

ASPECTS OF ENGLISH INFLUENCE IN AFRIKAANS PRESS ADVERTISEMENTS

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The aim of an advertisement is to attract the consumer's attention, arouse his interest, stimulate a desire to buy the product or make use of the service, convince the consumer that the product or service will be of benefit (even if the benefit is merely emotional) and (hopefully) prod him into the action of buying the product or making use of the service.

An advertisement has a very specific purpose - every product has to be a hit. This purposefulness of the advertising situation has a profound effect on the language used in an advertisement. The morphology, syntax, word choice, use of rhetorical techniques, etc. are all determined by the demands of the advertising medium.

The Afrikaans used in advertisements is, however, determined not only by the appellative character of the advertising medium, but also by the fact that advertising in South Africa is English-orientated. The advertising industry in South Africa is highly sophisticated and competitive. The estimated advertising expenditure for the financial year ending in June 1983 was close on R650 million. Advertising in South Africa is to a very large extent controlled by English-speaking companies with their headquarters in Johannesburg. Moreover, there are signs of an increasing involvement by several major international agencies. A tendency is emerging to handle advertising on an international level: an advertising campaign (e.g. *Revlon*, *Max Factor*, *Apple*) is launched in New York or London and the campaign is exported along with the product.

This situation has the effect that at least 90% of all Afrikaans advertisements are translations or, at the most, adaptations of their English counterparts. Thus, Afrikaans advertisements are based on the outlay, illustrations, typography, copy and (ultimately) style of the English advertisements. Moreover, the Afrikaans and English advertisements often appear in the media simultaneously. To the advertiser it is essential that both advertisements convey the same notion or idea. The advertising industry often refers to the brand character of a product - it is that which sets one brand apart from all others in a category, identifying and personalising it to a customer in a way which is distinctive, appealing and enduring. No consumer may ever encounter an advertisement which negates the character of the product. This situation complicates the work of the Afrikaans copywriter and is reflected in the Afrikaans used in advertisements. Not that the position is unique - a study of relevant literature showed that the strength of the American advertising industry and the dominant position of the English-speaking countries in the international world of commerce also has a profound effect on the German, Danish and Italian advertisements.

This article concentrates on the English influence in Afrikaans advertisements appearing in newspapers and magazines nationwide. Only advertisements created by recognized advertising agencies or advertising departments of large companies have been taken into account. An important feature of advertising language is the profusion of compounds - most of which are neologisms designating a new product concept, detail or characteristic. Due to the important role of the English language in the world of commerce and advertising, most of these new concepts reach us via English. The majority of compounds found in Afrikaans advertisements are loan translations. This should be seen as one of the most important and wide-ranging aspects of English influence in Afrikaans advertisements.

The most productive noun compound is the compound consisting of *N + N* and the vast majority found in Afrikaans advertisements were indeed loan translations:

day emulsion	-	dagemulsie
colour cosmetics	-	kleurkosmetiek
moisture balm	-	vogbalsem
credit line	-	kredietlyn
market leader	-	markleier.

Afrikaans equivalents which were really new and fresh were scarce:

junk food - kafkos
correction fluid - flaterverf

The so-called '*string compound*' is a distinctive feature of advertising language. This compound type is favoured in advertising language as well as in technical language, since it is so compact. Nearly all the string compounds found in Afrikaans advertisements were loan translations, the only difference being that the Afrikaans equivalents are written as one word. However, many of these Afrikaans words do appear rather unwieldy:

walnut grain wood inserts - okkerneutgreinhoutinsetsels
colour-keyed trim panels - paskleur-sierpaneel
dual circuit servo assisted brakes - dubbelbaan-servohulpremme
close ratio sports gearbox - kortverhouding-sportratkas

Likewise, the majority of adjective compounds found in Afrikaans advertisements were loan translations, especially the compounds consisting of *N + Adj.* (perfect participle),

foam-filled pillows
skuimge vulde kussings

beer-enriched conditioner
bierversykte opknapper

those consisting of *N + Adj.* (present participle),

energy-absorbing engine
energie-absorberende enjin

space-saving freezer
plekbesparende vrieskas

and those consisting of *Adv. + Adj.* (present participle),

deep moisturising lotion
diepbevogtigende vloeieroom

fast-acting headache powder
snelwerkende hoofpynpoel

active-penetrating vit. E
aktief-indringende vit. E.

