

‘Ageing youthfully’ or the rhetoric of medical English in advertising

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Abstract

This study examines how cosmetics brands adopt characteristics of medical English in their web sites as a rhetorical strategy to persuade consumers. From the joint perspective of rhetoric, understood as persuasive stylistic choices, and a relevance-theoretic approach to pragmatics, the present paper explains how social assumptions about “ageing youthfully” are successfully strengthened in this type of advertising thanks to the alliance with medicine. This work explores various rhetorical devices, specified through both lexical and syntactic features. The analysis suggested here urges to reconsider research conclusions drawn on the use of science in advertising along truth-seeking premises, as well as previous classifications of this type of goods based on purely informative grounds.

Keywords: medical English, cosmetics, web advertising, rhetoric, persuasion.

Resumen

“Envejecer manteniéndose joven” o la retórica del inglés médico en la publicidad

Este trabajo analiza el uso del inglés médico en las páginas web de las marcas de cosméticos como recurso retórico para persuadir a los consumidores. Desde la perspectiva conjunta de la retórica, concebida como elecciones estilísticas persuasivas, y de la pragmática, de acuerdo con la Teoría de la Relevancia, se explica cómo los supuestos sociales en torno a la idea de “envejecer manteniéndose joven” se intensifican en este tipo de publicidad debido a la alianza que se establece con la medicina. El estudio de recursos retóricos desde este punto de vista, tanto a nivel léxico como sintáctico, invita a reconsiderar las conclusiones obtenidas por otros trabajos sobre el uso de la ciencia en los

cosméticos, especialmente aquellos basados en la búsqueda de la verdad en la publicidad o bien en un enfoque puramente informativo de la misma.

Palabras clave: inglés médico, cosmética, publicidad web, retórica, persuasión.

1. Rhetoric and communication in advertising

Rhetoric as an ancient discipline meant the skills of eloquent speech, practised for both aesthetic and practical goals. According to a line of thought headed by Plato, it was believed that a repertoire of skills in persuasive speech could win any argument, without concern for questions of truth or beauty (Mauranen, 1993). This standpoint has been largely responsible for rhetoric's poor reputation, correlating it mainly with a flowery but empty message.

In the last decade of the 20th century and in the beginnings of the 21st century, rhetoric has flourished once more and practitioners have spread their analysis across a variety of disciplines, among them advertising (McQuarrie & Mick, 1996; Zhao, 2002). In its contemporary revival, rhetoric has placed the focus on style – how to say things – leaving content issues (for instance, what brand attribute to claim or what competitive position to hold) to marketing decisions.

The fundamental objective of running commercial advertising campaigns is to persuade, an aim that has always been at the very heart of rhetoric (Schiappa & Hamm, 2007). Therefore it seems likely that a rhetorical analysis can advance a broad understanding of advertising. McQuarrie and Phillips (2008) argue that the contribution of rhetoric to advertising is twofold: firstly, to point out that some of the choices available concern stylistic elements; secondly, to give a more detailed appraisal of how these elements operate in advertising.

Considerations of this nature lead us to establish another necessary link with pragmatics, in Sperber and Wilson's (2012a: 1) words, "the study of how contextual factors interact with linguistic meaning in the interpretation of utterances". According to Relevance Theory, what is explicitly communicated by an utterance goes well beyond what is said or literally meant, and may be vaguer and less determinate than is generally thought (Sperber & Wilson, 1995). There is then a fundamental distinction between

explicatures (the speaker's explicit meaning) and implicatures (all the other propositions that make up the speaker's meaning). As Sperber and Wilson (2012a: 14) state, the crucial point about the relation between explicatures and implicatures is "that implicated conclusions must be deducible from explicatures together with an appropriate set of contextual assumptions".

The notion of context supported by Relevance Theory (Sperber & Wilson, 1995) comprises people's cognitive environment in a broad sense, because it includes any phenomena that can enter the mind of the communicators during the interpretation process itself. This implies that contexts are dynamic, rather than fixed, and retrieved during the interpretation process (Xu & Zhou, 2013). The interaction between already held assumptions and new ones results in cognitive effects. The Principle of Relevance strives for the least processing effort with the greatest cognitive effects (Sperber & Wilson, 1995).

Relevance Theory provides interesting and useful reflections for our analysis. On the one hand, it follows that the less explicit the meaning, the higher the hearer's responsibility in constructing it. On the other hand, a hearer finds an input relevant when it connects with accessible contextual assumptions in order to draw positive cognitive effects. This is very important in advertising communication because each person will find some implicatures more accessible than others, thus being able to look for the relevance of the message in different ways. Moreover, if advertising communication is unfailingly characterised by a considerable load of processing effort (Diez Arroyo, 1998; Tanaka, 1999), then the reward will come in the form of greater cognitive effects.

