| **RESEARCH ARTICLE**

Can ESL Students Identify Emphatic Features of Advertisements?

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| **ABSTRACT**

The present study aimed at investigating ESL students' ability to comprehend and identify emphatic structures in advertisements, to find out the emphatic features that are easy to identify, and those that are difficult to identify. Sixty ESL college students in the fifth semester of the translation program who were enrolled in a Stylistics course took a test which consisted of a Mazda advertisement. The students were asked to identify the emphatic features of the Mazda advertisement and give two examples to illustrate the feature they give. Analysis of the subjects' correct responses showed that the emphatic structures that the students identified correctly are: Balanced sentence structure (53%), repeating key words (53%), arranging ideas in the order of climax, i.e. order of importance with the strongest idea last (45%), using active voice (33%), changing sentence length abruptly (33%), placing important words at the end of the sentence (32%), using periodic sentences (30%), placing emphatic words after a colon or a dash (27.5%), putting a word or phrase out of its usual order (23%) and identifying intensifiers, extraposition, exclamatory sentences, using anticipatory 'it', and changing sentence types together (20%). The emphatic structures in the advertisement proved to be difficult for the students to recognize because the advertisement draws an analogy between Mozart's musical genius and the Mazda car-making philosophy, emphasizing how both creations are driven by emotion, vision, and craftsmanship. The advertisement employs multiple emphatic techniques simultaneously, which may have overwhelmed the students and constituted a cognitive load. The Mazda advertisement does not just inform, rather it immerses the reader in an emotional experience through syntactic and lexical emphasis. Instead of focusing on emphatic structures, the students were probably more engaged in decoding the poetic message and understanding the content rather than analyzing how structural elements shape emphasis. In other words, the analogy between Mozart's music and the Mazda car, made the students less attentive to structural manipulations. Further causes of advertisement comprehension problems and recommendations for instructional techniques that would help enhance the students' ability to comprehend and identify emphatic structures in genre-specific texts are given.

1. Introduction

An advertisement[1], also known as an "advert" or "Ad", is a public notice or announcement that calls the public's attention to or promotes a product, brand, a service, an event, or any paid communication designed to inform or influence the public. It is a means of communication that aims to attract interest, engagement, and sales. Advertisements[2] are a way of reaching the target users by creating an engaging advertisement and spending enough money on that. Advertisements can have an immediate impact on business through improved trade or boosted brand recognition and others. Advertisements take many forms including print

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[1] https://squareup.com/au/en/the-bottom-line/reaching-customers/what-is-an-advertisement#:~:text=An%20advertisement%2C%20otherwise%20known%20as,designed%20to%20inform%20or%20influence.

[2] https://www.adjust.com/glossary/advertisement/

advertisements, broadcast advertisements, digital advertisements, billboards, posters, advertisements on buses, taxis, and trains, direct mail advertisements, sponsored advertisements on social media and YouTube. Some advertisements are placed within movies, TV shows, or video games. They can be in the form of text, banners, digital advertisements, push notifications or video.

Advertisements have three primary purposes[3]: to inform, to persuade, and to remind. Informative advertisements create awareness of products, brands, services, and ideas. They announce new products and programs and can educate the public about the benefits and attributes of a particular product. Persuasive advertisements seek to convince consumers that a particular product or service is superior, aiming to shape perceptions and enhance the brand's image. Their primary goal is to influence purchasing decisions, whether by encouraging customers to switch brands, try a new product, or maintain loyalty to an existing brand. Reminder advertisements remind people of the need for a product or service, or the benefits they will get when they purchase right away.

According to Goddard (2002), Cook (2001), Freeborn, French and Langford (1993), Hodges and Whitten (1982), and Brook (1977, Al-Jarf (2006) and Al-Jarf (1998), the language of advertisements is characterized by certain syntactic, lexical and rhetorical features. Advertisements consist of several paragraphs marked by indentation. Sometimes a paragraph consists of two or three words. They use a deviant method of punctuation and paragraphing that is not commonly used. They can be corrected by adding some deleted words or changing the punctuation marks. Sentences in advertisements are marked with capitals and full stops and are sometimes incomplete. Sometimes the advertisement, as a whole, may consist of a single long sentence or a single complex clause. Advertisements are economically worded. Economy is achieved through ellipsis and sentence fragments (*Simply the best*) which allow the writer to avoid repetition, short sentences and fragments, and imperative sentences (*Buy now*! or *Try it today*!).

