

Research Article

# Advertising as a Linguistic Tool: A Syntactic Study of English and Vietnamese Brand Slogans

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## Abstract

Advertising slogans are one of the most influential tools for building brand identity and attracting consumer attention in today's competitive market. Despite their widespread use, many marketing professionals continue to face challenges in crafting effective slogans, often leading to weak associations between brands and their slogans. This study aims to investigate the distinctive syntactic features of English and Vietnamese advertising slogans, with the purpose of identifying both similarities and differences between the two languages. A descriptive and comparative research design was employed, analyzing a corpus of advertising slogans collected from English and Vietnamese newspapers and magazines. The findings reveal that slogans in both languages frequently employ simplicity, brevity, and elliptical structures—such as noun phrases, adjective phrases, and verb phrases—though English slogans show a greater tendency toward ellipsis and dynamic expressions. Additionally, repetition at the syntactic level emerges as a significant device in both languages, enhancing memorability and persuasive power. These results provide valuable implications for teaching and learning business English, offering learners and teachers deeper insights into the linguistic mechanisms of advertising language. Furthermore, the study proposes practical guidelines for advertisers and copywriters to design effective slogans that strengthen brand recognition and consumer engagement.

## Keywords

Brand slogans, Advertising language, Linguistic features, Syntactic features

## 1. Introduction

Advertising is a crucial tool that businesses use to introduce products and services to customers. For advertising to be effective, language must be carefully selected, creative, concise, and highlight the key features of the product to attract customer attention and stimulate purchasing demand. Advertising language must also be rich and aesthetically pleasing as it represents a unique form of text that combines scientific, artistic,

practical, and aesthetic qualities (Võ Thanh Hương, 2004).

Alongside names and logos, advertising slogans are one of the three core elements of a brand. According to the Oxford Dictionary, an advertising slogan is defined as “a short, striking, or memorable phrase used in advertising.” Similarly, Sinclair (2014, p. 1473) cites the definition of an advertising

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slogan from the Cobuild Advanced Learner's Dictionary as "a memorable short phrase used by political parties or other organizations to make people remember what they are saying or selling." Summarizing research on advertising slogans, Gali et al. (2016, p. 1) describe slogans as "short phrases designed to convey descriptive and persuasive information about a specific brand."

Advertising slogans play a critical role in brand recognition and contribute to brand equity. In today's competitive market, most brands use advertising slogans to enhance their image, aid recognition and recall, and differentiate themselves in the minds of consumers. While the importance of advertising slogans is widely acknowledged, there is little consensus on what constitutes an effective slogan. Consequently, even though marketing professionals frequently use slogans, they often struggle to create effective ones. This can lead to inefficiencies and weak associations between the brand and its slogan, even for well-known brands. As a result, there is growing attention on the effective use of advertising language, especially in the context of business globalization. Linguistic experts are increasingly analyzing and evaluating the linguistic tools used in advertising to maximize effectiveness and improve techniques for crafting successful slogans.

Numerous studies have been conducted on the linguistic features of English advertising (Romanenko, 2014; Pilátová, 2015) and Vietnamese advertising (Mai Xuân Huy, 2005; Phan Thị Vân Anh, 2011; Đinh Kiều Châu, 2013). However, few studies have focused specifically on the syntactic aspects of advertising language in English and Vietnamese. This study, therefore, aims to analyze the syntax used in the advertising slogans of prominent domestic and international brands to explore how word arrangements convey specific messages. The authors hope that the findings of this research will provide practical recommendations for teaching and learning business English, as well as for professionals working in the advertising industry.

## 2. Previous studies on advertising slogans

Research on the linguistic aspects of advertising slogans remains limited compared to studies on brand naming. For instance, Klink and Wu (2014) examined how marketers incorporate sound symbolism into brand names. Bao et al. (2008) investigated the impact of brand name pronunciation on consumer preferences, while Lowrey and Shrum (2007) found that consumers tend to prefer fictional brand names featuring vowels associated with desirable attributes for specific product categories.

