

Research Article

THE FREQUENCY OF THE CONCEPTS “UP” AND “DOWN” IN ENGLISH ADVERTISING: A COGNITIVE LINGUISTICS PERSPECTIVE

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ABSTRACT

Research on metaphors has found that the concepts UP and DOWN are metaphorically structured. This theoretical finding can be tested in advertising, by comparing the frequency of use of both concepts in order to determine whether that frequency coheres with the finding in theory. On the basis of Conceptual Metaphor Theory (CMT), the study investigates the relationship between the metaphorical meaning of UP / DOWN and their frequency of use in advertising. It is based on a corpus of forty-nine internet advertisements from which UP / DOWN are retrieved and counted to determine the percentage of each concept. The results show that the concept UP is more frequent than the concept DOWN. This unequal frequency is coherent with their metaphorical meanings known in theory.

Keywords: Advertising, consumers, down, frequency, meaning, metaphor, up.

INTRODUCTION

Since the publication of Lakoff and Johnson's seminal book *Metaphors We Live By* in 1980, researchers have shown increasing interest in the use of metaphors in advertising. Among the categories identified by Lakoff and Johnson, orientational metaphors involving the use of UP and DOWN are also seen to occur in advertisements. For example, UP-DOWN metaphors occur in the following advertisements:

1. Spice up your life or beef it up¹
2. Turn up the taste not the calories²
3. Up your game³
4. Breaks down dirt and stains faster⁴
5. Cools you down by 6°⁵

The metaphors contained in these instances are MORE IS UP and LESS IS DOWN which are two main orientational metaphors identified by Lakoff and Johnson (1980). Behind the occurrence of such metaphors, there is another issue which has not been addressed sufficiently in previous studies. The issue relates to the frequency of use of UP metaphors compared with the frequency of DOWN metaphors in advertising.

Previous studies have outlined the metaphorical meanings of UP and DOWN on the basis of the work done by Lakoff and Johnson (1980). Hence, the meaning of UP is linked to positivity while DOWN equates with negativity. As summarized by Kövecses (2010:40), “*upward orientation tends to go together with positive evaluation, while downward orientation with a negative one.*” Given the metaphorical meanings associated with UP and DOWN in theory, and also given the purposes of commercial advertising, it is interesting to investigate the impact of such meanings on the frequency of use of these items and determine whether their frequency complies with the purposes of advertising. The interest of conducting such a study is to test the theoretical meanings associated with UP and DOWN by comparing their frequency in the specific genre of advertising.

The main questions that need to be answered by the end of this study are:

- (i) Do the metaphorical meanings associated with UP and DOWN cohere with their frequency of use in advertising?
- (ii) What is advertising and what are its main characteristics?
- (iii) What is the frequency of use of UP and DOWN in advertising?
- (iv) Is there a link between the frequency of UP and DOWN in advertising and their metaphorical meaning?

Based on the above questions, the general objective of the study is to show that the frequency of use of UP and DOWN in advertising is coherent with their metaphorical meaning defined in theory. Concretely, the study seeks to reach the following subsidiary objectives namely,

- (i) To define advertising and describe its main characteristics.
- (ii) To describe the frequency of use of UP and DOWN in advertising.
- (iii) To show the link between the frequency of UP and DOWN in advertising and their metaphorical meaning.

The study comprises three main parts. The first part outlines the theoretical and methodological frameworks. The second part focuses

¹Advertisement released by McDonald's in 2011 on <https://mealsdeals.blogspot.com/2011/01/mcdonalds-rs-100-menu-limited-time.html?m=1>

²Advertisement released by Coca Cola in 2015 on <https://www.passionateinmarketing.com/coca-cola-and-grofers-tie-up-to-testsprite-zero/>

³Advertisement released by Heineken in 2017 on https://mobile.twitter.com/heineken_sa/status/839447807232733189

⁴Advertisement released by Unilever in 2022 on https://www.facebook.com/PasifikaComms/posts/5373384379358673/?paipv=0&eav=AfaeF3vOCWyqfIpuvtEhx3Jbmc_QOXJyL8ZbOjCujVsbRkUjBPJEXvNFYhmSuFDadTY&_rdr

⁵Advertisement released by Unilever in 2021 on <http://www.boyraket.com/2021/07/keepyour-chill-as-unilever-beauty-store.html>

on the characteristics of advertising and advertising language. The last part is the presentation and discussion of the results.