2. Cosmetics in web advertising

This paper focuses on skin-care advertising in women's cosmetics companies' web sites, therefore throughout the whole work the consumer will be considered female by default. The decision to focus on cosmetics advertising springs from the curiosity to examine how advertising rhetoric handles, supports and, possibly strengthens, the surrounding social anxiety over body culture and the urgency of looking good. These features surrounding the textual rhetoric of cosmetic advertising are also manifest in the relevant role played by imaging, with pictures of beautiful, young women and even famous actresses endorsing the advertisement.

As regards the selection of our product class, cosmetics, it has largely been determined by the importance that the face has as a prime symbol of one's public appearance, above all for women. Women's motivation to give their attention to cosmetic goods can be based on factual explanations about how sensitive their skin becomes to the passing of time, hence the need to take care of it. But all these ideas necessarily coexist with other underlying reasons that have been studied from multiple sides. A possible approach has been taken from the marketing and consumer behaviour perspective (Guthrie, Kim & Jung, 2008), which explores how cosmetics may help women channel their desires to improve their physical attractiveness. Alternatively, other studies have been carried out from a gender viewpoint (Wolf, 1992) or a cultural one (Dolan, 2011), according to which the pressure on women is "to age youthfully".

As for the choice of advertising medium, cosmetics brands' web sites represent a challenge with respect to magazine advertising. Unlike most written advertising, the texts in our domain have not been conceived of as short attention-seeking phrases that a receiver may come across while browsing a magazine. Nor are they usually so heavily conditioned by the limitations to the layout for a given publication. It is these features that make web sites special in a very important respect: their potential readers must have shown an interest and curiosity in the product beyond its name and use (day cream, night cream, face cream, eye area cream or serum) that impels them to click on the pull-down menus. As argued by Janoschka (2004), online advertising is interaction-oriented, in the sense that it has been designed to offer information based on the users' decision. Thus the effectiveness of web advertising largely depends on the potential consumers' motivation and involvement (Janoschka, 2004).

People look for details about the object they are interested in and spend some of their time informing themselves about it. This informative issue that we claim to be attached to cosmetic brands' web sites is not to be disregarded and bears important consequences for the purposes of the present work. Firstly, the classical dichotomy information/persuasion in advertising may now appear, less than ever, to be not so clear-cut (we will refer back to this point later in section 2.3). Secondly, as observed by Santamaría Pérez (2011), Internet advertising (at least in the case of certain products, among them cosmetics) can be characterised by a neutral, objective and more explicative tone, closer to scientific explanations.

2.1. The data

As already stated, the selected object of analysis comprises women's cosmetics companies' web sites. The study is based on the information contained in the URLs of the following brands: Biotherm, Chanel, Dior, Estée Lauder, Eucerin, Guerlain, Helena Rubinstein, Jeanne Piaubert, Kanebo, L'Oréal, La Mer, La Prairie, Lancôme, Nivea, Olay, RoC, Shiseido and Yves Saint Laurent.

The collection of data took place in the period March-December 2012 when well-known and established web sites of cosmetics companies were examined manually with the intention of gathering information about the language instances shown in the presentation of the products they offered. No pre-conceived divide between mass and class brands was applied to the search. Arguably, however, the final selection of examples favours expensive brands over less expensive ones (that is, Nivea, RoC, Eucerin or L'Oréal), an imbalance that we attribute to the difficulty met on some occasions to access the Internet sites of certain trade marks (for instance Boots), whose products were found (at least from the Spanish location where the research was conducted) only in web sites specialised in online shopping, and hence, finally discarded for distorting the purpose of the analysis.

However, the uneven number of extracts between brand levels can obey other considerations. Firstly, differences may be partly attributed to the range of products available from each brand at a given time – with class brands ranking higher. Secondly, the design of the various web sites, with class brands coming top on the list of sophistication. This translates into the use of more details about the products, with optional sections (“learn more”, “application”, “ingredients”) that the reader can display at will. In this respect, we have observed a conscious effort to present the sections of the same line (for example, *Capture Totale* by Dior) in a careful, varied style, instead of the less sophisticated and more practical option of working on a schema and introduce variations on it. Such a strategy can be related to what is technically known (Aaker, 1997) as “brand personality”, that is, a compendium of the characteristics or perceptions that consumers attribute to a brand. Research has shown that consumers are inclined to purchase a product if they feel identified with the image projected by a brand or when they themselves want to achieve the ideal represented by it (Malhotra, 1981; Sirgy, 1982; Guthrie, Kim & Jung, 2008). Regardless of these considerations, there is no distinction drawn in this paper between the rhetoric of mass or class cosmetics.

2.2. Background assumptions and working hypothesis

When designing their texts, advertisers have to make decisions about what to say and how to say it. This is of the utmost importance, because at any time advertising must tune in to the current social values and interests. The relationship between the industry of personal care and consumers is mediated by society's worries over ageing and beauty. Developments in medical science have significantly increased life expectancy – older people can live vigorous and more active lives until a much older age than in the past, which brings about the valorisation of youthfulness through the extension of middle age and the encouragement to keep a close check on bodily deterioration (Tulle-Winton, 2000).