Studies on sound symbolism highlight the significance of phonology in constructing meaningful brand names. Phonological choices offer diverse possibilities for creating

impactful brand slogans. In English, research has explored morphological processes at the lexical level, particularly the use of prefixes and suffixes to generate variations related to brand names. These morphological variations reflect companies' efforts to persuade consumers to embrace a brand's unique vocabulary. For example, brand names ending in "-x," such as Lux soap, not only convey "light" through Latin etymology but also evoke "luxury." Names like Lux, Kleenex, Rolex, and Moulinex are considered strong examples due to their brevity, uniqueness, and phonetically appealing "-x" ending (Room, 1991; Stvan, 2006).

At the syntactic level, recent research by Miller and Toman (2015) suggests that moderately complex slogans, compared to syntactically simple ones, engage more intricate cognitive processing, thereby enhancing brand recall and interpretation. At the semantic level, there has been a significant focus on linguistic and visual metaphors in brand naming (Noble et al., 2013).

A corpus of advertising slogans, composed of legally verifiable and analyzable data, offers valuable insights into the understudied aspects of this advertising genre. Due to their legal and public nature, advertising slogans provide an excellent opportunity for traceability. For instance, a systematic search can be conducted to analyze advertising slogans and their current legal status through resources such as the USPTO (United States Patent and Trademark Office). By leveraging computational tools to analyze such data, researchers can generate scientific findings on this specialized and underexplored area of advertising language.

*Advertising slogans and their significance:* Alongside brand names and logos, slogans are one of the three core elements of brand identity, serving as a key way for a brand to communicate with the world around it (Kohli et al., 2002). For example, "Just Do It," Nike's famous advertising slogan, is as recognizable as the brand name itself, especially among athletes worldwide. This example highlights the immense power of an effective slogan.

Although each component of brand identity contributes to the overall brand, they are distinct and serve unique functions, with slogans playing a crucial supporting role in reinforcing and amplifying the brand's message.

*Syntactic features of brand slogans:* From a syntactic perspective, advertising language is recognized as a "block language," where sentences are constructed by limiting grammatical structures (Leech, 1966). This "block language" is evident in the omission of finite verbs within sentences, making slogans more concise while still conveying essential information through this technique. For example, "Absolut Attraction" (Absolut Vodka) or "Strong and Smooth" (Daewoo).

Repetition is another characteristic feature in advertising that exerts a strong pull on the human mind. According to Galperin, "Repetition is also one of the devices having its origin in emotive language. When applied to logical language,

repetition simply becomes an instrument of grammar. Its origin lies in the excitement accompanying the expression of a feeling at its peak tension” (Nguyen Thi Ngoc Anh, 2012, p.5).

Word and structural repetition is a significant feature in advertising, creating a memorable and emotionally engaging effect on consumers. For instance, slogans like “Pure Spirit. Pure Experience” (Crystal Head Vodka) or “Sweet Sweet. Sour Sour. So Delicious. So Cool” - Ngọt ngọt. Chua chua. Thật ngon. Thật mát (Lif Kun) exemplify the use of repetition to emphasize key product attributes and evoke emotional resonance.

### 3. Methodology

The descriptive method is employed to analyze and describe advertising texts in terms of both form and content. This approach aims to identify the features and stylistic characteristics of the language used in slogans in both Vietnamese and English.

The comparative method is applied to highlight the similarities and differences in the language of advertising slogans between Vietnamese and English. This analysis helps uncover deviations in advertising language and identifies errors to avoid in designing effective slogans.

## 4. Findings

### 4.1. Similarities in Vietnamese and English brand slogans

**Types of advertising sentences in Vietnamese and English based on structures:**

#### Simple sentences:

In Vietnamese advertising slogans, simple sentences (including both multi-component simple sentences and single-component simple sentences) are widely used. Similarly, in English advertising slogans, simple sentences also appear frequently. However, English tends to favor elliptical simple sentences, which typically consist of only a verb phrase.

Table 4.1. English slogans as simple sentences

Brand slogans	Brands	Vietnamese
Designed for lift	Oppo	Được thiết kế cho cuộc sống.
Dirt is good.	Omo	Lấm bẩn gieo điều hay. Tôi yêu mắt rồi.

