUMMY ELEGANTBUTIK

JOYBEAUTYsalon

ELEGANT BUTIK MURCH MURCH: Murch

Murch Boutique

COMFORT NIG.

ENTERPRISES BEADS ACCESSORIES

WHOLESALES

Yellow

Generally, yellow as a colour has a lot of meanings which could be denoted based on its usage. Yellow is used for remembrance, honour, optimism, warmth, clarity. It is also used for attracting attention due to its brightness. In Datum 3 the word ‘Elegant’is written in yellow colour as it draws one’s attention. This is also evident in Data 22, 23, 26 and 27. The names of the enterprises are painted in yellow. In Datum 5 the word ‘Salon’ is written in a different font which is smaller compare to ‘Excel’ and ‘Beauty’, but the choice of colour makes it catch the attention of potential customers that the enterprise is a salon. Hence, the colour yellow serves as clarity in the advert because other words are written bigger than the salon. The explanation for Datum 5 also accounts for Data 6, 11, 17 and 19. In Data 7 and 30, yellow is not used in all the letters rather it is used in certain letters of the datum, thus, giving it a different interpretation from the previous identified data. Datum 19 is unlike the other datum in the advert, neither the name of the enterprise nor what the enterprise the enterprise does is written in attentioncatching yellow. In the datum, a smaller font was used to write ‘call for’ and was written in yellow colour which captures the attention of the customer that the enterprise is just a phone call away from them.

White

 White is associated with goodness, coolness and cleanliness. It is also used in business to represent successful beginning and safety. Data 2,4,19, 21 and 28 focus the attention of the customers mainly onthe name of the enterprises. By laying more focus on the name of the enterprise, the advertisers are trying to differentiate their enterprise from other enterprises which might be offering the same service or product. We can also deduce that the advertisers are trying to convince the customers about their diligence and intention to provide them service which is different from others. It also indicates safety, which implies that the enterprise guarantees quality of product and service. In Data 7, 10, 13 and 15 both the names and nature of the enterprise are written in colour white, which means that the enterprise has high integrity and the goods and services offered to people from the enterprise are not of sub quality. In Data 3, 12, 19, 22, 23, 27 and 29 white is thereby used to emphasize the services and products the enterprises offer. Datum 17 is different in a unique way from other datum, the name of the enterprise is written in white except one letter which was written in another colour.

Pink

Pink is associated with love, affection, harmony, approachability, relaxation, and also to neutralize disorder.In the examples above, Data 29 and 30 have the names of the enterprises written in pink colour which means that enterprises are approachable and willing to give their customers maximum satisfaction. In Datum 30, the name of the enterprise is written in pink and part of the advert is also written in pink, the meaning of pink as used in the data is different from each other.

Discussion

The deductions made from the work so far are presented in Table 8.

Table 8: Frequency and Percentage of Graphological Devices in the SME

Adverts

Graphological Tools Frequency Percentage

Case 11 14.47

Font and Size 16 21.05

Use of Comma 3 3.95

3.95

3

Numbering

47.37

Colour

36

Italics

7

9.21

Total

76

100

Table 8 presents the frequency and percentage of the graphological devices used in the data. Colours occur 36 times with 47.37 % used as catch word to potential customers. Case occurs eleven times with 14.47%: they are used to draw attention to the words and to signify the importance of the words. Font and size are evident sixteen times with 21.05% it is used to differentiate one enterprise from the other. While number and use of comma are the least used graphological devices which occur three times with 3.95%. Numbers are used in the advert to create informality and comma is used to list the services rendered by the enterprise. Italicsis used seven times with 9%: it is used to give uniqueness to the advert.

Conclusion

This research has investigated the linguistic stylistic analysis of signboard advertisements of small and medium enterprise. The study deployed the linguistic tool of stylistics—graphology, for the analysis of the SMEs. It could be concluded that the advertisers used different markers of linguistic deviation to attract customers to their enterprise since most of these tools are eye-catching and are meant to appeal to their emotive sense.

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