Lexically, advertisements are characterized by choosing catchy and simple, short words that are easy-to-pronounce and remember in many languages, neologisms and coinages (e.g., Google it) and positive and persuasive language (e.g.: *best, new, exclusive, and limited time*). They use long words to create a sense of luxury and sophistication, use inflated language to elevate ordinary products, making them appear more exclusive. Advertisements may describe product attributes that are either commonplace or potentially disadvantageous, presenting them in a way that makes them look appealing. They reinforce their message through lexical repetition, use vogue words as '*top*' and '*smart*' to highlight desirability. Furthermore, advertisements often introduce newly coined terms (*snackable content, plantfluencer, athleisure)* to establish unique branding, identity and enhance memorability.

To engage consumers, advertisers use rhetorical devices including figurative and rhythmic language as alliteration (*Silky Smooth Skin*); hyperbole (*The world's best coffee*); metaphors and similes (*Your skin, as soft as silk*); puns and wordplay (*Time to ketchup*! for a condiment advertisement), metonymy, euphemism and connotation to shape perception and evoke emotions. Direct audience engagement includes the use the second-person pronoun "*you*"; questions (*Looking for the perfect gift*?); and repetition (*Fresh. Fast. Flavorful*). They are creative and bend grammatical rules to make slogans more striking. They invent new phrases or use unconventional sentence structures.

Due to the role of advertisements in people's daily life, they have been the subject of research in numerous disciplines including communication and media studies, marketing and consumer behavior, technology and AI in advertising, psychology and neuroscience, business and economics, sociology and cultural studies, in addition to language teaching and learning.

In language teaching and learning, advertisements are used as a practice material and for practicing a variety of skills as listening, reading, writing vocabulary, culture, critical thinking, discourse analysis, and identifying features as reiteration and emphasis. A review of the literature revealed a plethora of studies on advertisements such as the use of commercial advertisement to teach English for specific purpose to university students (Utami, Tyas, & Mustika, (2019); the role and use of advertisements in the English classroom (Godavarthy, 2014; Arora, & Kaushik, 2023); learning English from online advertisements using an electronic portfolio project (Liu, 2011); advertisement content and language learning (Sa-ngiamwibool, 2012); advertisements as authentic materials in business English classes (Lazović, 2017); using advertisements as an authentic material in the ESL classroom (Dharanya & Saravanan, 2018); and advertisements as resource in the foreign language classroom (Deutsch, 1984).

Another group of studies explored the use of advertisement on social media to enrich students' vocabulary (Adinda, Wibowo & Zarkasih, 2021); how the language of YouTube commercial videos enriches students' multicultural vocabulary knowledge through (Zubaidi, Maulidiyah, Suharto & Putri, 2024); the effect of TV advertisements on Iranian EFL learners' vocabulary acquisition and listening comprehension (Fathiyousefabad, & Farnoudkia, 2020); the effect of TV commercials on Iranian EFL learners' L2 vocabulary recall (Rasouli & Shoari, 2015); the use of advertisement in English language teaching to increase listening comprehension skill at Junior High School 3 in Bontomarannu, South Sulawesi, Indonesia (Al Fiana, Ampa, & UlHaq, 2022); the use of advertisements for teaching vocabulary at SMA LPP UMI private high school in Makassar, Indonesia (Permatasari, Kaharuddin & Sulaiman, 2022); teaching vocabulary through advertisement to 11th grade students at a vocational high school in Banten, Indonesia (Hadi, Izzah &

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[3] https://courses.lumenlearning.com/clinton-marketing/chapter/reading-advertising/#:~:text=The%20Purpose%20of%20Advertising,of%20new%20or%20established%20products.

Larasati, 2021); insights into teaching reading using advertisement (Jesudas, & Mohammed, 2024); magazine advertisements and logic in the ESL classroom (Sandsberry, 1979); teaching students how to analyze the impact of advertising media messages in the EFL classroom in Russia (Mikhaleva, 2019); advertisement, critical thinking and ESP Writing in China (Tso, 2009); advertisements in a basic skills writing class at the Community College of Southern Nevada, USA (Brickman, 1992); advertising and discourse analysis in Portugal (Freitas, 2013); the use of meta-discourse markers in achieving persuasion in short advertisements written by ESP students in Serbia (Vesić Pavlović, & Đorđević, 2024); the impact of reiteration in advertisements on consumers' attitudes in Algeria (Bedjadj, & Mekhloufi, 2016); relevance-coherence in advertisements in the EFL classroom in Spain (Martínez, 2007); and EFL college students' ability to identify lexical and syntactic features of advertisements in Saudi Arabia (Al-Jarf, 2006).