I'm lovin' it.	McDonald's	Cuộc sống tươi đẹp.
Life's good.	LG	Vì bạn xứng đáng.
Because I'm worth it.	L'Oreal	Chỉ có thể là Heineken.
It could be only Heineken.	Heineken	Thành phố không bao giờ ngủ.
The city never sleeps	Citibank	

These examples illustrate that both languages utilize simplicity and brevity in slogans, focusing on delivering a clear and impactful message. However, English slogans often achieve this through the omission of auxiliary or unnecessary elements, creating a more dynamic and direct tone.

A notable similarity in English and Vietnamese advertising slogans is the characteristic simplicity, which is the most commonly occurring feature across the types of sentences used in advertising. This simplicity ensures that slogans are easy to understand, memorable, and impactful, making them more effective in capturing the audience's attention and conveying the core message of the brand.

#### i) Elliptical Simple Sentences – A Noun Phrase

##### Vietnamese:

Table 4.2. Vietnamese slogans as a noun phrase

Slogans	Brands
Thuốc ho cho cả gia đình	Prospan
Bản lĩnh đàn ông	Bia Tiger
Giá trị tích lũy niềm tin	Ngân hàng Habubank
Không chỉ 1040 màu sơn	Mykolor
Mãi mãi tinh thần khởi nghiệp	Vin Group
Một phần Tất yếu của cuộc sống	Nước khoáng Lavie
Niềm vui mua sắm	Tiki
Sức mạnh Việt Nam	Bia Đại Việt
Vẻ đẹp quyến rũ thời trang Pháp	NEM
Vẻ đẹp quyến rũ	NewNem
Niềm tự hòa của Việt Nam	Bia Sài Gòn

##### English:

Table 4.3. English slogans as a noun phrase

Slogans	Brands
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Style revolution	Ninomax
Spice of life	Khu du lịch Chengdu
The happiest place on earth	Disneylan
Ideas for life	Panasonic
The art of performance!	Jaguar
The king of beers!	Budweiser
A daily detox for your skin!	Bioré

### ii) Elliptical Simple Sentences - An adjective phrase

Với thành tố chính là tính từ, các ngữ tính từ thể hiện chức năng diễn đạt những đặc điểm, tính chất, đặc trưng của sản phẩm được quảng cáo.

#### Vietnamese:

Table 4.4. Vietnamese slogans as adjective phrases

Slogans	Brands
Mạnh mẽ đầy lịch lãm	Sữa tắm Romano
Trắng gì mà sáng thể	Bột giặt Viso
Ấm áp như lòng mẹ	Chăn ga gối đệm Hanvico
Giá rẻ cho mọi nhà	Siêu thị BigC
Hòa hợp cùng phát triển	Hòa Phát
Mạnh mẽ, bền bỉ, tin cậy	Công ty viễn thông FPT
Sẵn sàng một sức sống	Sữa Cô gái Hà Lan
Mọi lúc mọi nơi	Công ty viễn thông Mobiphone

#### English:

Table 4.5. English slogans as an adjective

Slogans	Brands
Easy as Dell	Dell
Simply romantic... absolutely magic...	Mana Island Resort – Honeymoons
Soft and strong like cloth	Viva tissues - Every Day with Rachael Ray

### iii) Elliptical Simple Sentences - A verb phrase

The verb at the beginning of the verb phrase is repeated, closely connected with the subsequent verb phrase. This combination conveys the benefits that the advertised product

brings to users. The content in the subsequent verb phrase introduces the product that consumers should purchase to gain those benefits.