With these considerations in mind, we put forward the following hypothesis: advertisers draw the consumer towards cosmetics through the classical Greek myth of eternal youth, which is revived in our time through the alliance with medicine.

A similar connection in terms of beauty and health, in Spanish advertising, has already been noted by Díaz Rojo (2001/2002), but his is an analysis heavily dependent on social cues. The present study, however, aims to contribute to the body of research on persuasive communication by extending the use of medical language to the advertising context.

It is our contention that the tripartite link between medicine, health and beauty that allows advertisers to present the cosmetics product as a kind of medicine is based on four rhetorical strategies, namely, to assess the performance of the product, to invoke evidence as a scientific proof, to draw a parallelism with medical prescriptions and, finally, to adapt medical English to the advertising readership. Each of these strategies will be explained and exemplified in section 3.

The rhetorical practice of resorting to medicine as a persuasive mechanism has a plausible justification since

it [medicine] is an area in which the whole society is the potential clientele and where knowledge is quickly and frequently transformed into practice. It is perhaps the most obvious point of contact between science and society, and one at which attempts to popularise are inevitable. (McConchie, 1997: 4)

To this same respect Hughes (2000) or Díaz Rojo (2001/2002) have observed that medicine is repositioning itself as a biopsychosocial practice

in which health maintenance, rather than disease and its elimination, is becoming the locus for health-care organisations.

All the considerations made so far shed some light on how the invocation of medicine, or its counterpart, science, is designed to move the recipient of cosmetics advertising to take action, a recipient already sensitive to the issues of image and appearance intimately connected to health. These ideas are reflected in the following set of advertising extracts taken from our sample:

- (1) a. Our exclusive technologies revitalize aging skin, making visible age reversal a reality. <Time Zone Line and Wrinkle Reducing Crème, Estée Lauder>
- b. RoC® Scientists' unparalleled expertise in harnessing the anti-aging power of retinol has resulted in the development of products proven to significantly diminish signs of aging for healthier, younger looking skin. <RoC Retinol, RoC>
- c. Reenergizes to help skin recall the smoothness and tone of youth, and face the future with pride. <Future Solution LX Total Revitalizing Cream, Shiseido>
- d. It will help you look as young as you feel. <Cellular Radiance Concentrate Pure Gold, La Prairie>
- e. Skin beauty can wane when the natural recovery and protection functions of the skin are impaired by processes such as ageing, exposure to UV rays and active oxygen. <Impress, Kanebo>

It is worth noting the use of “impaired” in example (1e), a term characteristic of formal, medical contexts which directly makes the addresser yield implications about poor health, the need to take palliative measures and the like.

This line of analysis will let us appreciate the rhetorical value of the stylistic options taken by advertisers, but simultaneously, it will permit us to reconsider the conclusions drawn in other studies of cosmetics products. The next section is meant to review these works.

2.3. Cosmetics advertising: from truth-values to informative content

Although to the best of our knowledge, works on the use of science in skin-care advertising do not abound, it is no less true that its use has not gone by

altogether unnoticed. We would like to make reference to the works by Campanario, Moya and Otero (2001), Santamaría Pérez (2011) and Wolf (1992). The first two, especially Campanario, Moya and Otero (2001), inspect the broad use of science in advertising, with reference to cosmetics, from a scientific perspective. Wolf (1992) explores the beauty myth from a gender viewpoint, reflecting throughout her book on the advertising of beauty products. Grounded on different methodological approaches, these three studies reach a similar conclusion, namely, that advertisers make false statements and, consequently, advertising is decried as manipulative and dismissed as superficial.

While it is clear that unethical advertising should not be condoned, this research argues that the judgement pronounced on advertising in these works is misguided, not to mention the fact that corporations all over the world would not continue to spend their economic resources on claims that deceive all the people all the time.

We hypothesise that the methodological approach adopted in the present paper lets us explain why advertising cannot be judged from a perspective committed to truth-values. Advertising language is designed to sing the praises of the product, it is an instantiation of laudatory discourse, and knowledge of rhetoric (and by extension of advertising) is knowledge of how to say things. Moreover, Relevance Theory offers another powerful analytical tool, which makes it possible to provide an explicit and fine-grained account of the issue of truthfulness. Within this theoretical perspective, communication is only governed by a principle of relevance; consequently, the importance should be attached to why the speaker chooses to utter a particular sentence. Besides, utterances do not always communicate the concepts they encode, the meaning of an utterance is characterised by inferencing. This inferential role depends on the receiver, who takes the responsibility for interpretation. Thus, in this way, the same message is liable to be interpreted differently by different consumers.