Further studies investigated the social and cultural aspects of advertisements as the effect of using advertisements on pragmatic skill development among EFL learners at the Northern Border University in Arar, Saudi Arabia (Alenazi, 2022); socially-based learning using advertisements in the ESL classroom at a Japanese senior high school and a Japanese university (Williams, & Rates, 2006); television advertisements as a window on culture in teaching English as a second language in Turkey (Bieberly, 2013); and verbal and non-verbal signs representing feminism in an English language advertisement in an ESL setting at Universitas Mahasaraswati, Bali, Indonesia (Pratiwi, Sulatra, & Rahayu, 2021).

Regarding emphasis as a rhetorical feature in advertisements, few studies in the literature examined emphasis strategies in advertisements in Moldova (Petrea, 2022); how different speech emphasis strategies in commercials affect listeners' cognitive processing, memory retention, and emotional response using physiological measurements and how varying levels of emphasis (from no emphasis to over-emphasis) impact advertisement effectiveness (Rodero, & Potter, 2021); language means to express the communicative tactic of "emphasis shifting" in advertisement discourse (Izmalkova, 2019); and how advertisment slogans are adapted linguistically and culturally when translated into different languages, using the Skopos theory as a framework for effective translation strategies (Rumšienė, & Rumšas, 2014).

ESL students' ability to identify emphasis in advertisements has not been the focus of any studies in the literature. Therefore, this study seeks to investigate Saudi EFL college students' ability to comprehend and identify the emphatic features of print advertisements and to find out the emphatic features that are easy to identify, and those that are difficult to identify; to explore the causes of advertisement comprehension problems and to give recommendations for instructional techniques that would help enhance the students' ability to comprehend and identify emphatic structures.

Since ESL students at the College of languages and Translation (COLT), King Saud University, Riyadh, Saudi Arabia are trained to become translators and interpreters, they take a Stylistics course in which they are introduced to the different types of genres as advertisement, newspaper, legal, scientific, business, medical and Islamic, their lexical, syntactic and rhetorical features before they move on to the specialized translation courses in the subsequent semesters in which they practice translating advertisements and other types of genres from English to Arabic and Arabic to English. The ability to perform a discourse analysis of any genre, analyzing its lexical, syntactic and rhetorical features before embarking on translating it, is of ultimate importance for conveying the meaning correctly and accurately, especially in the translation of advertisements.

Additionally, results of this study will shed light on the difficulties that translation students have in identifying the linguistic features of advertisements, with a focus on emphatic features, in order to be able to convey the meanings and linguistic features from English to Arabic.

2. Definition of Terms

Advertisements make frequent use of emphasis. In linguistics, emphasis refers to techniques used to highlight, reinforce, or give prominence to certain elements in speech or writing. It plays a crucial role in communication, persuasion, and stylistic expression. According to Brook (1977); Hodges and Whitten (1982); Freeborn, French, and Langford (1993); Al-Jarf (1998) and Al-Jarf (2006), ideas can be emphasized in the following ways:

- By placing important words at the beginning or at the end of the sentence.
  - *At the beginning: Desperate*, she searched every corner for the missing key; *Victory*, at last, was theirs after years of struggle; *Angry*, he stormed out of the room without a word.
  - *At the end: She searched every corner for the missing key, desperate; After years of struggle, the victory was finally theirs; He stormed out of the room without a word, angry.*
- An emphatic ending can come before a colon and a dash:
  - Before a colon: *She had only one goal in mind: victory; There's something I must tell you: I'm leaving; His greatest fear was about to come true: failure.*
  - Before a dash: *He had finally achieved his lifelong dream—success .There was only one possible outcome—disaster. She opened the letter and gasped—she had won.*

Because the semicolon—sometimes referred to as a weak period—serves as a strong punctuation mark when linking main clauses, the words placed before and after it hold significant position.

- o *Determined, she refused to give up; triumphant, she finally reached her goal.*
- By changing loose sentences to periodic ones. In loose sentences, the main idea comes first; less important ideas or details follow. In a periodic sentence, the main idea comes last, just before the period. For Example:
  - o *After shopping at the mall, walking the dogs, and washing the car, I finally got to stay in and relax.*
  - o *Because of adding a pool, spa, and restaurant, the hotel is experiencing an increase in guests.*
- By arranging ideas in the order of climax, i.e., presenting them in ascending importance or intensity with the strongest idea last as in:
  - o *Before buying the house, inspect the paint for chipping, the carpet for wear, the plumbing for rusty water, the roof for leaks, and the foundation for cracks.*

  In Anticlimax, sequence builds up to an expected climax but then ends in a disappointing or trivial conclusion. It can be used for humor, irony, or to subvert expectations.

  Anticlimax - an unexpected shift from the serious to the comic or the dignified to the trivial. It is sometimes used for special effect.

