

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.0 Introduction

Languages change and evolve over time. Social, political and cultural circumstances are major contributing factors. The Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English (2004:789) defines language as the ‘ability to use words to communicate’ and is also described as ‘the kind of words and style used in one kind of writing or by people in a particular job or activity’, for instance poetic language. Algeo and Phyles (2004) state that language is the ability of human beings to communicate by a system of conventional signs. In other words, language differentiates and sets apart humans from other life forms; its primary purpose being to communicate. Language serves as the identity of people in a particular country or even area. The evolution of the media as a mode of communication has been intriguing and interesting. In the past, methods of communication were limited and usually took time. However, in the present day, due to the various technologies available, a wide variety of media can be used in many forms.

All throughout history, it is evident that whilst some languages have grown and prospered, some have barely survived and some have become extinct. English is one of the best examples of a language that has not only survived over the passage of time; it has also spread vastly and at an alarming speed. History shows the pioneering voyages to the Americas, Asia and Antipodes which resulted in the British colonial empire leading to the powerful spread of the English language (Algeo and Phyles, 2004). This brings to light the spread of English to Asia. Like so many countries in the world,

especially in South East Asia, Malaysia is keen to improve the English Language teaching and language learning among its learners.

The primary role of the English Language is seen as a means to provide a window to the world and give access to developments in science and technology. English is now a major lingua franca and is known for its importance and value globally. Being an internationally acclaimed language, the English Language plays a pivotal role in many industries and fields, especially in the education field. According to Asmah (1993), English was used for government administrative purposes during the colonial period and even ten years after Independence. It was the implementation of the National Education Policy that enforced the use of the Malay language as the medium of instruction.

1.1 The Language of Advertising

Another industry, where there is dominant influence of the English Language, is the media. The media has always been the way to get a message across millions of miles instantly. It is used as a medium to reach people in different nooks and corners of the world. Therefore, the media plays an important role in portraying issues and influencing the public's opinion on a variety of matters.

The media covers many areas, one of them being radio broadcasting. Radio has developed from its initial wireless form into a medium of communication that is used globally. Advertising is a vital element of radio broadcasting. Generally, radio advertisements are either commercials or Public Service Announcements. It is through commercial advertisements that the public is made aware of products, services, special promotions and useful information. Public Service Announcements are government

advertisements that send a message to the listeners to stay healthy, follow road laws and many more along the same lines. Some advertisements can be very engaging and creative. They grab the attention of the listener and leave an impression.

Delin (2000) claims that the language used in advertisements is one of society's pervasive forms of discourse. Advertisements can be found in a variety of forms. Magazine ads, newspaper ads, television ads, radio ads, ads on the Internet, posters, and billboards are a few common examples among the many forms of advertisements. The purpose of an advertisement is to promote a particular brand name, product or service. It is designed to attract and persuade consumers to purchase the product or service. Furthermore, it is to be noted that there is a target group that each advertisement is aimed at. Much research and survey is done on the characteristics and need of the target group.

Dimbleby and Burton (1998) suggest that communication through advertising sets out to change the opinions of a target group towards an advertised product or service. Therefore, persuasive language is used to achieve this purpose. Although advertising is not the only form of persuasive communication where persuasive language is used it is noticeably the most obvious form. Persuasive techniques that are employed are to gain the attention of the target audience. However, the majority of the target audience and listeners in general are not aware of these techniques.

Delin (2000) characterises consumers according to four criteria. First is demographic description such as sex, age and religion. Next is their need. This is because a consumer is driven by need. In other words, if there is a need then that need is met by purchasing a certain product or service that best meets that need.

Thirdly is the ability of the consumer to relate to the product or the service through the advertisement. It is whether they are able to identify with the products or services advertised.

Furthermore, Delin (2000) says that personality traits and lifestyle habits also influence the way a consumer reacts to an advertisement. She refers to them as 'psychographic information'. Therefore, it is vital that an advertisement is designed in a manner that is able to attract and persuade a consumer to purchase a product or to use a service. Advertisements are also designed to update the consumer on promotions and products, introduce or reintroduce a product, or even strengthen the selling power of a certain brand name.

