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ENGLISH-LANGUAGE ADVERTISING HUMOR

This article presents stylistic, cognitive and pragmatic analyses of a sample of English-language jokes about advertising and its variants. An analysis of the forms of 115 jokes sourced from four English-language websites shows that the most frequent forms of jokes about advertising are question/answer formats (60.8%), one-liner jokes (39.2%). A detailed study of 20 advertising-related jokes highlights the most frequent use of stylistic devices such as puns, fake enthusiasm, paraprosdokian, pastiche, bathos and irony. Other techniques include personified and zoomorphic metaphors, nonstandard similes, false argumentation (enthymeme), antithesis, are involved. From a cognitive perspective, the jokes apply cognitive mechanisms like the «deformation professionale», «von Restorff pattern», «distinct contrast» and «easel» patterns, switching of which leads to the incongruity mechanism and comic effect. Pragmatically, these jokes serve multiple purposes: they help students to relieve psychological stress, encourage creative and critical thinking, entertain, introduce readers to English-speaking advertising practices and techniques, and foster an appreciation of humor and irony. Besides, they motivate people to be successful and confident, while shaping stereotypical images of English-speaking advertising professionals, contributing to the development of intercultural and cultural competences. The advertising jokes form the stereotypical image of an advertising professional as a creative and smart, multifunctional and cynical, rude and highly skilled specialist in philology and psychology. The stereotypical image of an advertising professional carries out a number of functions. 1. The function of emotional trigger, because it tunes the audience into humorous tonality. 2. The function of the fast assimilation of the created image and simplified perception of it. 3. The function of funny labeling of advertising specialists. 4. The linguistic function of transforming the language towards expressivity and flexibility.

Key words: *humor, irony, socio-professional jokes, advertising, cognitive patterns.*

Олег Харченко. АНГЛОМОВНИЙ РЕКЛАМНИЙ ГУМОР

У цій статті запропоновано стилістичний, когнітивний та прагматичний аналіз вибірки сучасних англомовних жартів про рекламу та її різновиди. Аналіз форм 115 жартів, взятих з чотирьох англомовних сайтів, свідчить про те, що найбільш частотними формами жартів про рекламу є запитання/відповідь (60.8%), однорядкові жарти (39.2%). Розгляд 20 жартів про рекламу, досліджених у статті, розкрив, що у стилістичному плані, вони містять каламбури, пастиш, парапросдокіан, удаваний ентузіазм, бафос та іронію. Додатково залучаються такі прийоми, як персоніфіковані та зооморфічні метафори, нестандартні порівняння, антитеза, хибна аргументація (ентимема). У когнітивному аспекті гумор ґрунтується на механізмах когнітивних патернів професійної деформації, фон Ресторфа, мольберту, чіткого контрасту, негативного мислення. Прагматично, жарти ведуть до зняття психологічного стресу, критичного мислення, креативності, несуть розважальний елемент. Жарти знайомлять читачів з англомовним рекламним бізнесом, професійною та неформальною лексикою, допомагають виявити гумор та іронію, мотивують до професійного успіху, формують стереотипні образи рекламістів, підвищують упевненість у своїх знаннях, розвивають міжкультурну й культурологічну компетенці.

Ключові слова: *гумор, іронія, соціопрофесійні жарти, реклама, когнітивні патерни.*

Problem statement. The contemporary English-language multimedia discourse includes a considerable amount of humorous, ironic, and satirical content that engages various socio-professional groups. Through a combined research based on stylistic, cognitive, literary and pragmatic analyses of English-language advertising humor, this article aims to provide additional insights at the benefits of learning advertising humor.

The object of study is contemporary English-language advertising jokes from multimedia sources in the United States and the United Kingdom.

The subject of study is identifying stylistic, literary, and cognitive techniques used to create humor in these socio-professional jokes.

The objective of the study is to outline the stereotypical image of advertising professionals working in the USA and the UK, the functioning of the 'deformation professionale' cognitive pattern in socio-professional jokes about advertising business through cultural, linguistic, cognitive and pragmatic perspectives.

Methodology and Research Approaches. The methodological toolkit for this study includes empirical methods of cognitive, discur-

sive, literary and stylistic analysis; descriptive investigation of jokes; scientific generalization; and interpretation of humorous fragments for further comparison and conclusions.