More concluding evidence to this respect comes from recent research on consumer behaviour (LaTour & LaTour, 2009). It has been shown that, even admitting that advertising could be false, those consumers who were to notice such falsity will not reject a brand by the validity of the advertisement content.

The second element we wish to take issue with is the informative dimension of advertising. The traditional divide information/persuasion in advertising

(see for instance Madrid Cánovas, 2005) is usually associated with two different worlds: marketing and economic-based approaches favouring the former, while the latter pertains to the domain of rhetorical analyses, possibly embedded in linguistic and semiotic considerations. Obviously, this dichotomy is operative in as much as it is the result of applying many different strategies and research preoccupations to a field that is highly multidisciplinary, and to this extent it will continue to be valid. But, simultaneously, it must be taken with flexibility on both sides, because although the aforementioned worlds may be back-to-back, in our appreciation, there is a lot to be gained if they start talking, that is, if communication between them flows.

As already claimed, the (potential) consumers of cosmetic products address themselves to the various cosmetics companies' web sites looking for information, which implies that an analysis of stylistic choices should pay attention to how information is handled by advertisers. But we vindicate, in turn, that a study of advertising on purely informative grounds may ignore aspects that could yield different results should rhetorical weight be taken into account.

The analysis of marketing strategies frequently involves the classification of products into categories, being one of the most common ones the distinction between durable and non-durable goods – other overlapping categories also common in consumer behaviour are alternatively labelled as utilitarian and hedonic (Khan, Dhar & Wertenbroch, 2005). The former is made up of cars, furniture, home furnishings or appliances, which pose performance and financial risks to consumers, enjoy the status of high-involvement goods and are associated with high levels of information in their advertising campaigns. By opposition, the latter group consists, among others, of food, spirits, drinks and personal care, regarded as frivolous, with low-involvement rates and with low demands for information (see Abernethy & Franke, 1996: 1-4 for a detailed analysis).

According to this “informative dimension”, cosmetics, categorised as non-durable goods, would automatically inherit the features of their group. It is arguable, however, that the situation depicted here does no longer hold when a rhetorical analysis of the advertising of these products is substantiated.

We have already seen how the decision to present cosmetics from a medical perspective raises high levels of involvement, together with beauty/health consciousness among consumers. Moreover, the alliance with medical

science is meant to overcome the alluded frivolity of these products, which appear now as necessary to maintain our health. In addition, the lack of risk cannot be supported either, because the consumer expects to find not only short-term benefits, but also delayed benefits, for example, long-term health.

The point is that these issues do only become evident when examining a set of texts rather than conducting an enquiry among a group of consumers, and when using text-analytic methods instead of quantitative empirical ones. This is in fact the aim of the section that follows, to offer a rhetorical approach to cosmetics advertising texts and to show how the medical presentation of skin-care products will ultimately result in a new advantageous appreciation of such goods.

3. The rhetorical analysis of data

This section is designed to specify the rhetorical steps supporting the medical approach adopted in this type of advertising. The discussion opens with the cosmetic product seen in terms of how successfully it performs, that is, of its capabilities to improve the woman's skin condition. In the second place comes the pertinence of evidence, regarded as objective, scientific information backing the validity of the claims made. The third strategy develops the echoic nature of rhetoric, unveiling the parallelism with medical prescriptions. The section concludes with the effort to adapt inscrutable medical terminology to the general public.

3.1. The importance of performance

As has just been shown, one of the claims of the informative oriented classification of goods is that non-durable products had no performance risks associated. We will try to prove how the advertising of cosmetics attaches a great importance to the performance of the product. This, in turn, is easily justifiable from a medical point of view: when patients need to treat their health with medicines, however slight their state may be, they always want to know when the first improvements in their condition will appear. In agreement with Relevance Theory, the assumptions held by medical patients are quickly and effectively transferred to the world of cosmetics thanks to the medical terminology borrowed. Let's examine this set of examples from our data.

- (2) a. Utilizing unprecedented contour-recalling technology, this cream creates dramatic smoothness and firmness, rebuilding a look of youth instantly. <Shiseido Bio-Performance Advanced Super Revitalizing Cream, Shiseido>
- b. Instantly smoothes rough, dry patches with our exclusive MicroSphere Refinishing System. <Idealist, Estée Lauder>
- c. High Molecular Weight Hyaluronic Acid: instantly, it replenishes hydration to plump and smooth away fine dry lines in seconds. <Time Zone, Estée Lauder>
- d. Immediately, the skin feels refreshed, suppler and more comfortable. <Forever Youth Liberator Cream, Yves Saint Laurent>
- e. This 2-step process starts working immediately to reduce the appearance of dark circles and puffiness. <RoC Brilliance Eye Beautifier, RoC>

Product performance is measured in time indications conveyed by the adverbials “instantly” in (2a,b,c), this last one reinforced by the prepositional phrase “in seconds”, and “immediately” (2d,e). The urgency expressed by such time expressions draws implications about the high quality of the product, its efficiency or its healthy benefits.