As mentioned earlier, advertising can be seen in many forms. Radio advertisements have taken on a rather creative approach. Rather than merely being a monotonous monologue, radio advertisements usually incorporate impersonations, dialogues and humour which in turn make them more interesting and enjoyable. These elements contribute to the impact of the brand names in advertisements. Thus, as more and more listeners are drawn to radio advertisements, there is a need to study the language used in these radio advertisements.

Dimbleby and Burton (1998) assert that radio advertisements have an opening tease to gain attention. Then the ideas and the message are developed. A punch line or a twist is used to conclude. This is to leave the listeners with something more to remember the advertisement by. They go on to clearly state that advertising is very consciously planned. Thus, the language used in advertisements is carefully chosen, edited and

portrayed in the best possible way to persuade the listeners to purchase a product or service. Pratkanis and Aronson (1991), aptly encapsulate such persuasive language as ‘words that demand or plead for attention, sympathy, loyalty or money’. Larson (2001) explains ‘that clearly persuasion pervades our world.’

From once being a language that was spoken by a minority, English is now a language that holds the title of being a global language. It is acknowledged in various parts of the world as an important and crucial medium of communication. Dimpleby and Burton (1998), state that communication can be divided into three aspects. First is the form of communication. This comprises the many ways of communicating such as speaking, writing, drawing, gesturing and so on. They go on to elaborate that these forms are separate and distinct as they have their own system to send the message. Another aspect is the medium of communication. It refers to the means of communication which combine the different forms and often involves the use of advanced technology. Dimpleby and Burton (1998), exemplify this term using books which communicate using words and pictures.

Lastly, the media are examples of mass communication that are each distinct in its own way. Mass communication basically carries the meaning of communication that operates on a large scale. The media is a form of mass communication. Radio, newspapers, television and magazines are a few examples. Radio advertisement revenue as well as the percentage of listeners continues to rise. The mainstay of radio is music, interweaved with information, news, traffic updates and of course commercials. Commercials generally pay for the operation of radio stations.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

Thus, the importance of radio advertisements is not to be taken lightly. Various elements of radio advertisements contribute to its selling power. For instance, the language, music, sound effects as well as the elements of humour and wit. Music sets the mood or tone of the advertisements and is complemented with sound effects and voice-overs. As radio advertisements are usually targeted to reach a target audience each of these elements of an advertisement is tailored according to the appeal of that specific audience.

1.3 Significance of the Study

This study will explore the literary devices and vocabulary frequency use in radio advertisements. Literary devices are a major part of the world of literature. Hence, the common understanding is that it cannot be found in non-literary materials. Nevertheless, literary devices are present all around us interweaved into our daily lives. The researcher hopes to ascertain and present evidence of the existence of literary devices in Malaysian radio advertisements so as to form awareness that literature is more widespread than generally assumed. The English language is known for its extensive vocabulary and the choice of vocabulary that is used in an advertisement is not random, however it is chosen for its form, function and power of persuasion. It is the aim of the researcher to provide the vocabulary frequency use in Malaysian radio advertisements and to also compare the verbs and adjectives found with those listed by Leech (1966). Leech (1966) has conducted research on the words that are frequently found in advertisements and provides a list of commonly used verbs and adjectives. These verbs and adjectives that will be used as the basis for comparison will be presented in Chapter 3. Although Leech's findings were published in 1966, it was chosen to establish whether the same verbs and adjectives are commonly used even after all these years. Leech's research was also chosen due to its validity and reliability.

One's attitude and beliefs are affected by the media. This is due to the persuasive language that is used in messages. The media as a form of mass communication uses language as its main mode of communication. Other ways are music, sound effects, font size and layout. Radio is a form of broadcasting media that is significant and widely used. However, as radio only demands listening, it relies heavily on language to attract its listeners, making the language used in radio imperative. Advertisements are a vital source of income for radio stations. As a source of making profit, importance is given to ensuring well produced radio advertisements. All advertisements have explicit and implicit meanings, and radio advertisements are no different however, unlike other forms of advertisements, radio advertisements strongly rely on language, sound effects and music because they do not have graphics to conjure images in order to present messages and values.