#### Vietnamese:

Table 4.6. Vietnamese slogans as a verb phrase

Slogans	Brands
Sải cánh vươn cao	Vietnam Ariline
Đánh bay mọi vết bẩn	Bột giặt Omo
Giữ trọn niềm tin	Ngân hàng Techcombank
Hãy nói theo cách của bạn	Tập đoàn viễn thông Viettel
Hợp tác thành công	Ngân hàng BIDV
Kề vai sát cánh	Taxi Vinasun
Khơi nguồn sáng tạo	Cà phê Trung Nguyên
Không ngừng vươn xa	Công ty viễn thông Vinaphone
Nâng giá trị cuộc sống	Ngân hàng Viettinbank
Nâng niu bàn chân Việt	Giày dép Biti's
Sơn đâu cũng đẹp	Sơn Nippon
Viết nên cuộc sống	Bút bi Thiên Long
Vững tiến vươn xa	Ô tô Trường Hải Thaco Group
Vươn cao Việt Nam	Vinamilk

#### English:

Table 4.7. English slogans as a verb phrase

Slogans	Brands
"Think different."	Apple
"Empowering athletes everywhere!"	Adidas.
"Reach out and touch someone."	AT & T
"Just do it."	Nike
"Think outside the bun."	Taco Bell

In addition, there are many advertising slogans in English written in this way such as "Have a break, have a KitKat" (KitKat), "Taste the Feeling" (Coca-Cola), "Inspire the Next" (Hitachi), "Born to play" (Nintendo), "Connecting people" (Nokia), "Exceed Your Vision" (Seiko Epson), "Make believe" (Sony), "Look Inside" (Intel), "Don't Be Evil" (Google), "Imagine" (Samsung), "Love the skin you're in" (Olay), "Go

Further” (Ford), and “Don’t leave home without it” (American Express).

**Complex sentences:**

A complex sentence is a sentence that contains one main clause and one or more subordinate clauses. According to Caples (2004), the most perfect method is: “Use long sentences to describe the product, use short sentences to urge action. Doing so avoids monotony and gives readers a greater sense of urgency” (Caples, ,2004, pp. 77-78). This type of sentence is used to convey certain messages that advertisers want to present, emphasizing specific content. If such information is condensed, the advertising sentence in this case would lack persuasive power. Advertising slogans written in complex sentences are more common in English.

*Table 4.8. English slogans as a complex sentence*

Slogans	Brands
I don’t do fashion. I am fashion.	CoCo Chanel
It’s everywhere you want to be	Visa
In order to be irreplaceable, one must always be different.	Coco Channel
If you don’t see the shack take it back!	Tommy
The jeans that built America!	
Because life is a beautiful sport!	Levi’s
When it absolutely, positively has to be there overnight	Lacoste
If you have oily skin, this is for you.	FedEx
	Hộp màu trang điểm mặt hiệu Maxi

**4.2. Types of English and Vietnamese advertising slogans classified by the choice of repetition forms at the syntactic level**

Repetition involves repeating the same linguistic element within the same phrase or different linguistic elements, with or without some changes or variations in meaning. In these simple cases of repetition, rhetorical forms of repetition involve the same or similar linguistic units, such as phonemes, syllables, morphemes, phrases, clauses, or even entire sentences within advertising slogans.

Additionally, elliptical compound sentences are also used to enhance the effectiveness of advertising slogans. In English, simple sentences or elliptical sentences are often connected

using conjunctions such as and, but, or, nor, so, etc.

In Vietnamese, the structure of advertising slogans demonstrates coherence and is often expressed through connectors and relational word pairs. For example:

- Correlative pairs indicating an increasing relationship, such as “càng...càng” (the more...the more), “không chỉ...mà còn” (not only...but also), “vừa...vừa” (both...and).
- Subordinate relational pairs such as “nếu...thì” (if...then), “dẫu...nhưng” (although...yet), “vì...nên” (because...therefore), etc.

The forms of repetition in advertising slogans are categorized into four basic groups at the syntactic level.

