

# **A Comparative Study of English and Persian Advertising Slogans: Linguistic Means through the Sands of Time**

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## **Abstract**

This study was a contrastive analysis of the evolution of English and Persian advertising slogans to investigate their similarities/differences in using rhetorical figures, and the evolution in the use of these figures in the slogans of each language. Thus, 800 Persian and English slogans from the last four decades were collected. Lapsanka's framework (2006) including different aspects with some sub-variables was adopted. The frequencies of sub-variables were calculated and compared via Chi-square to determine the significance of the differences between the use of these figures in the slogans of each language and the two languages in the successive decades. Results revealed that Persian slogans changed phonologically, and lexically, but not syntactically and semantically. Also, English slogans changed phonologically, but not lexically or semantically. This study can have implications for teaching translation, journalistic English and Persian, and enhancing learners' cultural awareness.

**Keywords:** Advertisement; Slogan; Linguistic Means (Rhetorical Figures); Evolution

## **1. Introduction**

Advertising as an important tool that helps businesses in announcing product launches, price promotions, or product availability (Horniks, Meurs, & Boer, 2010), is divided into several parts: head line, body copy, signature line (including brand name, price tag, slogan or trade-mark), and standing details (Leech, 1972). Respecting 'slogan' there are various definitions among which is Myers' "any catchy phrase" (1997, p.12).

Using rhetorical figures, because of their own means of persuasion, is so common in the language of advertisements (Khodabandeh, 2007). Williamson (1978) argues that, being unaware of the underlying structures of advertisements, people are deceived by their messages. This is where the value of studying advertisements lies.

Over the last two decades, there were studies regarding rhetorical figures which include: Rhyme, Antithesis, Pun, and Metaphor among others (Mcquarrie &

Mick, 2003; Mothersbaugh, Huhmann, & Franke, 2002; Tom & Eves, 1999; Nickerson, 2005; Akbari, 2007; Khodabandeh, 2007; Jalilifar, 2010). Tom and Eves (1999) and Mothersbaugh et al. (2002) analyzed data obtained from advertising services to see whether the advertisements were containing rhetorical figures or not. Mcquarrie and Mick (2003) analyzed the rhetorical structures of advertisements by putting those containing visual and verbal figures in a magazine manipulating directed processing or incidental exposure to them. Nickerson (2005) studied the use of English for specific business purposes in print advertising of glossy magazines aimed at young women in Germany, Spain, and the Netherlands. Akbari (2007) tried to determine the discourse cues in advertisements utilizing the critical discourse analysis framework. Khodabandeh (2007) analyzed rhetorical figures in 200 headlines of English and Persian advertisements, using Clark's (1998) framework, and calculated their frequency. Regarding slogans, she concluded that, many slogans employ stylistic devices to enhance attractiveness and memorability. Also, Jalilifar (2010) analyzed the rhetorical figures in Persian and English advertising in order to discover how English and Persian advertisements are treated. He calculated the frequency of rhetorical figures in several English, Persian, and Persian-English advertisements published during a given time and analyzed the data to determine the type of macro-organization. He suggested that the language of advertising influences target groups and reflects the acceptable social patterns in that society and languages use various rhetorical devices to manage the minds of the target groups.

Despite all these studies on the use of linguistic means in advertisements and slogans, few researchers have focused on the evolutionary analysis of advertisement slogans in different time periods. While, according to Lapsanka (2006), in the course of time people try more and more to differentiate their products seeking new ways of presenting. With the economy and the trade expansion, advertising transforms into a more sophisticated conception. The creativity of copywriters, who are finding new ways, leads to the richness of various forms of advertising (Lapsanka, 2006). Moreover, one of the important research domains of genre analysis includes understanding the evolution of a genre over time. Genres change and develop because of changes in the culture or historical period in which the genre is being produced (Swales, 1990). Advertisements as a separate genre possess their own language, which differentiates them from other kinds of genres (Cook, 1992). Regarding the importance of this genre in promoting commodities and its effects on the target groups, the present study attempts to conduct a contrastive analysis of the evolution of English and Persian advertising slogans to investigate their similarities and differences, and also their evolution over time in the hope of offering help to advertising writers, ESP teachers, and learners. In this regard the following questions stand out:

1. Are there any differences between Persian advertising slogans of the 1970s, 1980s, 1990s, and 2000s in terms of using different linguistic means?
2. Are there any differences between English advertising slogans of the mentioned decades in terms of using different linguistic means?
3. Are there any differences between English and Persian advertising slogans in the use of different linguistic means in the last four decades?