Another common medical reference to time improvement periods is to express them in “weeks”. Note that the use of figures in (3a) makes the connection with doctors recommendations more evident, at the same time that the sequencing – “after 1 week”, “after 4 weeks” invites implications about credibility, real improved condition:

- (3) a. After 1 week, dark circles and under-eye bags are reduced. After 4 weeks, overall facial features are lifted and more defined. <RoC Brilliance Night Recharging Moisturiser, RoC>
- b. It will help wrinkles, even deep ones, appear plumped up within four weeks. <Eucerin Hyularon-Filler Eye Cream, Eucerin>

It can also be the case that the time span is detailed under formulas even closer to medical language:

- (4) a. Quick, concentrated, under-eye treatment sheets that dramatically transform the appearance of wrinkles and help improve

dark circles with a single application. <Benefiance Pure Retinol Instant Treatment Eye Mask, Shiseido>

The expression “with a single application” in (4a) above is an alternative way to indicate immediacy. But at the same time, the item “application” can have the meaning “medicinal substance applied to the skin”, implications about medicine are invited by the presence of other units characteristic of medical language, such as the noun “treatment” and the verb “improve”.

In the pursuit of persuasion, a crucial aspect closely related to the question of performance is the need to provide convincing proofs. This point is illustrated in the next subsection.

3.2. The role of evidence

Evidence plays a prominent role when the addresser wishes to offer conclusive details of his/her argument. In cosmetics advertising, this role becomes all the more relevant because it is used as a rhetorical strategy immersed in an alliance with medical science. The characteristic style of medical language thrives on scientific proofs based on tests and statistics clinically proven (Adegoju, 2008).

(5) a. 93% of women noticed enhanced lash and eye beauty within 4 weeks. <Eyes and Lash Anti-Aging Primer, RoC>

b. In a clinical testing, 97% of women demonstrated fast results. <RoC Brilliance Eye Beautifier, RoC>

c. Based on a clinical study on 41 women. <Absolue L'Extrait, Lancôme>

d. After 12 years and 6,000 experiments... <Crème de La Mer, La Mer>

e. In a series of four studies with 180 people, the following results were achieved: 94% of people using Eucerin Hyularon-Filler Day Cream and 77% of people who used Eucerin Hyularon-Filler Night Cream found an overall improvement to the condition of their skin. Further tests by consumers also showed positive results: 95% said the Eucerin Hyularon-Filler Concentrate left their skin visibly and noticeably smoother. 83% agreed the Eucerin Hyularon-Filler Concentrate effectively minimises the appearance of wrinkles. <Eucerin>

The rhetorical strategy here consists in the inclusion of figures and percentages, together with lexical items such as “clinical” (5b,c), “tests” (5b,e), “studies” (5c,e) or “results” (5e), in order to reinforce the scientific image of the product advertised in each case. Its function is to increase the persuasiveness of a message that through the incorporation of objective, factual information becomes highly relevant for a consumer avid for good news to enhance her public image.

A further element that holds a powerful persuasive function is the allusion to proper nouns:

(6) a. [...] confirms Michelle Rathman, expert of stem research at L’Oréal. <L’Oréal>

b. [...] thanks to a collaboration with Professor Desmoulière, a specialist in tissue reconstruction. <Guerlain>

These people are identified as experts (6a) and specialists (6b), further accompanied by the title of “professor” in the last case. They are presented as authorised voices that give evidence and credibility to the assertions made about the product.

Relevance Theory helps us to understand how the scientific implications which have been triggered by the presence of figures, statistics, proper nouns and pertinent lexical units in the message benefit the consumers’ appreciation of the cosmetic product, at the same time that reassure women in their quest for beauty.

3.3. The echoic nature of rhetoric

Over the last two decades, many scholars in Applied Linguistics have directed their attention to the analysis of medical English in various forms: texts written by specialists for specialists (Salager-Meyer, 2004; Méndez Cendón, 2004; Gotti & Salager-Meyer, 2006) or have focused on the features exhibited by medical research articles (see Mungra & Canziani, 2013: 40-43 for useful references). While their various studies have contributed to a better understanding of the lexical and syntactic specifics of this particular jargon, our interest in this manifestation of specialised text falls, however, on a slightly different side, that is, on an everyday communicative genre: medical prescriptions.

This section aims to demonstrate how some parts of cosmetics advertisements have been designed to resemble a type of medical text that

anyone of us, as eventual patients, knows well. In Swinyard's (1975: 1601) words, the prescription order "brings to focus (...) the diagnostic acumen and therapeutic proficiency of the physician with instructions for palliation or restoration of the patient's health". Hence these forms display a format where doctors specify information (Swinyard, 1975; Shmerling, 2011) as, for example, the dosage of a medication, how many doses to be taken at once, by what route (oral or otherwise) the medicine should be administered, how often it should be taken and how to do it. Also included are additional details such as time of day and indications about how to take the medicine (that is, with or without food).