The intricate and wide-spread use of noun group pre-modification, especially in copy which is technical or semi-technical, is an interesting feature of advertising English. One is inclined to

agree with Leech (1966 : 128) that the translation of these pre-modifiers into post-modifiers might make the meaning more explicit 'but would certainly make for an intolerably cumbersome style of expression'. For this reason I am of the opinion that the loan translations mentioned above should be seen as a useful contribution to and enrichment of the Afrikaans language.

An interesting feature of English in advertising is the widespread use of the noun or noun group as a designative pre-modifier. Leech writes that 'pre-modifying nouns are used with far greater freedom than is usual' (1966 : 94). A noun or noun group as pre-modifier is most unusual in Afrikaans. There are a few examples, such as:

'n liter melk
'n ton mielies
hotel Lanzerac

but under the influence of English they are frequently found in Afrikaans advertisements:

a broad spectrum tonic
'n breëspektrum tonikum

a medium price motor
'n medium-prys motor

a new generation fly-killer
'n nuwe generasie vlieëddoder

a gentle frequent-use shampoo
'n sagwerkende gereelde gebruik sjampoo

the high technology design
die hoë tegnologie ontwerp

the new 5-speed Opel Ascona
die nuwe 5-spoed Opel Ascona.

The role of colour designations in advertisements deserves some mention. Every season new fashion colours and series of cosmetics complementing those colours are released. The latest shades of colour and colour combinations entail the creation of new colour names. English and Afrikaans (and for that matter German, Italian, French, etc.) do not have an extensive colour vocabulary and various methods are used to create new colour names. One of the most interesting methods is the practice of the powerful Anglo-American cosmetic houses of releasing a new

collection of fashion colours every season - each collection revolving around a specific theme. In most of these themes one may observe the marked influence of the American and British cultures, e.g. *Estée Lauder's* 'Country Market' make-up colours, *Mary Quant's* 'Brave Face' collection and *Max Factor's* 'Gold Fever' colours. Afrikaans advertisers usually do not attempt to translate these colours, with the result that the colour name acts almost like a trade name:

Charles of the Ritz se 'Going Places'-grimeerklere
Oë - Manhattan Brownstone
Wallstreet Greens
High Flying Russet

Lippe - Ritz Lipgloss

and Kleure wat gloei soos die westerson. Kleure wat dartelend oor jou lippe en naels dans. Vurige vlamkleure soos *Indian Violet* en stralende *Sunglazed Peach* of smeulende *Sundance Pink*. Ryk warm skakerings van *Shiraz* en *Claret*. Kelksagte *Amber* en *Velvet Rose*.

Oksaar (1961 : 217) is of the opinion that these loan words often have more appeal than the attempts to translate them would have had: 'Werbetechnisch sind die ausländischen Wörter häufig eindrucksvoller als die einheimischen Abstrakta, die ja oft zu allgemein und abgegriffen sind.'

The trade names (of local as well as imported products) are mostly English. Occasionally one finds a Japanese, German or Italian trade name. Afrikaans trade names are scarce, e.g. *Koffiehuis*, *Trekkerkoffie*, *Ouma Meelbol*, *Vasvat*. There are some South African products which have neutral names, e.g. *President*, *Senator*, *Brigadiers*, *Springbok*, *Helderberg*. The Englishness of the trade names causes many problems for Afrikaans copy writers, especially when the effect of the advertisement depends upon word-play:

For me it's *Eleven o' Clock*
Vir my is dit altyd *Eleven o' Clock*

Come up close with *Close-Up*
Kom heerlik naby met *Close-Up*.

Often the copy writer plays with the sounds in the trade name:

Jeyes Snowbowl ... Showbowl
Turn your toilet into a Showbowl

With *Jeyes Snowbowl*
A true-blue loo. Isn't that for you?

or relies upon the effect of an orthographic manipulation:

Shatterprufe is shatterproof

Keep it cool with *Kool*.

This is of course impossible in the Afrikaans advertisements. Trade names are sometimes used as verbs and once again this technique does not succeed in Afrikaans:

Wondercoat your home
Wondercoat u huis

Fluorogard your teeth and gums against plaque
Fluorogard jou tande en tandvleis teen plaak.

