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من قبل الطالبة
أزهار حامد علي

بأشراف
أ.م.د. اطياف حسن ابراهيم



**Ministry of Higher Education and
Scientific Research**

**University of Diyala
College of Education for Humanities
Department of English**



**A Socio-Linguistic Study of Slang Expressions in
British and American Advertisements**

A Thesis

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By

Azhar Hamid Ali

Supervised by

Asst. Prof. Atyaf Hasan Ibrahim (Ph.D.)

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Abstract

The expansion in trade marketing including slang expressions occupies a considerable space in the media environment. However, such overuse of slang language in marketing brings about misleading and misunderstanding of the intended aim of the ad and, in turn, the attention of people, as consumers, can be confused. This study is conducted to examine the employment of slang language in selected British and American advertisements (Henceforth, ads). It aims at exploring the contextual meanings of slang expressions, identifying the types and functions of slang expressions in British and American ads. It hypothesizes that there are certain contextual meanings behind using different slang expressions in British and American ads. In addition, slang expressions are more used in British adverts than in American ones. Besides, it is hypothesized that advertisers deliberately employ slang expressions in advert designing to have the intended effect on people as costumers and slang expressions are highly effected by social and cultural factors. To achieve its aims, answer its questions, and verify its hypotheses, the study follows two types of procedures: theoretical and practical. The theoretical part consists of presenting a theoretical framework of slang language including its root, development, universal features, functions, classifications and models. On the other hand, the practical part consists of selecting a sample of ten British ads and other ten of American ads. The adverts in both sets are written by different advertisers and companies, which are downloaded from different electronic newspapers, magazines, and websites. The data selected are analyzed in the light of an eclectic model based on Allan and Burrige (2006) and Burdova's (2009) theories. The study comes out with several

conclusions that slang expressions, in both American and British ads, have different contextual meanings based on the certain linguistic items and the cultural environment in which they are employed. Such expressions are commonly used in American and British ads to establish a sense of familiarity and connection with the target consumers. Functions served by slang expressions in the British ads are several such as ‘*Cultural Connection; Informality and Relatability; Humor; Attention-Grabbing; Conveying Brand Identity and Simplification*. Whereas, these expressions serve different functions in the American ads like ‘*Engagement and Connection, Creating a Brand Identity; Attracting Attention; Conveying Informality and Fun and Cultural Relevance*. Slang expressions used in both sets of ads are recognized to exert various impacts on the customers as a specific segment of society. Linguistically, slang expressions can contribute to the spread of propaganda of new strategies of marketing that can become more widely understood and used. They demonstrate the creativity and adaptability of language, as they often involve repurposing existing words or creating entirely new ones. Culturally, slang terms can reflect cultural trends and attitudes in that British ads tend to employ more slang expressions than Americans ones. The study ends up with a number of conclusions, recommendations, and suggestions for further research based on its findings.

CHAPTER ONE

Introduction

1.1 Preliminaries

An informal style of speech often involves the frequent occurrence of slang, which may be a single word or a group of words as a discourse. Slang expressions are highly informal and often used in colloquial speech. It is a kind of language that usually occurs outside the standard usage, and consists of both newly coined words and phrases, and new extended meanings attached to the established terms (Chen, 2006: 260).

1.2 The Problem

It is noticeable that the overuse of the slang language is rising up in marketing and in the ways of making ads. Advertisers, on the other hand, try to shape their ads at the level and in the way they target the needs of people as consumers in general. However, the increasing use of slang expressions in British and American ads brings about misunderstanding of the intended aims of these ads and, in turn, people's attention may be distracted. Thus, there is an urgent need to study such expressions from a sociolinguistic perspective in order to determine their social impact and their cultural effect on people. The problem of the study can be represented by the following questions:

- 1.** What are the contextual meanings of slang expressions used in British and American ads?
- 2.** What are the types of slang expressions used in British and American ads?
- 3.** What are the functions of slang expressions used in British and American ads?

4. What are the aims of using slang expressions in British and American ads?
5. How are the slang expressions affected by social and cultural factors?
6. Which culture uses slang expressions more; American or British?

1.3 The Aims

This study aims at:

1. exploring the contextual meanings of slang expressions in British and American ads,
2. identifying the types of slang expressions used in British and American ads,
3. finding out the functions of slang expressions in British and American ads,
4. investigating the aims of using slang expressions in British and American ads,
5. exploring the effect of social and cultural factors on slang expressions, and
6. identifying which culture uses slang expressions more; American or British.

1.4 The Hypotheses

It is hypothesized that:

1. There are certain contextual meanings behind using slang expressions in British and American ads.
2. The types of slang expressions such as (compounding and flippant) are more used in British than in American ads,

3. Advertisers deliberately use slang expressions in designing the ads to have the intended effect.
4. Using slang expressions is to fulfill similar aims in both British and American ads,
5. Slang expressions are highly effected by social and cultural factors, and
6. Slang expressions are used by the advertisers in the British culture more frequently than in the American culture.

1.5 The Procedures

The following steps will be followed to achieve the aims of the study and verify its hypotheses.

1. Presenting a theoretical framework of sociolinguistics including its principles, approaches and models, etc.,
2. Selecting a sample of British and American ads from different electronic newspapers, magazines and websites,
3. Adopting a suitable model for the analysis of the selected ads,
4. Analyzing the selected ads in the light of the adopted model and,
5. Drawing conclusions based on the study findings, providing recommendations and suggestions for further research.

1.6 The Scope

This study confines itself to investigating slang expressions in British and American ads. The selected ads will be analyzed according to an eclectic model based on Allan and Burridge (2006) and Burdova (2009) theories. The selected data consist of ten British ads and other ten American ones. The selected ads are downloaded from different electronic newspapers, magazines, and websites.

1.7 The Significance

The study is hoped to be useful for those who are interested in Linguistics in general and Sociolinguistics in particular. In addition, this study is useful for those who are interested in social and cultural differences. It is significant for learners of foreign languages because knowing slang expressions improve their skills and enrich their language. It is also essential for those concerned with EFL learning and instruction, as having knowledge of advertising language enhances learning skills.