In agreement with our theoretical framework, this rhetorical strategy adopted by advertisers can be conceived of as having an echoic nature. In Sperber and Wilson's (2012b: 93) terms:

An echoic utterance indicates to the hearer that the speaker is paying attention to a representation; it indicates that one of the speaker's reasons for paying attention to this representation is that it has been entertained by someone; it also indicates the speaker's attitude to the representation echoed.

The hypothesis we put forward is that the parts of the cosmetics advertisements related to the application of the beauty cream are echoic in nature. On identifying the features of medical prescriptions and the short sentences in which they are written, the consumer reinforces the parallelism between the medicine and the product designed by scientists to restore and maintain her skin healthy. Through this method of echoing scientists' consideration of the product as scientific or medical, advertisers express a positive attitude, hoping to transmit approval or even reverence. Additionally, the details presented in this way attain a higher degree of objectivity and realism; after all, it is practical information that the reader is made to find more relevant thanks to the rhetorical device chosen and the cognitive effects derived.

In what follows we are going to indicate how this strategy works. Let's start with the instructions about the dosage of the product and how often it should be taken:

(7) a. Use once or twice a day in the AM and/or PM. <RoC Brilliance, Roc>

- b. Use daily in the morning and evening <Eucerin® DermoPURIFYER Cleanser, Eucerin>
- c. Use twice daily before the Day and Night Creams. <Eucerin Hyularon-Filler Concentrate, Eucerin>
- d. Apply every night after cleansing your face. <NIVEA Q10 plus ANTI-WRINKLE Night Cream, Nivea>
- e. After the first application, dimply pump to dispense product, AM/PM. <Skin Caviar Liquid Lift, La Prairie>
- f. Day and night, dispense one drop onto the palm of your hand and gently smooth over your face, neck and décolleté. <Cellular Radiance Concentrate Pure Gold, La Prairie>
- g. Apply a thick layer on the thoroughly cleansed face and throat, 2 to 3 times weekly. Leave on for 10 minutes and remove any excess with a cotton pad. <Certitude Absolue Ultra Anti-Wrinkle Cream Mask, Jeanne Piaubert>
- h. The eye beautifying crème and eye activating serum should be applied in equal amounts evenly to the eye area. <RoC Brilliance, Roc>

Syntactically, these excerpts are written in the imperative, the most common verbal form to give instructions; alternatively, (7h) presents the variation of modal verb “should” plus the passive form. Lexically, the choice of verb ranges from “to use” (7a,b,c) to “to apply” (7d,g) to a variant of both slightly more specific as “to smooth” (7f). The recommended frequency is indicated by the adverbials “once”, “twice” and “daily” (7a,b,c); but note that (7g) replaces the letters with figures, which may arguably be closer to what doctors write on prescriptions. The same reasoning can be applied to the abbreviations “am/pm” in (7a,e), instead of the full forms “morning” and “evening” (7b) or their variants “day” and “night” (7d,f). Special attention deserves the verb “to dispense” (7e,f) for its connections with medicine in the meaning “to give out medicine according to a doctor’s prescription”, reinforced in (7f) with the exactness of the dose “one drop”, only possible through a dropper, a specially designed container for measuring out drops of medicine. The same idea of precision encapsulates (7h) in the prepositional phrase “in equal amounts”.

The parallelism with the instructions for administering the medicine can be found in:

- (8) a. Apply by gently massaging into the skin, using upward circular strokes. <NIVEA Q10 plus ANTI-WRINKLE Night Cream, Nivea>
- b. Eye Activating Serum. Using your fingertip, apply the activating serum to the complete eye contour area, including eyelids and below eyebrows. Gently massage into skin. <RoC Brilliance, Roc>
- c. (...) gently smooth over your face and neck. Your skin will take on a golden radiance. <Cellular Radiance Concentrate Pure Gold, La Prairie>
- d. Apply generously to the face and neck. Spread the cream from the centre of the face outwards. <Capture Totale Multi-Perfection Crème, Dior>

If the prescriptions instruct on whether to take the medicine orally or otherwise, cosmetics advertisements equally point to where to apply the cream: “skin” (8a), “eye contour area”, “eyelids” and “below eyebrows” (8b) or “face” and “neck” (8c,d). Indications of how to do it are also provided: “using circular strokes” (8a,b), “using your fingertips” (8b), where the nonfinite gerund clauses alternate with imperative forms “apply by gently massaging” (8a), “gently smooth over your face and neck” (8c), “spread the cream from the centre of the face outwards” (8d).