English influence on the syntax of Afrikaans advertisements is not easy to determine. More often than not the Afrikaans syntax is the result of a poor translation rather than of English influence. The direct translation of idiomatic and fixed expressions is, however, very common and the frequent use in advertisements may assist in the establishment of these direct translations. (I prefer the German term 'Lehnwendung', which Carstensen (1963 : 99) defines as follows: 'Lehnwendungen sind die Nachbildungen einer fremdsprachlichen Redensart'.) For example:

Met *Volkskas* kan jy dit bekostig om groot te dink.
('to think big')

Probeer ons vir 'n beter transaksie.
('Try us')

En breek weg met *Mainstay*.
('break away')

Westvaal sit geweldig baie dinkwerk in hul kombuis.
('put a lot of thought into')

Ek wou hom handgee met die regmaak van sy nette.
('to give a hand')

Gee jou neus 'n 12-uur breek.
('give it a break')

There were, however, certain aspects of English influence on the syntax which were more subtle. I shall mention one or two. The V-I principle in imperative sentences is firmly established in Afrikaans. Under the influence of English advertisements this firm principle is often violated. Interestingly enough, Leech points out that the initial 'for'-phrase is characteristic of the English used in advertising (1966 : 107) and that the combination of a 'when' clause with an imperative sentence is likewise characteristic. The influence of English is quite clear:

Vir 'n supervars mond ... kry vandag nog *Supermouth*.

Vir deskundige advies, loer in by u naaste *Innova*-apteek en gesels met ons skoonheidsdeskundige.

Sodra die warmte aan jou begin kriewel, duim die waaiër aan.

Terwyl jou porieë nog oop is, smeer *Helancyl* se BI-Active room aan totdat dit heeltemal geabsorbeer is.

English copy-writers make frequent use of the gerund. Afrikaans does not have an equivalent construction at its disposal. Consequently the English is often translated directly and the result is unwieldy:

Behoorlike borsel met *Mentadent P* verwyder plaak.
('Regular brushing')

Dit het 'n dubbele romp vir dryfvermoë in geval van omslaan.
('in case of capsizing').

In Afrikaans *daardie* normally functions as a demonstrative pronoun. In Afrikaans advertisements, however, many examples were found in which *daardie* did not function as a demonstrative pronoun, but rather as a type of article with a deictic function:

Elke blik bevat ferm, sagte lote met *daardie* varsgeplukke geur.

Just firm and tender spears, with *that* fresh picked flavour, in every tin.

It is interesting to note that Leech refers to a variety of linguistic techniques used by English copy-writers to emphasize the unique advantage of a certain product - among others the use of words such as 'only', 'unique', 'no other', the use of superlatives and the employment of 'the' and 'that' in 'this sense of absolute deixis, without reference either to the linguistic or non-linguistic context'. (Leech 1966 : 157).

In the process of persuasion the copy-writer makes use of a wide range of rhetorical and literary techniques. *Repetition* is a favourite technique, for example, the repetition of the same advertisement, of the slogan, of the trade-name, of phonological regularities, as well as the use of grammatical parallelism. The translation of many of these repetition techniques causes many problems. Sometimes, for example, alliteration or rhyme is retained in the Afrikaans copy, even if the Afrikaans is poor:

Vir die weinige ware vrou
For the feminine few.

Sometimes the alliteration or rhyme is abandoned, but more often than not the Afrikaans advertisement then lacks impact:

Van Dyck *Torture-Tunnel-Tested*
carpets at
down to earth O.K. prices

Van Dyck se Foltergang-getoetste
tapyte teen
O.K. se billike pryse.

A 'beer with body' becomes 'n bier met lyf' and has no appeal.

The use of *idioms or word-play upon idioms* is a favourite rhetorical technique in advertising. It does, however, often happen that in the effort to translate an idiom for which there is no Afrikaans equivalent, the English is translated directly and the result is un-Afrikaans:

Lomerigheid kan van jou 'n nat lap maak op 'n partytjie.
('a wet cloth')

