

METAPHORS INSTRUMENTAL IN ACHIEVING THE PRAGMATIC EFFECT IN ANIMAL RIGHTS ADVERTISEMENTS

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Abstract

Metaphor can manifest itself in a variety of form including the visual one, which can be an extremely expressive means of communication. That is why visual metaphors are widely used by marketers and advertisers thus becoming a topical object of linguistic research programmes. The study of visual metaphor is tightly related to the study of conceptual metaphor as the target message delivered by a picture is derived from a certain source field that is employed for metaphorical representation. Another type of metaphor commonly used in visual representation is a multimodal metaphor. The present research dwells upon the study of metaphor use in animal rights protection advertisements. The hypothesis of the study is that visual metaphors present strong content that can activate emotions and contribute to the marketers' desire to influence the audience.

Keywords: animal rights, advertisement, conceptual metaphor, multimodal metaphor, visual metaphor

1. Introduction

The present research dwells upon the study of metaphors in animal rights protection advertisements. Metaphor can manifest itself in a variety of forms involving different modes, for instance, visual, written, spoken signs, gestures,

sounds, music, taste, touch, etc. Since the present study focuses on printed advertisements, the modes studied are the visual and the verbal ones, which often are used together, thus developing multimodal metaphors. Metaphor is a very productive tool for advertising inasmuch as it successfully engages audiences in intended activities and functions, and as an advertising strategy contributes to the communicative function of the advertising discourse. Koller (2009: 49) states, “multimodal metaphor is a tool to meet the persuasive function of advertising in that it requires the addressee to construct a meaningful reading by processing verbal and visual elements together.” Alongside its persuasive role, metaphor in advertising discourse is aimed at attracting and retaining viewers’ attention. Moreover, it helps to get across the intended message thus ensuring the transmittance of abstract concepts by bringing into play diverse modes. It is especially important for social advertising campaigns, because, differently from commercial advertising, their aim is to raise awareness and thus promote changes in public attitudes and behaviour towards targeted social issues. That is one of the reasons why visual and multimodal metaphors in text-image advertisements are nowadays widely used by advertising agencies and thus these kinds of metaphors have become a focal point of linguistic and cognitive research.

The study of visual and multimodal metaphors is tightly related to the study of conceptual metaphor as the target message delivered by exclusively visual or the combination of verbal and non-verbal modes is derived from a certain source domain that is employed for metaphorical representation. In multimodal metaphor, rendering of the source and the target domain is complicated by the involvement of various sign systems (in the present case visual and written). Carrying out the analysis of metaphors interweaves various analytical skills, i.e. psychological and sensuous perception, topic awareness (the skill to recognize the topic illustrated by means of a metaphor), cognitive ability to juxtapose the information received to the implication it makes, etc.

Following Lakoff and Johnson who developed the conceptual metaphor theory in the 1980s focusing on the exploration of conceptual metaphor as reflected in linguistic expressions of metaphor, Forceville worked on his own study of visual metaphors (1996) which further developed into the research of multimodal metaphor. The scholar (2009a) mentions that since a metaphor is a basic instrument in cognition, it may demonstrate itself in pictures and sounds, not only in language. He argues that what establishes a metaphor partly depends on the surrounding in which it appears. According to Forceville (1996), there is an established formula of metaphor: it consists of two elements, the source and the target. The target is the theme of the metaphor, but the source is the notion used to affirm something about the target. Both elements are parts of various notions such as meanings, emotions, attitudes, etc. Forceville (2009a) states, “in each metaphor at least one, but often more than one, feature from the source domain is mapped onto a corresponding feature in the target domain”. In such a way, the metaphorical relation between the two domains is created with the help of mapping across the conceptual domains.

The hypothesis of the present study is that visual and multimodal metaphors present strong content that can activate and contribute to the campaigners' desire to influence the audience. During the research, advertisements for animal rights protection based on metaphors were studied with the purpose of identifying the type of metaphor, analysing the source and target domains employed in metaphorical representation, as well as analysing the intended message and its pragmatic effect delivered by a metaphor.

2. Monomodal versus multimodal metaphor

Forceville (2009a, b) describes visual or pictorial metaphor as a metaphor of monomodal kind, which is represented only in a pictorial mode without mixing with other modes like words or sounds, i.e., a metaphor "having its target and source exclusively rendered in the same and single mode" (Forceville, 2009a: 23). As opposed to visual metaphor, multimodal metaphor can occur in diverse modes, focusing on a combination of the visual, of language, gestures, sound, and music, i.e., a metaphor "whose target and source are each represented exclusively or predominantly in different modes" (Forceville, 2009a: 24) or "constituted by mapping, or blending, of domains from different modes" (Koller, 2009: 46).