  - o *He was a brave, fearless warrior, respected by all—until he tripped over his own sword (literary).*
  - o *After years of research, countless sleepless nights, and millions of dollars spent, scientists finally discovered … that water is wet (humorous example).*
  - o *Monty Python and the Holy Grail ends with King Arthur being arrested by modern-day police, abruptly cutting off the medieval adventure (movie example).*
  - o *I trained for months, followed a strict diet, and sacrificed my weekends—only to come in last place (everyday example).*
- By repeating important words:
  - o *Hope brings light in the darkest moments. Hope brings strength in times of despair. Hope brings healing to wounded souls (Anaphora - Repetition at the Beginning).*
  - o *We will fight for justice. We will stand for justice. We will never stop seeking justice (Epistrophe - Repetition at the End).*
  - o Believe in yourself, because if you don't, no one else will believe in yourself (Epanalepsis - Repetition at the Beginning and End).
- By using active voice instead of passive voice.
  - o *The average shopper is paying little attention to cheap, nutritious foods.*
- By putting a word or phrase out of its usual order.
  - o *Basic to all achievement was freedom.*
- By using balanced sentence structure, i.e., when grammatically equal structures are used to express contrasted or similar ideas. It emphasizes the similarity or contrast between parts of equal length and movement.
  - o *To be French is to be like no one else; to be American is to be like everyone else.*
- By abruptly changing sentence length.
  - o *The storm raged on, tearing through the city with relentless force, uprooting trees, shattering windows, and flooding streets in a chaotic display of nature's fury. Then silence.*
- Use of emphatic appositive: *I, myself, will follow up that matter; you yourself are responsible for the problem.*
- Use of exclamation*: what a time we've had today!*
- Use of extraposition: *Breathless I was when I ran away from the stray dog; a good rest is what you need most; it's a nuisance that the banks are closed on Saturday.*
- Use of cleft structures: *it was john who discovered the best solution; it was last year that she won the contest; it is the noise and the traffic jams that I was complaining about; it is a good diet what you need to recover; it was because he was ill that we decided to come back.*
- Use of pseudo-cleft structures: *what I need is a break; what they bought was a new house; what I hate is washing dishes;* what you need most is a good rest.
- Use of emphatic auxiliary: *He really did sell his house; Do please sit down.*
- Use of intensifiers or emotionally charged words to heighten meaning as:
  - o Adverbs: *Very, extremely, absolutely, actually, indeed, definitely, clearly, certainly, really, obviously, surely.*
  - o Adjectives: *a certain winner; a drastic mistake; she is so pretty; to keep good time is what I expect from my clocks.*
  - o Emotionally charged words: *Thrilling, electrifying, breathtaking, empowering, heartwarming, visionary.*

- Morphological Emphasis, i.e., altering word forms, such as affixation (e.g., *superhappy*) or elongation (*soooo good!*).
- Graphological Emphasis In written language as in using capitalization, italics, bold text, or punctuation (*WOW! This is amazing!).*

3. Methodology
3.1 Participants
A sample of 60 EFL female college students majoring in English-Arabic translation at the College of Languages and Translation (COLT), King Saud University, Riyadh, Saudi Arabia participated in the study. They completed 4 semesters of an English language course (4 listening, 4 speaking, 4 reading, 4 writing, 3 grammar and 2 vocabulary building courses). All the participants were in their fifth semester of the translation program and were enrolled in a Stylistics course that the author taught. Emphasis was one of the stylistic features of connected discourse taught in the course. The students were concurrently taking Semantics (3 hours), Text Typology (2 hours), Linguistics (3 hours), Contrastive Analysis (2 hours), in addition to Medical and Physical Science translation courses (2 hours each).

In semesters 6-10 of the translation program, the students are required to read and translate texts in a variety of specialized translation courses that include medicine, science, engineering, oil industry, education, Islamic studies, agriculture, law, sociology, political sciences, mass media, literature, computer science, business, military, and public safety. To be able to fully comprehend and translate specialized texts in the aforementioned areas of specialty, the students must be able to apply advanced reading skills, perform a discourse analysis of the text and synthesize meaning from the different sources in it. Identifying and understanding the lexical, syntactic and rhetorical features of a text, especially emphatic structures, are important factors in comprehending the English source text and transferring its meaning to Arabic.

3.2 In-class Instruction
The students received direct instruction in the emphatic features of discourse, in general, and in print advertisements, in particular. Each feature, mentioned above, was explained and illustrated by examples using a smart board. For practice, the students identified emphatic structures in expository texts, followed by advertisements in class with the help of the instructor. They also took a quiz that required them to identify lexical and syntactic feature of an advertisement about a garlic supplement.