A parallelism can also be drawn between the indications given by doctors about how to take the medicine (that is, with or without food) and the application of the beauty product alone or in combination with any other:

- (9) a. Apply after cleanser and softener. <Shiseido Bio-Performance Advanced Super Revitalizing Cream, Shiseido>
- b. Apply day and night, alone or after the Forever Youth Liberator Serum, on the face and neck. <Forever Youth Liberator Crème, Yves Saint Laurent>
- c. Follow with your daily moisturizer. <Cellular Radiance Concentrate Pure Gold, La Prairie>
- d. Applied before any other treatment, it boosts its performance. <Capture Totale One Essential, Dior>
- e. For best lifting results, let the serum dry on the skin before applying another product. Follow with Skin Caviar Luxe Cream, Extrait of

Skin Caviar Firming Complex or moisturizer of choice. <Skin Caviar Liquid Lift, La Prairie>

Special highlighting deserves the short length of the sentences, as corresponds to a text that echoes doctors' indications, achieved in occasions through the elision of noun phrases in complement position after the transitive verb "follow" as in (9c,e). Example (9e) is especially noticeable in this respect, since its last part shows additional omission of quantifiers and determiners: "follow with (...) or moisturizer of choice", instead of the most common "follow with (...) or any other moisturizer of your choice".

This section has argued in favour of a rhetorical strategy in cosmetics advertising that consists in presenting the parts of the advertisement concerned with the application of the product after the format of medical prescriptions. We have presented this rhetorical device as having echoic nature, which will abound in the consumer's recognition of the cosmetic product as a scientific outcome and which will ultimately boost the positive appreciation of the advertised goods.

The next step is to analyse the role played by scientific/medical terminology in cosmetics advertising.

3.4. Adapting medical English to the advertising readership

In their pursuit of convincing the consumer of cosmetics, advertisers resort to the employment of scientific or pseudo-scientific terms. The complexity inherent in this type of language, as pointed out by Schmieid (2008: 13), "is a necessary reflection of the complexity of reality. That is why academic descriptions and explanations of more complex phenomena have to be rendered as complex language structures". The conceptual difficulty added to the complex lexical features – polysyllabic words, Greco-Latin affixation, among others – limit the interpretation of these terms to specialists, an elitist community. The decision to include the specialised terms in this kind of advertising, however, can only be understood as a rhetorical device, that is, as an effort to reinforce the scientific character of the product. The interpretation of such terms demands extra processing effort which, according to Relevance Theory, will be rewarded by the cognitive effects in favour of the benefits of the cream, its positive results for the consumer's skin, her beauty and so on and so forth.

Studies on scientific and popular scientific texts conclude that “the difference (...) in terms of accessibility and readability can be captured in the parameter of semantic difficulty” (Haase, 2007: 49). In order to overcome the alluded semantic depth and adapt the specialised word to the general public, advertisers introduce an explanation under a variety of forms. Let’s start with the following examples:

- (10) a. Vitamin E energizes skin and protects from premature aging signs. Allantoin soothes away flakiness and calms irritations. <Revitalizing Cream, Shiseido>
- b. A Shiseido skincare original technology formulated with the innovative Form Support Veil effectively corrects and helps prevent the appearance of lines and sagging around the delicate eye and lip areas. <White Lucent Anti-Dark Circles Cream, Shiseido>
- c. At the same time, the unique R.A.R.E.TM oligopeptide helps to re-bundle collagen. <Rénergie Microlift Eye R.A.R.E.TM Lifter, Lancôme>
- d. Exclusive TriLipid Complex restores missing lipids, repairing the moisture barrier. Anti-oxidants protect skin from environmental damage and visible signs of premature aging. <Verité, Estée Lauder>

All of these extracts take the form of simple sentences where the specialised item, “vitamin E” and “allatoin” in (10a), “Form Support Veil” (10b), “R.A.R.E.TM oligopeptide” (10c), “TriLipid Complex” and “anti-oxidants” in (10d), is the subject of verbs like “to protect” (10a,d), “to help” (10b,c), “to correct” (10a), “to restore” (10d) or “to energise” (10a). Items of this kind are known in the relevant literature (Pérez-Llantada, 2012: 58) as “procedural words”, whose function is to assist the specialised terminology in conveying propositional content.

At other times, the specific unit is qualified by appositive noun phrases introduced after a dash (11a) or a comma (11b,c):

- (11) a. [...] stimulating the production of the enzyme FN3K – skin’s own natural anti-wrinkle antidote. <Ultra Correction Line Repair, Chanel>
- b. Temps Majeur Cream is enriched with ‘Ganoderma Lucidum’, a popular ingredient used in Chinese Medicine. <Temps Majeur Cream, Yves Saint Laurent>

c. A powerful combination of unique ingredients –Reconstruction Complex and Pro-Xylane™, a patented scientific innovation– has been shown to improve the condition around the stem cells and stimulate cell regeneration to reconstruct skin to a denser quality. <Absolue Precious Cells, Lancôme>