To represent the different ways through which visual similarity might be created, Forceville distinguishes four subtypes of visual metaphor in static representation as is the case in printed advertisements, namely, contextual metaphors, hybrid metaphors, pictorial similes and integrated metaphors (Forceville 2008, 2009a, b).

Hybrid type of visual metaphor is described as a metaphor that "is experienced as a unified object, consisting of two different parts that are usually considered as belonging to different domains, and not as parts of a single whole" (Forceville, 2009b). The perception of this metaphor depends on understanding one of the two elements in terms of the other.

Contextual type of visual metaphor is defined as a metaphor that "is experienced as a unified object and understood as being something else due to the visual context in which it is depicted" (Forceville, 2009b). Metaphors of the contextual variety come closest to the idea of a collage. A certain represented thing is showed in an unexpected context, namely in a context which strongly prompts something else instead.

Pictorial simile is "a phenomenon that is experienced as a unified object and is juxtaposed with a unified object belonging to a different category in such a manner that the first is understood in terms of the second" (Forceville, 2009b).

Integrated metaphor is a metaphor that "is experienced as a unified object and is represented in its entirety in such a manner that it resembles another object even without contextual cues" (Forceville, 2009b).

3. Animal rights advertisements: a discussion

Overall, 100 social advertisements were analysed for the purposes of the present study, all of which concerned the issue of animal rights protection and all of which had been selected randomly from different Internet sources. The themes related to the animal rights issue are much varied; they include animal abuse, animal extinction, the use of animals in testing cosmetics, environment pollution-related dangers, the problem of animal adoption (instead of buying), etc.

The first group of the analysed advertisements had been developed within the framework of the campaign against desertification (cf. example in Fig.1). The campaign released in 2011 includes three adverts, which feature the animals, i.e., the parrots, the leopard and the elephant respectively, being frozen in motion. The animals are illuminated as if being in the spotlight and are gradually turning into dust, thus, becoming extinct after losing their habitat as a result of desertification caused by climate change. The SPOTLIGHT IS simultaneously the SCORCHING SUN and an attention-trigger to the environmental issue under question.



1a The Parrots¹



1b The Leopard²



1c The Elephant³

Figure 1: WWF advertising campaign against desertification

The text on all images within this WWF campaign is as follows: “*Desertification destroys 6000 species every year*”. It serves as the verbal manifestation of the metaphor instantiated in the adverts and participates in facilitating the perception, understanding, and interpretation of the metaphor DESERTIFICATION IS ANIMAL EXTINCTION. In the images embedded in the advertisements, due to the desertification, wildlife turns into dust. The images can be identified as examples of the use of the hybrid visual metaphor since the animals depicted in the adverts are unified, even blended, objects that link and merge two different parts that belong to different domains: the desert and the fauna.

¹ Retrieved from https://www.adsoftheworld.com/media/print/wwf_parrots

² Retrieved from https://www.adsoftheworld.com/media/print/wwf_leopard_2

³ Retrieved from https://www.adsoftheworld.com/media/print/wwf_elephant_5

2a The Leopard Handbag⁴2b The Crocodile Boot⁵

Figure 2: WWF advertising campaign against the use of animal fur and skin

Every year billions of animals suffer and die because of humans' desire for natural skin and fur clothing and accessories, thus, it has become an issue that needs to be addressed. The set of advertisements (cf. example in Fig. 2) featuring the use of the hybrid type of visual metaphor is one of many campaigns against the use of animal fur and skin in the production of accessories, in this case handbags and footwear. To attract viewers' attention, the creators of the given adverts have objectified the depicted animals, the leopard and the crocodile respectively, through merging them with the products made of these animals' skin and fur. Thus, the construction of the metaphors LEOPARD IS BAG and CROCODILE IS BOOT underlying the intended message is enabled. The objectification of animals in such a way shows that lives of animals are despised by humans, and this must be stopped.

The use of the contextual type of visual metaphor is exemplified in the following series of advertisements (cf. example in Fig. 3) created within the campaign to raise funds for the preservation of various species, i.e., fighting against animal extinction.

3a The Gorilla⁶3b The Brown Bear⁷3c The Seal⁸

Figure 3: WWF advertising campaign against animal extinction

⁴ Retrieved from <https://www.pinterest.fr>

⁵ Retrieved from <https://www.pinterest.fr>

⁶ Retrieved from https://www.adsoftheworld.com/media/print/bund_gorilla

⁷ Retrieved from https://www.adsoftheworld.com/media/print/bund_brown_bear

⁸ Retrieved from https://www.adsoftheworld.com/media/print/bund_grey_seal

The visual context supporting the intended message is the clock and animals being trapped between the hands of the clock, where being “squeezed” they suffer the last minutes of their lives. Thus, the metaphor employed is **TIME IS KILLER**. However, reading the verbal message presented in the ads “*Every 60 seconds a species dies out. Each minute counts. Each donation helps.*” enables the audience to construe a multimodal metaphor, namely, **DONATION / MONEY IS LIFE**. By donating money, people are paying for the lives of animals and giving them time that they so desperately need, i.e., donation is time given to animals to live their lives. These advertisements serve to demonstrate that ads may contain more than one metaphor; moreover, the construed metaphors can be of different types (mono- and multimodal). In the advertisements above, both metaphors encountered contribute to achieving the pragmatic effect of the message, which is to cause sympathy to the animals caught in a time trap and encourage human action aimed at saving animal lives.