3.3 Tasks
At the end of the semester, the students were given a test that consisted of a print Mazda car advertisement taken from Reader's Digest magazine (See Image 1). The Mazda advertisement draws an analogy between Mozart's emotional depth in composing music and Mazda's pursuit of innovation in car design. Emphatic structures, such as parallelism and contrast (love/hate, joy/sadness), impactful punctuation (dashes and colons), and bold statements (Mazda SINCE 1920), highlight passion and craftsmanship. The rhythmic sentence structure mirrors musical flow, emphasizing creativity. The repetition of "dream" connects human ambition with Mazda's vision. This interplay of language and emotion highlights Mazda's dedication to artistry in car manufacturing.

The Mazda advertisement contains 18 ways for emphasizing ideas in a compact, short text. The students were asked to identify at least six ways used to emphasize ideas in the Mazda car advertisement and give two examples to illustrate each feature they identif.

Image 1: Advertisement Used in the Test

What more did Mozart have when he wrote his requiem? He was a man like no other. Filled with love and hate, joy and sadness, beauty and violence - yet inside him there was something else. He dreamt of a new and beautiful music-born of many emotions. The creation of a car is also the realization of a dream. Its many parts coming together to create a balance between aesthetics and technology, courage and wisdom. It is a dream shared by 29,000 people: The people that work for Mazda

SINCE 1920
On the road to civilization. MAZDA

3.4 Scoring the Responses

The students' written responses were marked by the author. To be marked as correct, each emphatic feature had to be associated with correct examples from the Mazda advertisement. Features which were not associated with an example or were associated with a faulty example were not counted. Percentages of students who were able to correctly identify each emphatic feature were then calculated.

To determine the reliability of the students' test scores, the Kuder-Richardson 21 formula was applied, which estimates the internal consistency of test items. The resulting reliability coefficient was 0.81. Additionally, inter-rater reliability was assessed by having a colleague, who taught the Stylistics course, mark a sample of students' answers to the Mazda advertisement test. The marked responses from both raters were then compared. The inter-rater reliability was found to be 96%. Discrepancies were resolved through discussion.

4. Results

Results of the error data analysis are presented in Table 1. Based on the students' responses, the 18 emphatic features in the Mazda advertisement are rank-ordered according to their difficulty level. The percentage of correct responses reflects how easy an emphatic feature is, whereas the percentage of faulty responses reflects how difficult an emphatic feature is. As seen in Table 1, students in the current study performed moderately well on three emphatic structures: *balanced sentence structure* (53%), *repeating key words* (52%), and *arranging of ideas in order of climax, i.e. order of importance with the strongest idea last* (45%) as about half of the students were able to identify these three features, suggesting that they are comfortable with structural emphasis at the sentence level. However, the other half of the students in the sample had difficulty identifying those three features.

Secondly, Table 1 shows that about one third of the students identified 5 emphatic structures in the Mazda advertisement, compared to two thirds of the students who found those particular emphatic structures challenging: *The use* of *active voice* (33%), *abrupt changes in sentence length* (33%) which emphasizes rhythm and contrast, *placing important words at the end* (32%), *periodic sentences* (30%) and *use of emphatic words after a colon or dash* (30%). In these emphatic structures, the students had difficulty distinguishing the impact of active versus passive constructions. They struggled with how shifts in sentence structure and how syntactic manipulation rather than direct word choice affect emphasis. The students might have focused more on meaning, while reading the Mazda advertisement, rather than structural types and placement. Delayed emphasis - where the key point arrives at the end – was particularly difficult to recognize. The placement of emphatic words after a colon or dash and periodic sentence structures seem to pose the greatest challenge, with about 70% faulty response rate.

Thirdly, Table 1 demonstrates that a quarter of the students could correctly identify the Mazda advertisement emphatic features as *use of emphatic words* (25%) and *putting a word or phrase out of its usual order* (23%), suggesting that the students can recognize emphasis at the word level. However, their performance on the emphatic features "*placing important words at the beginning*" (20%) was slightly lower, reinforcing the challenge they face with emphasis through sentence structure. These findings also illustrate that while some students grasped these emphasis techniques, the majority still struggled with them. They probably struggled with the contextual interpretation within the Mazda advertisement and its poetic structure which made emphasis harder to spot.

Fourth, results in Table 1 reveal that a high percentage of students struggled with emphatic features such as *questions* (97%), *changing sentence type* (98%), and *exclamatory sentences* (98%), indicating a great difficulty in identifying emphatic shifts through syntactic variation. The lowest percentages of students (under 10%) who could identify emphatic structures correctly were in "*fronting*" (3%), "*intensifiers*" (7%), and "*placing important words at the beginning*" (7%), which suggest that the students had great difficulty recognizing emphasis that depends on word placement rather than explicit grammatical markers.