Quite often, the noun phrase presents a higher level of complexity: around the head may cluster not only premodifying elements, but also post-modifying restrictive relative clauses introduced by “that” (12a,b,c), and, less commonly in our examples, by “which”:

(12) a. Contains Xylitol-enriched Phyto-Vitalizing Factor, a high-performance moisturizing and retexturizing agent that effectively softens fine lines and brings a noticeably younger look to skin. <The Skincare Multi-Energizing Cream, Shiseido>

b. Contains Hydroxyproline, a high-technology amino acid that parallels skin’s own natural building blocks and helps natural collagen production. <Benefiance Pure Retinol Instant Treatment Mask, Shiseido>

c. It contains E-PULSE®, our unique cosmetic electro-stimulation technology that stimulates the skin’s natural process for fast results and a younger-looking you. <RoC Brilliance Beautiful Skin, RoC>

d. It contains a powerful E-PULSE™ technology which smoothes and perfects the skin around the eyes. <RoC Brilliance Eye and Lash Anti-Aging Primer, RoC>

Alternatively, the specification of the head noun can take the form of nonfinite clauses, for ease of reference indicated in the extracts by means of square brackets:

(13) a. It contains E-PULSE™, a patented micro-current technology [inspired by the latest professional procedures] and [backed by years of research]. <RoC Brilliance Night Recharging Moisturiser, RoC>

b. TXC™ —the first active brightening ingredient [registered in Japan as a quasi-drug by a Western company]— has a distinctive structure that delivers continuous action for 12 hours. <Le Blanc, Chanel>

- c. The first skincare with LR 2412, a molecule [designed to propel through skin layers]. <Visionnaire, Lancôme>
- d. Hydra Collagenist mask, a deep hydration intense re-infusion face mask [enriched in Derm-Hydrifix complex and collagen microspheres to “implant” water at the heart of skin]. <Hydra Collagenist Mask, Helena Rubinstein>

In all of these examples the antecedent head is identical with the implicit subject of the -ed postmodifying clause. Moreover, the participle concerned is firmly linked with the passive voice in such a way that these clauses can be interpreted, according to the context, as equivalent to expanded finite relative clauses with a restrictive character: “which has been/was inspired by the latest professional procedures” and “which has been/was backed by years of research” in (13a), “which has been/was registered in Japan” (13b), “which has been/was designed to propel through skin layers” (13c) and “which has been/was enriched in Derm-Hydrifix complex” (13d).

But explanations of the scientific term can equally be provided by means of infinitive purpose clauses, where the formal “in order to” is replaced by “to”, the mere mark of infinitive:

- (14) a. It contains highly concentrated Hyaluronic Acid and Glycine Saponin to help skin feel smoother and look younger. <Eucerin Dermo Purifier Cleanser, Eucerin>
- b. The formula, enhanced with micro-fillers and hydra-vitamin complex, works deep within the lip surface to intensely hydrate and help smooth. <Regenerist Anti-Aging Lip Treatment, Olay>
- c. (...) micro-spheres filled with perfecting ingredients to replump the skin’s hydration mattress and smooth skin. <Aquasource Skin Perfection, Biotherm>

All of the examples (10) to (14) show the advertisers’ efforts to adapt the (pseudo)scientific terms to the readership through a variety of syntactic structures that specify the semantically loaded lexical item. This can find a parallelism in the plain English Campaign’s recommendations for doctors towards their patients. In a downloadable document from their website (URL: <http://www.plainenglish.co.uk>), they offer several tips to write medical information in plain English, top on the list are the

attempts to avoid jargon and to keep the language as straightforward as possible.

Advertisers' decision to include the specialised item, together with an explanation of its contribution to skin's health, can only be assessed from a rhetorical perspective. Relevance Theory explains how the initial presence of specialised language in a non-specialised scientific/medical domain such as advertising is meant to impress consumers and to bring about processing effort. This extra processing cost can appropriately be counterbalanced by rich cognitive effects, which will ultimately reinforce the medical appreciation of the product in question.

4. Concluding remarks

In this paper we have defended a rhetorical analysis of cosmetics advertising as the only possible means to understand the relevance of the claims that advertisers make about their products. In particular, we have studied how these goods are advertised from the medical-scientific perspective, establishing a parallelism between the advertising of cosmetics and the characteristics of medical English. The analysis focuses on the role of performance and evidence, as well as the echoic nature of medical prescriptions; finally we have examined how the medical-scientific jargon is adapted to the advertising readership, emulating plain English. The choice of these persuasive strategies has far-reaching consequences, not only for the consumers' new appreciation of these products, traditionally regarded as frivolous, but also for previous work in advertising based on a classification sustained on purely informative terms. Thus we have vindicated the need for collaborative work within the advertising industry itself. Rhetorical analyses, supported on qualitative text-analytic methods, are essential to gain a better insight into the complex phenomenon of advertising and one cannot afford to ignore their conclusions.

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