## **2. Method**

### **2.1 Corpora**

The corpora in this study consisted of 800 advertising slogans, 400 of which were published in 13 Persian magazines from 1970 to 2014 (100 slogans for each decade). These magazines included: (1970s): *Salnameye Donya*, *Ketabe Sale Keihan*, *Jahan*; (1980s): *Keihan*, *Adine*, *Gozarash 3*; (1990s): *Etelaate Haftegi*, *Khanevade Sabz*, *Rahe Zendegi*, *Iran Javan*; (2000s-2010s): *Nedaye Mahya*, *Honare Ashpazi* and *Rahe Zendegi*.

The other 400 slogans were collected from 12 English magazines from 1970 up to now. These magazines included: (1970s): *Ladies Home*, *Good House Keeping*, *Redbook*; (1980s): *Time*, *Redbook*, *The New Yorker*; (1990s): *Vogue*, *Smash Hits*, *Cosmopolitan*; (2000s): *Candy*, *Nylon*, and *Entertainment*.

### **2.2 Instrument**

The instrument in this study was the framework developed by Lapsanka (2006) utilized to analyze the language of slogans from different aspects namely: phonological (including: Rhyme, Rhythm, Alliteration, Assonance, Graphic Aspect of the Text, Transliteration, and Homophones), Lexical and Morphological (Verb Phrase, Noun Phrase, Adjectives, Numerals, Foreign Words, Intertextuality, Formation of New Words and Phrases, Idiomatic Constructions, and Collocations), Syntactic (Sentence Type and Structure) & Semantic (Personification, Simile, Hyperbole, Metaphor, Metonymy, Antithesis, Homonymy, and Polysemy).

### **2.3 Procedure**

The researcher tried to find these sub-variables in each slogan, in order to find the differences in the language of slogans in different decades for each language and the two languages, the frequencies of these items were calculated and Chi-square tests were used to determine whether these differences, were statistically significant or not. Also the average length of the slogans was calculated separately for each decade, to find the differences between the length of slogans in successive decades for each language and also the two languages.

### 3. Results & Discussion

#### 3.1 The Analysis of the Language of Advertising Slogans

##### 3.1.1 Phonological Aspect

Table 3.1 *The Analysis of Persian Slogans in the Last Four Decades from the Phonological View Point*

Phonological Aspect	1970s	1980s	1990s	2000s & 2010s
Rhyme	15	13	12	5
Rhythm	86	90	97	94
Alliteration	5	15	20	25
Assonance	44	47	56	58
Graphic aspect of the text	0	0	1	0
Transliteration	1	0	0	0
Homophones	1	0	0	0
Total	152	165	186	182
Chi-square	0.046			

Statistically significant at ( $p < 0.05$ )

According to this table, phonologically, Persian slogans have undergone significant changes in the last four decades. To give an example, the use of rhythm, has increased in them in the course of time. Consider the followings:

"/ li:ka: tænhæ: toli:d konændeye pu:keje lika: dær i:ra:n /"

(Lica, the only producer of Lica shell in Iran) (Jahan, 17 January, 1973, p.18)

"/ li:ka: shenæ:xte shode dar donya:/"

(Lica famous around the world) (Rahe Zendegi, 20 April, 1999, p.10)

The first slogan, published in 1973, does not contain any special rhythm, but the second slogan which advertises the same commodity in 1999 is rhythmic.

Table 3.2 *The Analysis of English Slogans in the Last Four Decades from the Phonological View Point*

Phonological aspect	1970s	1980s	1990s	2000s & 2010s
Rhyme	9	4	5	5
Rhythm	96	86	89	100
Alliteration	4	8	16	18
Assonance	39	20	15	8
Graphic aspect of the text	6	2	7	1
Transliteration	1	0	2	1
Homophones	2	2	0	4
Total	157	122	104	137
Chi-square	0.012			

Statistically significant at ( $p < 0.05$ )

According to this table, phonologically, English slogans too, have changed significantly over time. For example, the use of alliteration, has increased in them.

"Put a tiger in your tank" (Redbook, 2 September, 1987, p. 8) (Repetition of /t/)

"The slag of all snacks" (Smash Hits, 13 June, 1995, p.14) (Repetition of /s/)

Table 3.3 *Comparison of English and Persian Slogans in the Last Four Decades from the Phonological View Point*

Chi-square	0.000
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Statistically significant at ( $p < 0.05$ )

According to this table, English and Persian slogans are different concerning the phonological changes they have had over time.