Table 1: % of Students Who Could Identify Each Emphatic Feature in Order of Difficulty

Emphatic Features	% of Correct Responses	% of Faulty Responses
balanced sentence structure	53%	47%
repeating key words	52%	48%
arranging of ideas in order of climax, i.e. order of importance with the strongest idea last	45%	55%
Using active voice	33%	67%
Changing sentence length abruptly	33%	67%

Placing important words at the end of the sentence	32%	68%
Using periodic sentences	30%	70%
Placing emphatic words after a colon or dash	30%	70%
Use of emphatic words	25%	75%
Putting a word or phrase out of its usual order	23%	77%
Placing important words at the beginning	20%	80%
Identifying intensifiers	7%	93%
Using anticipatory it (preparatory It)	7%	93%
Use of Questions	5%	95%
Use of Adjectives	3%	97%
Fronting (extraposition)	3%	97%
Changing sentence type	3%	97%
Use of Exclamatory Sentences	2%	98%

5. Discussion

5.1 Why Students Struggled with emphatic Structures in the Mazda Advertisement
ESL students at COLT were given a test that consisted of a Mazda car advertisement and were asked to identify the emphatic structures in it. The emphatic structures in the advertisement proved to be difficult for the students to recognize, because the advertisement draws an analogy between Mozart's musical genius and the Mazda car-making philosophy, emphasizing how both creations are driven by emotion, vision, and craftsmanship. The advertisement employs a variety of emphatic structures such as rhetorical questions, contrast, fragmentation, periodic sentences, fronting, and repetition to reinforce the poetic, persuasive tone of the advertisement. The Mazda advertisement does not just inform, rather it immerses the reader in an emotional experience through syntactic and lexical emphasis.

Percentages of correctly and incorrectly identified emphatic structures reflect the difficulty level of the different emphatic features in the Mazda advertisement. Incorrect responses reveal inadequate application skills and students' inability to apply the emphatic features they have studied to the Mazda advertisement on the test. Inability to identify the emphatic features might be due to the interaction between inadequate linguistic competence, faulty study skills, and inefficient strategies in determining the emphatic features of the advertisement. Some students just memorized all of the emphatic features of advertisements that they had studied and wrote them all on the test paper in the order in which they were presented in class and in the course material, whether all of those emphatic features exist the Mazda advertisement or not, and without giving or connecting them with examples from the advertisement.

Moreover, incorrect responses demonstrate inadequate situational, cultural and world knowledge. The students seem to be unfamiliar with car advertisements and Mozart and his music, especially Requiem. They probably could not identify or comprehend the Mazda advertisement theme and could not interpret the analogy between Mozart music and the Mazda car manufacturing philosophy. It seems that the students' difficulties with emphatic structures, in the Mazda advertisement, stem from linguistic complexity, rhetorical abstraction, and cross-cultural differences for several reasons. The advertisement's highly stylized and emotional tone made it harder for students to separate rhetorical emphasis from general meaning. Instead of focusing on emphatic structures, the students were probably more engaged in understanding the content, i.e., the analogy between Mozart's music and the Mazda car, making them less attentive to emphatic structures.

The advertisement employs syntactic, lexical, and structural emphasis in ways that are not immediately obvious to the students as ESL learners. It integrates multiple emphatic techniques simultaneously, which may have overwhelmed the students and constituted a cognitive load. Techniques such as periodic sentence structure, abrupt sentence length changes, fronting, and rhetorical questions require nuanced recognition. Since students were primarily trained in mechanical grammar exercises in their grammar courses, they could not figure out how emphasis operates dynamically in real-world and genre-specific texts.

Despite taking three grammar courses, four writing and four reading courses, students in the current study had not actively practiced writing or reading genres such as advertisements, news headlines, or legal documents. Reading, writing and grammar exercises may not have trained them to identify emphasis in natural, genre-specific texts because coursework focused on general grammatical rules rather than genre-specific syntactic variations, making it harder for the students to recognize emphatic structures when applied to advertising rhetoric.

Many students may have anticipated the advertisement to be direct and product-focused, rather than poetic and philosophical. The Mazda advertisement disrupts conventional expectations by drawing an analogy between Mozart's artistry in music and Mazda's engineering philosophy, using abstract and emotive phrasing rather than explicit product descriptions. This made it challenging for students, as L2 learners, to distinguish one emphatic technique from another.