The analysis of last publications. Socio-professional stereotypes are shaped by extralinguistic factors of social and professional, cultural and historic character. From the angle of cognitive linguistic, at least partly, they are formed by such cognitive pattern as 'deformation professionale,' which presents the key part of the same called cognitive bias. This French term means the tendency to consider different questions from the position of some profession. It was introduced by D. Warnotte [12], later it was popularized by a number of scientists including A. Carrel, who affirmed in his work, 'Man, The Unknown' that "every specialist owing to a well-known professional bias, believe that he understands the entire human being, while in reality he only grasps a tiny part of him" [3].

In a metaphorical way, the sense of the term 'deformation professionale' reveals the quotation of A. Maslov, "I suppose it is tempting, if the only tool you have is a hammer, to treat everything as if it were a nail" [11].

Taking into account that the humorous discourse flow moves through some cognitive frames [4], we affirm that, at least partly, the comic effect is shaped by switching cognitive patterns. The key cognitive biases were singled out and determined by D. Kahneman and A. Tversky [19].

In my view, a cognitive pattern is a mental filter, connecting several frames and the active model of reality cognition, revolving around a main value dominant, the regular application of which forms properly or misleads the real-world cognition, shaping the same name cognitive bias which builds in gradually in the world map of a person. The cognitive pattern is a transitional filter between a frame and a related cognitive bias.

In the 'deformation professionale' cognitive pattern the key value dominant – 'my profession is the best.' It is surrounded by several key frames – 'respect,' 'smartness,' and 'correctness.'

As an example of a joke, well illustrating the 'deformation professionale' cognitive pattern, could be the following one, "A doctor, a lawyer and a product manager were discussing the relative merits of having a wife or a mistress. The lawyer says, 'For sure a mistress is better. If you have a wife and want a divorce, it causes all sorts of legal problems.' The doctor says, 'It's better to have a wife because the sense of security lowers your stress and is good for your health.' The… manager says, 'You're both wrong. It's best to have both so that when the wife thinks you're with the mistress and the mistress thinks you're with your wife – you can do some…management'" [7].

In this joke, for the lawyer, the key value dominant – 'law,' or 'dura lex sed lex'; for the doctor – 'health,' because 'good health is above wealth'; for the manager, the key value dominant is 'hard work', since 'hard work always pays off, whatever you do.' The main characters of this joke represent the 'deformation professionale' patterns widespread within their socio-professional groups. They look through the angle of their professions. The comic effect of the joke is caused by the incongruity effect (cognitive level) and the stylistic figure paraprosdokian, because the answer of the manager sounds unusual and creative.

Besides, it is necessary to remark that jokes targeting the socio-professional groups – provide additional linguistic, cultural and professional insights. E. Reddington and H.Z. Waring argue that "the ability to create and understand humor is increasingly recognized as a component of communicative competence…" [17, p. 3]. S.E. Davies [5] and D. Hann [8] assert that analyzing jokes, including professional jokes, enhances cross-cultural competence.

Discussion and Analysis of Jokes. For this study, we selected jokes focusing on such socio-professional group as advertising professionals working in media and social networks.

The advertising-related jokes were sourced from websites including jokeandpun.com [13], reddit.com [18], namesurfy.com [1], and pouted.com [14]. The primary types of advertising jokes are short "question/answer" jokes and one-liner jokes. An analysis of a sample comprising 115 jokes from the mentioned websites shows that 60.9% are in the question/answer (Q/A) format, while 39.2% are one-liners.

In this study, we examine 20 jokes from these websites, which we believe belong to the most illustrative examples.

1. Why did the billboard go back to school? It wanted to improve its "ad-dress" [13].
2. Why don't advertisers play poker? They're too good at bluffing! [13].
3. What kind of commercials do chickens love? Egg-vertisements [13].
4. Why did the print ad refuse to leave its job? It loved having a solid "copy" [13].
5. Why is advertising like a bad magic trick? Because the results often disappear right before your eyes! [13].
6. Why did the radio ad visit the farm? To work on its pitchfork strategy [13].
7. What do you call a terrible marketing strategy for curtains? Window dressing [13].
8. Local advertising. In New Mexico, on a septic tank truck in New Mexico, it was printed

boldly on the side: "Your shit is our bread and butter!" [18].

9. Local advertising. Fire sprinkler company: "Water sprinklers save your grass, fire sprinklers save your ass!" [18].

10. Local advertising. Septic tank service with the name "Honey Wagon". The slogan on the trucks was "Satisfaction guaranteed or double your honey back." (local advertising) [18].

11. 'Think Small' – Volkswagen [1].

12. 'Think Outside the Bun' – Taco Bell [1].

13. 'Once You Pop, You Can't Stop' – Pringles [1].

14. 'We're Like a Gym for Your Finances' – FitWallet Financial Advisors [1].