A very popular technique employed by copy-writers is the so-called '*Aufhänger-technique*': 'Nich selten wird die eigentliche Werbebotschaft eingekleidet. Man bedient sich dazu eines Mittels, das in der Journalistik 'Aufhänger' genannt wird: Man beginnt mit einer Aussage, die scheinbar auf etwas anderes will, und am schluss fügt man entweder vermittelt oder unvermittelt - die Auslobung der Ware an'. (Römer 1968 : 187) Leech refers

to this technique as 'Role borrowing'. For example, an advertisement is written in such a way that it resembles an identity document, a doctor's prescription, a curriculum vitae, a public service form or the opening paragraphs of a novel or short story. The problem with the translation of advertisements depending upon this technique for their impact, is that the 'Aufhänger' is often deeply bedded in the cultural heritage of the language users. Translations which take no note of the underlying cultural differences are often without impact. A chocolate bar advertisement using the popular American song 'Deep in the heart of Texas' and typical cowboy and bar scenes succeeds admirably in English. The same song (sung in Afrikaans) and the cowboy and bar scenes do not, however, have much impact in the Afrikaans version. Another advertisement used the strawberries and cream for which Wimbledon is renowned, as its 'Aufhänger'. Similarly, a biscuit advertisement featured a scene from the Mad Hatter's tea party in 'Alice's Adventures in Wonderland'. Lewis Carroll is so indisputably English that the Afrikaans rendering is most unsatisfactory and ineffective:

'What a bore' said Alice. 'He's not a boar, he's a Dormouse,' said the Hatter biting the Dormouse's paw as though it was a large hairy sausage roll. 'I don't mean him', said Alice, 'I mean your party'. 'Oh', said the Hatter looking rather hurt, 'but I have a little surprise for you'. At that moment a bell rang three times. 'Ah ha!' said the Hatter mistakenly pouring tea into the Dormouse's large ear instead of his cup, 'three rings, that must be them now.'

As he said Ah ha! three of the jolliest bakers Alice had ever seen pranced up to the table armed with the most delicious looking biscuits

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Wonderland se Hoedemaker hou 'n teeparty wat nie alte waffers verloop nie. Die Waaierstertmuis sit en slaap en die Paashaas roer sy tee om en om. 'Dis die verveligste teepartytjie waarop ek nog ooit was!' kla Alice. Toe begin die muis in sy slaap sing: 'Ons drie malle het 'n verrassing vir Alice.' Terwyl hy sing lui daar 'n klokkie drie keer. 'Aha!' sê die Hoedemaker en skink sy tee in die Waaierstertmuis se groot oor in in plaas van in sy koppie, 'dis seker nou hulle'. Toe kom daar drie van die joligste bakkers wat Alice nog ooit gesien het aangehuppel met die lekkerste beskuitjies wat sy nog ooit gesien het

A certain brand of margarine relied upon the viewer's knowledge of and affection for P.G. Wodehouse's character, Jeeves, for its effect, but he, too, is not part of the Afrikaans culture. One final example illustrates how the copy-writer tried to bridge the gap between the Afrikaans and English worlds. The result is an injudicious transposition from one culture to another. The advertisement for girls' dresses featured a few little girls all dressed up in Scottish tartan check dresses.

We'll take the high road.

*When we dress up, we also make up.
We make up places we have never been to
and people we have never seen.
One day we can be street urchins, straight out
of the pages of Oliver Twist; the next day
we can be Yankee Doodle Dandies; and today
we're as Scottish as heather.
We saw our bonny young men toss the caber
and dance to the skirl of bagpipes.
They tease us, mercilessly, about the Loch
Ness Monster and they say they'll take us
to that place in the highlands where the sleek,
fat salmon jump up stream.
We know it's all make-believe. But there's
plenty of time for real life ... later on.*

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Dan vat ons die wandelpad.

Wanneer ons aantrek, verbeel ons ...

*Verbeel ons ons is in nooit besoekte plekke
saam met nooit gesiene mense.
Die een dag kan ons straatknopies wees, amper
soos Ampie; die volgende dag Kaapse Klopse;
en vandag is ons so Skots soos heide.
Ons sien ons hupse jongmans die paal gooi
en dans deur die gedoedel heen. Hulle terg
ons genadeloos oor die Loch Ness monster en
sê hulle sal ons neem na dié plek waar
die blinkwit salms stroomop spring.
Ons weet dis als verbeelding. Maar daar's
oorgenoeg vir die werklike lewe ... later.*

It is clear that the translators of advertisements should take note that an appellative text is structured according to certain

principles⁽¹⁾ and that the language is used in a purposeful manner to ensure that the text has an appellative character. When such texts are translated the preservation of the appeal is of the utmost importance.

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