Most likely, the students focused on content over structure, i.e., they concentrated on decoding the poetic message rather than analyzing how structural elements shape emphasis. If the students are accustomed to direct, functional English rather than poetic and abstract expression, they would have overlooked the dramatic structuring of the advertisement.

5.2 Comparison with Prior Studies on Other Genres

Findings of the current study are consistent with prior studies conducted by the author with other groups of translation students semester 5 at COLT, in which the students were tested to find out if they could identify the lexical and syntactic features of legal texts, news headlines, news stories and another type of advertisement. In Al-Jarf (2023a) and Al-Jarf (2023b), students at COLT had difficulties identifying legal verbs (69%); prefixing and suffixing of prepositions (63%;) prepositional/adverbial phrases (57%); long complex sentences (52%); coordination of synonyms (doublets) (52%); statements (22%); no adjectives (10%); few pronouns (8%); use of technical vocabulary and emphatic auxiliaries (7% each); use of passive structures, relative clauses and other syntactic features. In news headlines, 45% of the errors were syntactic. In 34% of the errors, the subjects failed to match the feature with an example, confused news headline features or did not provide examples (Al-Jarf, 2021a). In processing another type of advertisements on a garlic supplement with no analogies and no poetic structure, more students failed to identify syntactic features as the use of parallel structure (20%), complex sentences (56%), long sentences (76%), ellipsis (74%), balanced sentence structure (91%), incomplete sentences (92.5%), emphasis (92.5%), pronouns (95.5%), and extraposition (95.5%) (Al-Jarf, 2007). Regarding, the students' ability to identify four types of cohesive ties in a reading text, the most difficult ties to process were substitution, reference, ellipsis, then conjunction in that order. Cohesion errors were caused by poor linguistic competence, especially poor syntactic and semantic awareness, and inaccurate or poor knowledge of cohesion rules (Al-Jarf, 2001).

In all of the above studies, syntactic complexity in the different genres seems to be the students' main obstacle. Both news headlines and legal documents have rigid structures that rely heavily on word order, omission, or inversion, making them syntactically distinct from everyday language. In news headlines, students may have struggled with elliptical constructions (verbs and articles omitted for brevity), noun-heavy phrasing (instead of full sentences), and Inversion. In legal documents, challenges included lengthy, embedded clauses (complex sentence structures), formal word order (where reordering might change legal interpretation) and passive constructions (to maintain neutrality). Even in the garlic supplement advertisement, the students had more difficulties in processing syntactic than lexical features. In the current study, students' awareness of emphatic structures in the Mazda advertisement is low, especially in the case of arranging sentences for impact. The identification of syntactic and rhetorical features seems to be more far-reaching, because the students were not familiar with the text topic.

Since the students have already taken three grammar courses in the first 4 semesters of the program, their difficulty with syntactic emphasis is not due to lack of grammatical knowledge but to how grammar functions stylistically across different genres. Grammar courses typically focus on rules and correctness, while stylistics explores how grammatical structures create emphasis, persuasion, and rhetorical effects, which is a different cognitive skill. When the students learn grammar through standard sentence construction, they might not get enough practice seeing grammatical structures in real-world contexts where emphasis operates differently. They might understand grammar in isolation, but they might lack genre-based syntactic awareness. As a result, they struggle to recognize how different genres manipulate syntax to create a special impact. The challenge is more about shifting from correctness-focused grammar to stylistic grammar. For example, news headlines omit words intentionally (*Fire Destroys Factory"* *instead of "A fire has destroyed a factory*), legal texts use long, structured clauses to ensure precision (*The party to the contract agrees that*...), and advertisements use fragmentation and repetition for emotional appeal (*Power. Speed. Perfection. This is Mazda*).

6. Recommendations

Advertisement comprehension is a developmental process that should be systematically incorporated into COLT's reading, writing and grammar courses. Since students in the translation program will eventually be required to translate advertisements between English and Arabic, building foundational stylistic awareness at an early stage will prepare the students for advanced translation tasks when they take the media translation course. By engaging students with advertisements as part of their coursework, they can gradually develop the ability to identify emphatic structures and analyze how different rhetorical features shape meaning.