Over the course of a day, an abundance of advertisements are aired. The constant repetitive power of penetration to listeners that radio advertisements have means that language choice plays an important role in subtly influencing our behaviour and habits. As users of language and as listeners of radio advertisements it is hoped that this study will create more awareness and better understanding of the language used in radio advertisements especially the literary devices and vocabulary frequency use.

By identifying the literary devices that radio advertisements commonly use, it is hoped that awareness will be created amongst listeners of the presence of literary devices in a non-literary genre, radio advertisements. The researcher intended to bring to light an unconventional area where literary devices are used namely radio advertisements. There has also been a few studies done on the use of literary devices in radio advertisements in Malaysia. Research on Malaysian radio advertisements has mostly focused on aspects

other than vocabulary. Thus in this study, the researcher has collected and studied the vocabulary that is frequently repeated and employed as part of the persuasive language of radio advertisements. Leech (1966) listed common verbs and adjectives found in his sample of television advertising. Using this list, a comparison will be made to determine whether the same verbs and adjectives are common in Malaysian radio advertisements.

It is the desire of the researcher that through this study the literary devices that are used in radio advertisements in Malaysia along with the frequently used words and phrases will be documented. Finally, the researcher aspires to contribute to other studies conducted on the language used in Malaysian radio advertisements.

1.4 Purpose of the Study

This study analyses the literary devices used in radio advertisements taken from two prominent radio stations in Malaysia. The objective of this study is to examine and analyse the literary devices used. By identifying the literary devices used, this study aspires to create an awareness of devices that are used in radio advertisements. In addition, it is to show that literary devices are not just exclusive to literary materials but can be found in advertising language as well, which is another genre of language use..

Language comprises words and these words are used to influence and persuade listeners of an advertisement. There are many words that most advertisements utilise to influence listeners. This study attempts to analyse recurrent words and phrases that are employed to persuade listeners. The recurrent verbs and adjectives will then be compared against the findings of Leech (1966). Another purpose of this study is to add to the existing English Language research on the language used in radio advertisements in Malaysia.

1.5 Research Questions

Given that the objective of this study is to tabulate the literary devices and vocabulary used in radio advertisements in Malaysia, this study will address the following questions:

- 1) What are the frequently used words employed in Malaysian radio advertisements?
- 2) Are literary devices used in Malaysian radio advertisements?
- 3) What are the common literary devices found in radio advertisements in Malaysia?
- 4) Based on Leech's (1966) findings are the same verbs and adjectives constantly used in Malaysian radio advertisements?

1.6 Scope and Limitations of the Study

This study has been undertaken with the purpose of providing some insights as to the literary devices and language used in radio advertisements to create awareness of the existence of these features.

This study is limited to radio advertisements from only two prominent radio stations in Malaysia which are hitz.fm, and mix fm where broadcasting is done in English. There are four radio stations which use English as their medium of communication; hitz.fm, mix fm, lite fm and Traxx fm. Stations such as Fly Fm, red fm and RADIO 24 not only use English but Malay as well and were not selected. Out of the four radio stations that broadcasts in English, the bulk of the advertisements aired on hitz.fm and mix.fm were the same. Although both radio stations operate in English, other Malaysian languages such as Malay, Chinese and Tamil words are occasionally used to create humour or to refer to a particular matter of local concern.

Radio advertisements can be public service announcements, commercials, traffic updates, advertisements for future programmes and contests or advertisements for the radio stations. The researcher concentrated on commercials for the purpose of this research.

This study focuses on certain literary devices namely alliteration, allusion, ambiguity, antithesis, connotation and denotation, euphemism, hyperbole, metaphor, onomatopoeia, parallelism, personification, pun, repetition and simile. As there are probably many other literary devices, the existence of other literary devices was not investigated. The devices chosen are common literary devices that are widely used in literary analysis. Furthermore, this study was conducted on radio advertisements and not on other forms of advertising. The findings and results of this study are valid under these circumstances only.

1.7 Conclusion

In this chapter the background, significance and purpose of the research has been discussed. The next chapter functions as a review of relevant literature to this study. Subsequently, Chapter 3 presents the methods used for gathering and analysing the data followed by the findings and results of the data analysed. The final chapter discusses the research and provides a summary of the findings.