### 3.1.2 Lexical and Morphological Aspect

Table 3.4 *The Analysis of Persian Slogans in the Last Four Decades from the Lexical and Morphological View Point*

Lexical and morphological	1970s				1980s				1990s				2000s & 2010s			
	Sp	I	Pv	P	Sp	I	Pv	P	Sp	I	Pv	P	Sp	I	Pv	P
Vp	26	15	24	3	30	14	22	2	37	11	20	11	39	9	5	0
Np	100				85				90				64			
Adjective	47				50				54				92			
Numerals	8				7				6				5			
Fw	54				50				41				39			
In	10				11				12				13			
Fwp	0				0				0				0			
Ic	3				2				1				0			
C	13				6				7				14			
Total	303				279				290				280			
Chi-square	0.003															

Statistically significant at ( $p < 0.05$ )

(Abbreviations: Vp =Verb phrase; Np= Noun phrase; Fw= Foreign words; In= Intertextuality; Fwp =Formation of new words and phrases; Ic= Idiomatic constructions; C= Collocations; Sp= Simple present; I=Imperative; Pv=Phrasal verb; P= Passive)

According to this table, lexically and morphologically, Persian slogans have changed significantly over time. For instance the use of foreign words has decreased in them.

"/ka:na:da:dra:y bæra:ye hæ no sæli:ge /"

(Canadadry for every taste) (Salnameye Donya, 20 January, 1972, p.18)

Table 3.5 *The Analysis of English Slogans in the Last Four Decades from the Lexical and Morphological View Point*

Lma	1970s				1980s				1990s				2000s & 2010s			
	Sp	I	Pv	P	Sp	I	pv	p	S p	I	Pv	P	Sp	I	Pv	P
Vp	64	23	11	3	26	31	9	4	24	33	8	0	20	35	1	3
N p	89				87				84				80			
Adj	66				60				55				51			
Num	9				2				4				1			
Fwp	2				0				3				1			
In	19				7				13				17			
Fw	2				5				2				3			
Ic	7				6				4				1			
c	8				9				11				14			
Total	303				246				241				227			
Chi-sq.	0.168															

Not statistically significant at ( $p < 0.05$ )

According to this table, lexically and morphologically, changes in English slogans were not significant over time.

Table 3.6 *Comparison of English and Persian Slogans in the Last Four Decades from the Lexical and Morphological View Point*

Chi-square	0.000
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This table reveals that, English and Persian slogans are different concerning the lexical and morphological changes they have had in the course of time.

### 3.1.3 Syntactic Aspect

Table 3.7 *The Analysis of Persian Slogans in the Last Four Decades from the Syntactic View Point, Sentence Types*

Syntactic Aspect	Sentence types					Total
	Declaratives	Interrogatives	Imperatives	Exclamatives	Phrase	
1970s	33	0	15	1	57	106
1980s	29	1	14	0	59	1033
1990s	21	2	11	0	60	94
2000s & 2010s	14	1	9	0	65	89
Chi-square	0.431					

Not statistically significant at (p<0.05)

This table verifies that concerning different sentence types used as slogans, Persian slogans have not undergone significant changes.

Table 3.8 *The Analysis of Persian Slogans in the Last Four Decades from the Syntactic View Point; Sentence structure*

Syntactic aspect(2)	Sentence structure						Total
	Schematic patterning						
	Parallelism	anaphora	epiphora	antimetabole	Ellipsis	Incomplete sentences	
1970s	7	2	2	0	43	12	66
1980s	7	1	2	0	40	15	65
1990s	6	1	3	0	32	25	67
2000s&2010s	7	2	3	0	28	33	73
Chi-square	0.533						

Not statistically significant at (p<0.05)

This table reveals that, concerning different sentence structures employed, Persian slogans have not changed significantly over time.



Table 3.9 *The Analysis of English Slogans in the Last Four Decades from the Syntactic Viewpoint; Sentence Types*

Syntactic aspect (1)	Sentence types					Total
	Declaratives	Interrogatives	Imperatives	Exclamatives	Phrase	
1970s	39	5	23	6	27	100
1980s	28	6	31	6	29	100
1990s	27	6	33	4	30	100
2000s & 2010s	24	1	35	1	39	100
Chi-square	0.141					

Not statistically significant at ( $p < 0.05$ )

This table manifests that, the changes in the use of different sentence types as slogans were not significant for English slogans over time.