*Table 4.9. English and Vietnamese as repetition forms at the syntactic level*

Repetition at the syntactic level	Examples
Repetition of elements at the beginning of consecutive structures	Active wear – Active live – (FOCI) Be good, Be bad, Be yourself (CK Jean) Luôn luôn lắng nghe - Luôn luôn thấu hiểu (Prudential) It takes a lickin’ and keeps on tickin (Timex)
Repetition of elements at the end of consecutive structures	Save money - Live better (Walmart) Your potential - Our passion. (Microsoft)
Repetition of the structure of the previous phrase (changing words combined with rhyming the previous phrase or words that bring positive changes)	Môi trường an lành. Chi phí thấp. Chất lượng giáo dục cao (Du học New Zealand) Một kết nối. Muôn lợi ích. Triệu niềm vui (Mạng Internet Mega VNN) Một cây cầu mang tên thành phố. Một bán đảo tràn ngập những khoảng xanh. Một chốn an cư yên bình trong thành phố trẻ (QC cho căn hộ cao cấp ven sông Sài Gòn - Hoàng Anh) Tạm biệt tàn nhang, xua tan vết nám (Sắc Ngọc Khang)

Another form in advertising slogans involves the use of inverted structures, a technique in the art of writing aimed at enhancing brand communication effectiveness.

In Vietnamese, a typical example is the slogan for the

natural milk latte drink:

“Khác lạ một vị ngon. Sảng khoái năng lượng nhẹ. Hứng khởi trọn ngày vui”

(“A unique taste. Refreshing light energy. Excitement for the whole day”) (TTVGĐ 2/11/2009).

In English, the slogan for Olay facial cleanser and skin purifier is considered a hallmark of this structure:

“So purifying, it's like a mini-sauna for your face” (Parents 6/2007).

Although this structure has a very low frequency, it highlights and emphasizes creativity and novelty in both the content and form of advertising slogans, aiming to enhance advertising effectiveness. The uniqueness of the inverted structure compared to the normal sentence structure captures attention, sparks interest, and stimulates readers to engage in the process of receiving and understanding the conveyed message.

## 5. Conclusions and implications

### 5.1. Conclusion

Brand or product advertising slogans are a marketing strategy aimed at persuading consumers to use a product or service. This is a strategy for promoting products or services, thereby increasing the impression and memorability of the brand and product.

Effective advertising language exploits ways to awaken consumers in general, making them more receptive and thus helping to increase consumer appeal. Depending on their nature, these methods of emphasizing through repetition at the structural level can be classified into three main categories.

Firstly, the repetition of any element in an advertising slogan enhances consumer awareness and increases the importance of the brand, as repeating the name of the advertising slogan boosts the likelihood of it being retained in consumers' memory.

Secondly, the use of linguistic metaphors contributes to stimulating a reaction in the recipient. Metaphors allow us to relate an abstract concept to a specific object.

Thirdly, if the correct rhetorical form is used, the advertising slogan will attract consumers to purchase a specific product or service. In this regard, a successful advertising slogan includes at least one of the linguistic repetition methods described here in this article.

The study was conducted with the aim of identifying the use of semantic features in English and Vietnamese advertising language to observe similarities and differences in the semantic aspects of the mentioned languages and to provide suggestions for further improvement.

The essential concepts of the study relate to advertising and the language used, serving as the basis for the practical section. The common characteristics of advertising language and the semantic approach in advertising language have been

addressed accordingly.

Data for the study was collected by analyzing English and Vietnamese advertising language from a syntactic perspective. Descriptive analysis and comparative methods were simultaneously used in the analysis. The researcher divided the semantic approach data into three main thematic categories to study the patterns that emerged.

### 5.2. Implications

This article was written with the hope that this research will be valuable for learning and teaching English for specific purposes as well as for advertising writing.

For learners of English for specific purposes, especially business English learners in Vietnam, the results of the research serve as a foundation for understanding English and its diversity. The findings contribute to learners' existing knowledge of advertising language and provide them with insights into the similarities and differences in linguistic and rhetorical mechanisms in English and Vietnamese advertising language.

For teachers of English for specific purposes, the research can serve as an additional reference for teaching, contributing to a better understanding of language usage and its benefits. Furthermore, the study is considered a useful resource in lectures on advertising in general and the power of language within it.

For copywriters, the study provides informative knowledge about English and Vietnamese advertising language and the semantic approaches to these languages to maximize their writing abilities. Additionally, the similarities and differences in each advertising language can benefit content creators by helping them craft slogans that fully meet customer expectations.

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## Biography

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## Research Field

**Vo Thi Anh Dao:** teacher agency, second career language teacher, learner autonomy, AI, teacher identity