15. 'Your Trash is Our Treasure' – GreenCycle Waste Management [1].

16. 'We Make Your Mother-in-law Jealous' – Sparkle Home Cleaning [1].

17. 'We're the Cat's Meow' – Purrfect Pets Pet Store [1].

18. 'We Make Your Computer Sit and Stay' – TechTrain [1]

19. People say nothing is impossible, but I do nothing every day [14].

20. My mind works like lightning; one brilliant flash, and it's gone [14].

Analysis of stylistic devices used to create comedic effect in the selected jokes. So, we consider the stylistic devices employed to generate comedic effects in the aforementioned sample of jokes.

Puns are utilized in the first joke (*ad-dress* – a word play on both "address" and "a dress for ads"), the third (*egg-vertisements* – a paronymy involving "advertisements" and "egg-vertisements," where *egg* refers to eggs, and *vertisement* references a small advertising company), the fourth (*copy* – interpreted both as "a duplicate" and "a spiteful person"), the sixth (*pitchfork strategy* – a pun on *pitch* as the main idea of a presentation and *pitchfork* as a farming tool), and the seventh (*window dressing* – a double meaning of "shop window decoration" and "deception").

Pastiche, referring to mixing lexicons from different genres and registers, is used in the second joke (*advertisers, poker*), the third (*commercial, chicken*), the fifth (*advertising, magic trick*), the eighth (*advertising, shit*), the ninth (*advertising, ass*), the fourteenth (*gym, finances*), the fifteenth (*trash, treasure*), and the eighteenth (*computer, sit and stay*). Additionally, the stylistic device of bathos, characterized by the abrupt use of low-register vocabulary, is seen in jokes eight, nine, and fifteen.

Paraprosdokian (unexpected joke endings) is used in the twelfth joke, where instead of the idiomatic phrase *"Think outside the box"* (meaning "think creatively"), the advertising version

suggests thinking outside "the bun." In the seventeenth joke, product producers call themselves "the cat's meow," which serves as a zoomorphic metaphor. This stylistic device is also combined in other jokes with surprising endings, such as jokes 1, 2, 3, 6, 8, 10, 11, 12, 14, 15, and 18.

Faulty logic or enthymeme is involved in the second joke. Advertisers are said not to play poker because they are good at bluffing – an innuendo suggesting they are akin to fraudsters. The fifth joke compares advertising to a bad magic trick, implying that advertising results quickly disappear, again hinting at deceit. The nineteenth joke plays on the word *"nothing"* by suggesting that "nothing" can also be done.

Irony is utilized in the eighth joke, where "shit" is called the company's "bread and butter" (its main income source). Similarly, in the tenth joke, "shit" is referred to as "honey," with an innuendo tied to libido, implying that "satisfaction is guaranteed." In the fifteenth joke, "trash" is described as "treasure," hinting at the idea that one person's trash is another person's wealth.

Antithesis is seen in the twentieth joke, where the brain's activity is humorously described as: "My mind works like lightning. One brilliant flash – and it's gone." An implicit antithesis is also present in the eleventh joke, where the traditional phrase *"Think big"* or *"Think globally"* is replaced with *"Think small."*

Personified metaphors are noticed in the first joke, where a billboard "goes to school"; in the third joke, where chickens "enjoy commercials"; in the fourth joke, where printed ads "refuse to quit their jobs"; in the sixth joke, where radio ads "visit a farm"; in the thirteenth joke, where chips "pop up" like living creatures; and in the eighteenth joke, where a computer obeys commands like a dog.

Nonstandard similes appear in the fifth joke, where advertising is likened to a bad magic trick; in the fourteenth joke, where advertisers are compared to a "gym for finances"; and in the twentieth joke, where the mind is correlated to lightning.

Situational humor, drawn from everyday life, evokes laughter in the sixteenth joke, where a cleaning company provokes envy in a mother-in-law due to the high quality of cleaning services.

Almost all jokes employ the stylistic device of fake enthusiasm, as most jokes are filled with cheerful optimism.

The comedic effect is further enhanced by: rhyme in the ninth joke (*grass, ass*) and the thirteenth joke (*pop, stop*); alliteration in jokes eight (*bread, butter*), fifteen (*trash, treasure*), and eighteen (*sit, stay*); diacope (repetition of a word) in jokes nine (*sprinklers save, sprinklers save*)

and nineteen (*nothing, nothing*); isocolon (parallel structure) in jokes nine, thirteen, and nineteen.