Table 3.10 *The Analysis of English Slogans in the Last Four Decades from the Syntactic View Point; Sentence structure*

Syntactic aspect(2)	Sentence structure						Total
	Schematic patterning					Incomplete sentences	
	Parallelism	anaphora	Epiphora	Antimetabole	Ellipsis		
1970s	0	0	0	0	22	12	34
1980s	6	3	0	0	24	9	42
1990s	8	1	0	1	30	2	42
2000s&2010s	2	1	0	0	39	1	43
Chi-square	0.000						

Statistically significant at ( $p < 0.05$ )

This table represents that, concerning different sentence structures employed, English slogans have had significant changes over time. For example the use of ellipsis has increased in them over time.

Table 3.11 *Comparison of English and Persian Slogans in the Last Four Decades from the Syntactic View Point*

Chi-square	0.000
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Statistically significant at ( $p < 0.05$ )

This table shows that, English and Persian slogans are different concerning the Syntactic changes they have had in the course of time.

### 3.1.4 Semantic Aspect

Table 3.12 *The Analysis of Persian Slogans in the Last Four Decades from the Semantic View Point*

Semantic aspect	Personification	Simile	Hyperbole	Metaphor	Metonymy	Antithesis	Polysemy	Homonymy	Total
1970s	21	0	24	13	37	2	0	0	97
1980s	20	0	20	16	37	2	0	0	95
1990s	19	1	16	25	50	2	0	0	113
2000s&2010s	11	1	11	29	42	4	0	0	98
Chi-square	0.060								

Not statistically significant at ( $p < 0.05$ )

This table shows that, semantically, Persian slogans have not changed significantly over time.

Table 3.13 *The Analysis of English Slogans in the Last Four Decades from the Semantic View Point*

Semantic aspect	Personification	Simile	Hyperbole	Metaphor	Metonymy	Aniithesis	Polyseny	Homonymy	Total
1970s	4	6	13	25	40	2	1	1	92
1980s	12	5	16	17	33	2	2	0	87
1990s	7	3	19	14	24	2	1	1	71
2000s&2010	6	6	31	7	10	2	1	0	63
Chi-square	0.440								

Not statistically significant at ( $p < 0.05$ )

Beholding this table it is found that, semantically, English slogans changes were not significant over time.

Table 3.14 *Comparison of English and Persian Slogans in the Last Four Decades from the Semantic View Point*

Chi-square	0.000
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Statistically significant at ( $p < 0.05$ )

In general, table 3.14 reveals that, English and Persian slogans are different concerning the Semantic changes they have had over time.

### 3.2 The Analysis of the Length of the Slogans

Table 3.15 *The Analysis of the Average Length of Persian Slogans in the Last Four Decades*

Decade	Average Length of slogans
1970s	5.87
1980s	5.20
1990s	4.86
2000s&2010s	4.20

Table 3.16 *The Analysis of the Average Length of English Slogans in the Last Four Decades*

Decade	Average Length of slogans
1970s	5.89
1980s	5.68
1990s	5.21
2000s&2010s	4.26

Looking at these two tables it is realized that, English and Persian were alike in the fact that, in both of them the average length of the slogans was almost the same in all the decades and also, it has decreased over time.

#### 4. Conclusion

Overall, the findings of the current study supported the views in the literature about the differences between English and Persian advertisements which was in the frequency of some rhetorical figures and was attributed to cultural/personal differences. Also this study investigated the differences of the slogans of the two languages separately, and also in comparison with each other, in the last four decades, which had not been investigated empirically before.

A possible explanation for the changes in English and Persian slogans in the last four decades might be that, in every decade, due to the necessities of the time and the taste of the people, the need for using some linguistic means has grown and so they have been used more frequently. In addition to that, the differences between Persian and English slogans in using linguistic means in different decades can be attributed to the fact that, each language, according to the will and opinion of its discourse community in each decade, the culture which dominates them, the functions that they have in their discourse community, the roles they play in their society, the necessities of the occasion and society, and technological developments, prefers some stylistic devices over than the others. When time passes, these necessities and also the culture change and the use of other rhetorical figures in advertising slogans seems necessary. Thus, the learner should be aware of these differences to avoid possible problems. The results of this study have pedagogical implications for teaching translation course, journalistic English and Persian, and also enhancing learners' cultural awareness.

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