THEORETICAL AND METHODOLOGICAL FRAMEWORKS

Theoretical Background

The study is rooted in Conceptual Metaphor Theory (CMT), a linguistic theory developed by George Lakoff and Mark Johnson since the 1980s. CMT is a subfield of Cognitive Linguistics, a research paradigm that has been under development since the 1970s with the pioneering works of linguists such as Charles Fillmore (Fillmore 1976), George Lakoff and Mark Johnson (Lakoff and Johnson 1980, Lakoff 1987), Ronald Langacker (Langacker 1987 and 2008), Gilles Fauconnier and Mark Turner (Fauconnier 1994, Fauconnier and Turner 2002) and Leonard Talmy (Talmy 2000). Conceptual Metaphor Theory started in 1980 with the seminal book by George Lakoff and Mark Johnson entitled *Metaphors We Live By* (Lakoff and Johnson, 1980). These researchers have noticed that everyday linguistic expression is replete with metaphors that influence human thought and action. From that observation, they came to the conclusion that the human conceptual system is largely metaphorical. Metaphors organize conceptual system covertly and unconsciously and appear in language through linguistic expressions. According to Lakoff and Johnson (1980), people use metaphors in every conversation to categorize abstract entities in terms of more concrete elements of life. In other words, human beings think in terms of metaphors even if they are not always aware of doing so. Metaphor is inescapable for human thinking because it allows the structuring of abstract thought, based on concrete realities of everyday life. Hence, abstract entities can be understood and reasoned about in terms of more concrete elements. Because metaphors serve for the understanding of abstract entities in terms of concrete ones, they map concrete knowledge onto abstract knowledge. Cognitive linguists refer to the concrete knowledge as the source domain while the abstract knowledge is the target domain. This leads to the definition of metaphor as the mapping of a source domain onto a target domain, to allow the understanding of the target domain in terms of the source domain (Kövecses 2010). The mapping is a set of systematic correspondences between the source domain and the target domain. Lakoff and Johnson (1980) have shown that many metaphors occur verbally in conversation. As such, a major part of their work lays emphasis on the verbal manifestation of metaphor in conversation. However, subsequent research has shown that metaphors can also appear in other modes than verbal (Forceville 1996, 2020). In most instances, though, metaphor expression is multimodal with a combination of verbal and pictorial modes of communications.

Methodology

The study is based on a corpus of forty-nine advertisements randomly collected from the internet. These advertisements have a commercial purpose as they are meant to promote the products and services of twenty-five companies that authored the selected advertisements. Besides, they either contain the concepts UP / DOWN explicitly, or they express the ideas associated with them. From the advertisements, the data collected are the various occurrences of the two concepts. These occurrences are then counted to determine the frequency of use of each concept not only by each company but also in the overall corpus. Based on the percentage of occurrence of each item, the study highlights the most frequent concept. The results are then discussed to account for the variation in frequency, drawing on

theoretical assumptions about the metaphorical functioning of UP and DOWN. In the same process, the results are compared to the findings of previous studies.

CHARACTERISTICS OF ADVERTISING AND ADVERTISING LANGUAGE

Characteristics of Advertising

The word 'advertising' comes from the Latin word 'advertere' which means to 'draw one's attention on' (El-Dali, 2019: 96). Advertising is a professional activity that serves to communicate about a product, service, idea, event, or an organization to draw the attention of the public or to motivate it to choose that product, service, idea, event, or organization. Advertising is part of mass communication and can be commercial or institutional (El-Dali 2019). Advertisements can be categorized either from the perspective of the medium or lucrativeness. In terms of medium, there are magazine, audiovisual, billboards, prints, radio or internet advertisements (Cook 2005). On the lucrative side, advertisements can be commercial and non-commercial (Akinbode 2012). The goal of advertising is to change the behavior of the potential consumer to embrace the product, service, or idea (Barre & Gayard-Carrera, 2015). To achieve this goal, advertisements operate on the consumer at three levels: cognitive, affective, and conative. In other words, they inform consumers, arouse their desire to purchase and finally trigger action from consumers (Barre and Gayard-Carrera 2015; Décaudin and Digout 2011).

Advertising Language

Since the work of Ferdinand de Saussure (1916), *language* in linguistics refers to an ability whose manifestations are *langue* and *parole* (Langacker 1987). However, language can also refer to a specific linguistic variety of a specialized field that is subject to sociolinguistic and stylistic restrictions (Crystal 2008). In this sense, one can talk about scientific or advertising language. Advertising language is a persuasive language that makes use of Aristotle's model of persuasion, a triad composed of *logos*, *ethos*, and *pathos*. For Aristotle, these three elements are the key aspects of the art of persuasion (Aristotle, trans., 350 BC).

The *logos* aspect is the one concerned with logical, rational, and argumentative language using so-called objective elements such as figures, graphs and even percentages (Barre and Gayard-Carrera 2015). The logical character of advertising language appears in advertisements where the discourse is explanatory. In this type of advertising, the focus is on the information to be conveyed objectively and the purpose of the advertiser is to make the product known to the consumer. The *pathos* or emotional side is the ability to incite potential consumers through emotion and the focus in this case is on consumers (El-Dali 2019). To achieve this goal, advertisers often adopt a narrative discourse with an event to narrate to arouse empathy. The narrative evolves from a problematic situation to a satisfying final situation promoted by the brand (Barre and Gayard-Carrera 2015).