Effective emphasis instruction in the EFL context should follow a structured, graded approach consisting of four stages: Sensitization, synthesis, analysis, and transfer. In the *sensitization* stage, students compare two versions of the same text—one unemphatic and one emphatic—to develop an awareness of emphasis. Moving to the *synthesis* stage, the students practice transforming unemphatic sentences into emphatic ones, starting with short, simple sentences and gradually working toward more complex stretches of discourse. The *analysis* stage then introduces short texts where students identify emphatic structures before progressing to advertisements. In the final *transfer* stage, students analyze and compare advertisements for the same product in English and Arabic, reinforcing their understanding of cross-linguistic rhetorical strategies (Al-Jarf, 2013) and Al-Jarf, 2023)**.**

For deeper engagement in reading comprehension and stylistic analysis, students can benefit from multimodal teaching approaches that integrate reading, writing, vocabulary, and grammar skills. Print and digital advertisements can be incorporated into task-based and project-based learning activities, debates, and online discussions. Using technology tools such as blogs, online discussion forums, Padlet, videoconferencing and social media platforms will enable the students to discuss, interact, engage in and collaborate with their classmates in understanding and analyzing the advertising content, and strengthening their analytical and interpretative abilities (Al-Jarf, 2024b).

In addition to structured instruction, collaborative learning environments can foster active engagement with advertising rhetoric. Students can work individually, in pairs, or small groups, both synchronously and asynchronously, to analyze advertisements and exchange insights through the use of platforms like WhatsApp, ConnectYard, online community forums and social media platforms.

In the reading courses, the students practice reading and comprehending genre-specific texts that target the types of texts the students will be translating in their specialized courses in the subsequent semesters as media, legal, literary, business medical, Islamic texts and so on. Structured exposure to a variety of advertisements and exposure to emphatic syntax in stylistic contexts enables the students to build reading comprehension skills, understand the meanings of new words from context, encounter a variety of syntactic structures, and emphatic, lexical and rhetorical features, apply semantic and syntactic clues and recognize the text macro- and micro-structures of the reading text (Al-Jarf, 2013).

Collecting, reading and analyzing linguistic landscapes in the environments can further enhance students' awareness of lexical, syntactic, and emphatic structures in advertisements. Linguistic landscapes, such as advertisements, billboards, and signage, combine textual and visual elements to create emphasis. Analyzing how language interacts with imagery in public spaces can train students to recognize how punctuation, sentence structure, and word placement function in the Mazda advertisement. Linguistic landscapes often use unexpected phrasing or unconventional syntax to grab attention. This mirrors how advertisements use emphatic structures to highlight key messages (Al-Jarf, 2021c; Al-Jarf, 2024a)..

Moreover, reading and analyzing inspirational quotes will help the students understand imagery and figures of speech, use contextual clues to infer the meaning of specific vocabulary, and develop reading appreciation skills. Inspirational quotes often use brevity, placing emphatic words at the beginning or end to maximize impact. Recognizing this in quotes helps students identify similar techniques in advertisements. Quotes frequently employ parallelism, repetition, and punctuation (like dashes or colons) to highlight key ideas—just like advertisements. Analyzing these elements makes students more attuned to emphasis in different contexts (Al-Jarf, 2021b).

Reading fiction from mobile apps can significantly improve students' ability to recognize emphatic structures in advertisements. Fictional narratives often use a mix of sentence lengths, punctuation styles, and structural emphasis. This exposure helps ESL students become more familiar with how writers emphasize ideas. Fiction teaches students to infer meaning from context. Recognizing emphasis in dialogue or dramatic situations helps students identify similar techniques in advertising. The students will develop sensitivity to tone and voice. By analyzing how tone is crafted in fiction, students can better understand how advertisers use emphasis to persuade consumers. Fiction often employs rhetorical techniques like repetition or parallel structures, which are common in advertisements. Regular reading increases comprehension speed, making it easier for students to recognize emphatic cues without struggling with basic sentence processing (Al-Jarf, 2022a; Al-Jarf, 2022a).

Integrating grammar and writing practice together can significantly enhance ESL students' ability to recognize how emphatic features—like punctuation, word order, and syntactic variation—shape meaning. If students engage in writing exercises that focus on emphatic strategies, they will develop a much keener eye for emphasis in both advertisements and other forms of media. By composing sentences with emphasis as repetition, contrast, or word placement, they will internalize these techniques. When students practice persuasive writing, they will gain first-hand experience with techniques like parallelism, sentence variation, and punctuation that are all essential for emphasis. Strong grammar skills enable students to break down complex sentences more

effectively. Writing enhances analytical skills. When students draft texts using emphasis, they become more able to spot similar structures in advertisements (Al-Jarf, 2005).

By incorporating graded emphasis instruction, multimodal learning strategies, and interactive technology, COLT can ensure that students develop a strong foundation in advertisement comprehension before moving on into their specialized translation courses. This phased approach will enable students to apply their stylistic knowledge effectively when translating advertisements between English and Arabic.

Finally, translation students' ability to process the lexical, syntactic and rhetorical features of other types of genres - Islamic, medical, engineering, scientific, military, educational and literary, are still open for further investigation by researchers in the future.

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