The stylistic analysis reveals that most jokes utilize, often in combination, the following devices:

• Puns (5 jokes – 20%)
• Paraprosdokian (13 – 65%)
• Personified and zoomorphic metaphors (7 – 35%)
• Pastiche (8 – 40%)
• Antithesis (2 – 10%)
• Unconventional comparisons (3 – 15%)
• Irony (3 – 15%)
• Bathos (3 – 15%)
• Faulty logic (3 – 15%)
• Fake enthusiasm (16 – 80%).

From the cognitive point of view, where we identify cognitive patterns as main mechanisms for creating humor, there is a set of jokes – namely, in samples 1, 2, 4, 5, 9, 13, and 14 (7–35%), jokes demonstrate the activation of the cognitive patterns of the "Von Restorff effect" [21, p. 299]. This effect involves the audience's tendency to pay greater attention to individual, isolated, fantastical, and supernatural objects and the "extraordinarity bias" [10, pp. 52–55], which includes a provocative element. The latter refers to a tendency to remember objects with additional unusual qualities.

The cognitive bias of the 'deformation professionale' is activated in all the jokes of the sample. All jokes sound like creative witticisms, trying to convince readers to buy some products or services, or to impress them with smartness, humor, and cynical hints, which reflect the components of good advertising and underline the implication that advertisers are good psychologists too.

The cognitive pattern of the "easel" is observed in jokes 8, 10, 12, 15, 17, 18, and 20 (7–35%). This pattern shapes the cognitive bias of the "importance of visuals." According to A. Paivio, people remember visual images and representations formed by words much faster than any logically connected information [16].

The cognitive pattern of "distinct contrast" is applied to create a comic effect in jokes 8, 11, 19, and 15 (4–20%). This pattern is part of the "contrast effect" bias, identified by D. Kahneman and A. Tversky [19]. It is based on the assertion that contrasting referents presented together attract more attention and are more memorable.

The cognitive pattern of "negative thinking," characterized by problem-solving through negative experience and part of the eponymous cognitive bias [5, 7], is used in jokes 2, 5, 8, 9, and 15 (5–25%).

What stereotypical image of an advertiser from the UK or the USA do these jokes create?

Such a professional is perceived as creative, smart, multifunctional, somewhat cynical, and highly skilled specialist in philology and psychology.

From this perspective, the stereotypical image of an advertising professional performs a number of functions. 1. The function of emotional trigger, because it tunes the addressee in humorous tonality. It is connected with a smorgasbord of feelings and emotions (joy, excitement, mocking etc.). 2. The function of the quick assimilation of the shaped image and simplified perception of the surrounding reality through the eyes of this image (the law of effort saving). 3. The function of funny labeling of those who work in the advertising business. 4. The linguistic function which is displayed in the transforming of the language towards more expressivity and flexibility.

According to the analysis of sample jokes, the main pragmatic functions of English-language jokes about advertising include: entertainment through creating a positive emotional mood and stimulating laughter; familiarization with the peculiarities of the English-speaking advertising industry; psychological stress relief by eliminating negative emotions; encouraging critical thinking; motivating success and career growth; strengthening professional confidence; stimulating creativity; highlighting humor and irony.

Conclusions. English-language jokes about advertising are nationally marked and serve as an effective pragmatic tool for selling products and services. The advertising jokes illustrate the techniques of creating effective advertisements within the English-language professional and cultural environment.

An analysis of the joke formats revealed that, out of 115 units sampled from four humor websites, 60.2% were in the form of question/answer, while 39.2% were one-liners.

The analysis of a subset of 20 jokes about English-language advertising indicates that jokes are created through a combination of various stylistic devices, including: fake enthusiasm (80%), puns (20%), paraprosdokians (65%), personified and zoomorphic metaphors (35%), pastiche (40%), antithesis (10%), unconventional comparisons (15%), irony (15%), bathos (15%), and faulty logic (15%). Rhyme, alliteration, diacope, isocolon, or parallel structures act as humor intensifiers.

In the cognitive aspect, humor is created using patterns such as the 'deformation professionale,' 'Von Restorff effect,' 'extraordinarity,' 'easel pattern,' 'distinct contrast,' and 'negative thinking.'

All the analyzed jokes fulfill the following pragmatic functions: activating critical thinking, causing entertainment, familiarizing with

advertising techniques and vocabulary, revealing humor and irony, alleviating psychological stress, creating motivation for success, fostering professional confidence, and enhancing creativity.

The advertising jokes shape the stereotypical image of an advertising specialist as creative and smart, multifunctional and cynical, rude and a highly skilled professional in philology and psychology.

The research findings presented in this article demand further studies with a larger database.

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