Another example of the use of contextual visual metaphor is employed in the campaign against the exploitation of animals in circuses (cf. example in Fig. 4).



Figure 4: WWF advertising campaign against animal exploitation in circus⁹

The metaphor **ANIMALS ARE CLOWNS** functions as a metonymic reference to circuses and animals trapped in such places, which, in turn, makes it possible to develop another metaphor **CIRCUS IS PRISON**, where prison is depicted in the images in the form of cage bars, behind which animals-clowns are imprisoned. The cage bars function not only as a metonymic reference to prison, but they also stand for the violation of animal rights and cruelty inside the circuses that must be fought against.

The campaign against exploiting (polluting) the ecosystem is a series of six advertisements¹⁰, which depict the animals that provoke fear and may cause human’s death if met, namely, a shark, a vulture, a scorpion, a rattlesnake, a tarantula, and a bat. The animals are pictured in their natural habitats and the advertisements contain the caption “*Horrifying. /Frightening. /Petriifying. /Terrifying. / Harrowing. /Alarming.*” respectively, i.e. the feelings evoked in

⁹ Retrieved from <https://miavormawah.wordpress.com/2018/10/01/circus-cruelty-ideas/>

¹⁰ See <https://whatisadvertising.tumblr.com/post/54997246445/horrifying-more-horrifying-wwf-ad-campaign/amp>

humans by these animals. These images are juxtaposed to a “*More horrifying. / More frightening. / More petrifying. / More terrifying. / More harrowing. / More alarming.*” pictures, i.e. the images of the habitats without the corresponding dangerous animals, which is the scary future that the human kind may face once. All the things considered, the viewers are invited to construct the multimodal pictorial simile ANIMAL EXTINCTION IS MENACING FUTURE.

In this case, as in the previous ones, it is not possible to draw a clear demarcation line between the visual and the multimodal metaphor. The use of a pictorial simile is obvious, although, to perceive and interpret the metaphor, the viewer has to consider the unique verbal messages present in each of the adverts. In addition, to highlight the threats of exploiting the ecosystem, the campaign makes use of the slogan “*Exploiting the ecosystem also threatens humans’ lives. WWF for a living planet.*”, which enables the construction of the metaphor HEALTHY ECOSYSTEM IS HUMAN LIFE.

Integrated type of visual metaphor is employed in the advertising campaign against maltreatment of pets (cf. example in Fig. 5). The underlying metaphor in these advertisements is PET IS GARBAGE BAG.



Figure 5: Advertising campaign against pets’ maltreatment¹¹

All the animals, namely, a cat, a dog and a rabbit, are depicted black, which is the most common colour of garbage bags; their posture and the way in which their paws and ears are tied up reflect the outline of a garbage bag, and the fact that they are tied renders the way they are treated by people. No further contextual cues are necessary to identify, perceive and interpret the intended message of the advertisements, i.e., the image of a pet-garbage bag may provoke the feeling of sympathy in viewers and desire to help those in need. The given awareness campaign released in Switzerland addresses the issue of cruelty towards animals, and points out that animal welfare offenses are not sufficiently prosecuted and lawfully punished, thus aiming at protecting animal rights. This is supported by the slogan “*Some animals are treated like garbage. Help us to help them. Donate*

¹¹ Retrieved from <https://campaignsoftheworld.com/print/foundation-tier-im-recht-animal-cruelty/>

to *tierimrech.org Rights for animals.*”, however, it does not participate in the construction of the metaphor PET IS GARBAGE BAG.

Another set of advertisements with integrated metaphors are the adverts that evidently aim at encouraging people to preserve nature and campaigns against using natural fur coats (cf. example in Fig. 6).



6a The Jaguar¹²



6b The Fox¹³

Figure 6: Advertising campaign against fur clothing

The first advertisement features the jaguar and its cub bearing size labels and strolling along in the wild, while the other – fox cubs cuddling to a fur coat which they apparently believe to be their mother. The metaphor employed is **NATURAL FUR CLOTHING IS LIVE ANIMAL**.

The given awareness campaigns aim at demonstrating how the clothing industry is exploiting animals to produce products for their companies. The slogan “*Fashion claims more victims than you think*” in the upper right corner of the first advert exemplified above (cf. example in Fig. 6a The Jaguar) invites the viewers to think about the negligence and cruelty of modern fashion industry towards animals and the abuse animals experience.

The tone of the second slogan “*Every child needs parents*” (cf. example in Fig. 6b The Fox) creates even stronger sense of pity and compassion towards animals used in fashion industry. The underlying metaphor **ANIMALS ARE PEOPLE** instantiated in the given advert serves the purpose of creating a connection with us humans and invites the viewers to project the current situation onto their own lives. The image of the fox cubs cuddling to a fur coat as if to their mother fox together with the accompanying slogan aims to make humans relate to the feeling similar to the one experienced when their children or loved ones are in danger, thus, evoking sympathy, compassion and pity towards the abused animals.

Both adverts make use of the image and the text to generate a view of the problem under question and aim at convincing the public to take an action, i.e., potential buyers to stop buying products made of natural skins and / or the fashion industries to stop slaughtering and using animal skins in their products.

¹² Retrieved from <https://www.pinterest.com/pin/164944405074114524/>

¹³ Retrieved from <http://inyminy.com/35-influential-animal-ads-time/>

Multimodal metaphors, i.e. metaphors employing more than one mode (in the present case these are visual and verbal modes), in printed animal protection advertisements can be further exemplified by the following ads.

The advertisements within the campaign promoting adoption rather than buying pets feature little pets being cut with a credit card as if with a knife (cf. example in Fig. 7).



Figure 7: Advertising campaign promoting animal adoption¹⁴

It is hardly possible to grasp the intended message without referring to the verbal text provided in the ads “*Every pet you buy from pet shops causes death of another. Don’t buy. Let’s adopt from shelters.*” Therefore, these should be viewed as examples of the use of multimodal metaphor BUYING A PET IS KILLING A PET. The source is present visually, the verbal part only having a secondary role in supporting the interpretation, whereas the target can be identified only with the help of the verbal part of the ads.

The advertisement against animals treated as souvenirs is yet another token of a multimodal metaphor (cf. example in Fig. 8).



Figure 8: WWF advertising campaign against exotic animal souvenirs¹⁵

The target domain of the multimodal metaphor BUYING EXOTIC ANIMAL SOUVENIRS IS KILLING is represented verbally by the slogan “*Don’t buy exotic animal souvenirs*”, whereas the bloody trace left behind the suitcase, which

¹⁴ Retrieved from <http://www.adeevee.com/2014/09/association-of-shelter-volunteers-and-animal-rights-istanbul-cat-dog-print/>

¹⁵ Retrieved from https://www.adsoftheworld.com/media/print/wwf_blood

is carried by a woman, stands for killing and is the visual representation of the source domain. Without the text one may come to a faulty interpretation of the ad concluding that it is the suitcase that is made of genuine leather, thus, coming to the conclusion that it is a campaign against animals being used for manufacturing clothing and accessories. However, the intended message and the aim of this advertisement is to stop people buying (or giving as presents) exotic animal souvenirs, which is consequently posing a threat to nature and wildlife.



Figure 9: Advertising campaign against the use of animals in experimenting and scientific research¹⁶

The advertisement against the use of animals in experimenting and scientific research testing (cf. example in Fig. 9) contains the text „*Victims of vivisection need a hand*”, without referring to which the interpretation of the ad metaphor VIVISECTION IS KILLING would most probably be lost. The target domain is presented only verbally, while the source domain is represented only visually by the image of the dog-angel, which is a metonymic reference to the death of an animal, and thus killing.

The logo of the advert invites the viewers to “*send a text message to donate one euro to help treat surviving animals*”, i.e. to give or lend a helping hand to animals who have suffered from vivisection and now are fighting for their lives as suggested in the verbal message. Thus, the image of the human’s hand holding the dog-angel is the visualisation of the intended message of the particular awareness campaign.

4. Closing remarks

Metaphor is a productive tool in advertising not only a product, but also a cause; it contributes to the impact of the intended message on the target audience. The aim of the use of metaphors in printed advertisements is to attract and retain society’s attention. It particularly refers to social advertising.

Despite the fact that the messages in the social advertisements considered are rather straightforward, in many cases the visual metaphor is sufficient to understand the intended message. Only if the message is very specific, the visual is supplemented with the verbal mode thus developing a multimodal metaphor.

¹⁶ Retrieved from https://www.adsoftheworld.com/media/print/enpa_ghost

Moreover, as every viewer has a different perception of the world, as well as different background knowledge, some metaphors encoded in adverts may be interpreted differently from person to person, which is natural and complies with the cognitive approach to communication, where interpreting and understanding are seen as dynamic processes, and where language is recognised as the most explicit, but also one of many means of communication.

Within the analysed corpus of advertisements, the most frequently encountered types of metaphor are hybrid and contextual metaphors, followed by the integrated type, while the pictorial simile is the least often used type of metaphor..

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