At last, *ethos* or ethics is the side of advertising that lays emphasis on constructing a positive image of the product or service. Ethics focuses on the brand for which it aims to create a valuable image among consumers. The advertiser sublimizes the brand through descriptive processes that allow imagination, perception or feeling. Sometimes, to achieve this goal, the advertiser resorts to metaphors with the intention to influence the consumer's perception and sensation (Barre and Gayard-Carrera 2015; Johannessen *et al.*, 2010).

RESULTS

Presentation of the Results

Out of forty-nine instances investigated, thirty-eight were found to contain the UP concept or to express the idea associated with it. The occurrences of DOWN accounts for eleven instances in the corpus. Therefore, the UP concept stands for nearly seventy-eight percent of all occurrences while DOWN represents twenty-two percent. It shows that there were more UP instances found in advertising than the instances found for DOWN concept. In other words, the concept UP is more frequent in advertising than the concept DOWN. The former is more than three times the latter. Beside these overall results, one can notice some variations among the companies as far as the use of UP / DOWN is concerned. Thus, it is observed that the concept UP is more frequently used by Coca Cola and Volkswagen with six instances found and therefore fifteen percent for each. As for the concept DOWN, there were more instances found in the advertisements of Unilever, Coles and Disney totaling eighteen percent each.

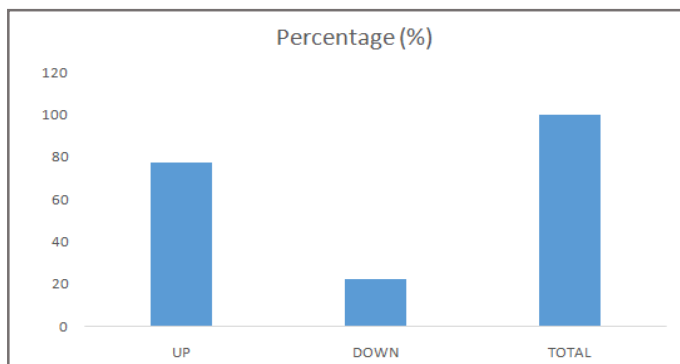


Figure 1: Frequency of UP and DOWN in Advertising

Discussion of the Results

This study investigates the link between the theoretical metaphorical meanings associated with the concepts of UP / DOWN and their frequency of use in the specific genre of advertising. This helps to test the theoretical findings related to the meanings of these concepts by comparing their frequency of use in advertising. From this test, one can assess whether the theoretical meanings of these concepts cohere with their functioning in advertisements. The results show that the use of the concept UP prevails over that of the concept DOWN. This difference of use is coherent with the theoretical metaphorical meanings associated with both concepts. Indeed, the meaning of UP is theoretically associated with positive evaluation while DOWN is linked to negative evaluation (Lakoff and Johnson 1980, Kövecses 2010, Fais, 2019). These ideas of positivity and negativity are key factors that either go along with or contradict the purpose of advertising. Because advertisers are concerned with persuading the target audience, they have to draw a positive picture of the advertised product or service. In this case, the frequent use of UP is coherent with since it participates in the expression of positivity, in advertisements. However, the use of DOWN is reduced since advertising is not concerned with the expression of negativity. Yet, the concept DOWN occurs in specific contexts where it refers to an action that consumers can perceive as being positive. For example, a positive reading of DOWN can be perceived in advertisements (4) and (5). In (4), a positive reading can be related to the action of breaking down dirt and stains faster. It shows that OMO is an efficient detergent which consumers should opt for. In (5), the idea of cooling down by 6 degree is also positive. It tells consumers that AXE is a

spray that refreshes their body by cutting high temperature. So, the use of DOWN in this case means to provide comfort to consumers. The findings of this study can be compared with those of other researchers at least as far as the frequency of UP/DOWN is concerned. In Xiaqing's study, a section is devoted to the analysis of orientational metaphors to show how this category of metaphors also illustrates human metaphorical thinking and the mental operation involved in the process of understanding advertisements (Xiaqing 2017). The study provides four instances for the concept UP which the author relates to the expression of positivity. However, there was no instance provided for the concept DOWN. The same thing can be observed in Stanković's study which is purely devoted to orientational metaphors (Stanković 2019). In this study, the author stresses the frequency of UP metaphors but DOWN metaphors have been stressed less. These studies go along with the current one insofar as they illustrate the frequency of the concept UP. However, none of those previous studies has provided an explanation to the noticed disbalance between the frequency of UP / DOWN in advertising. The current study has implications that can be set at different levels. First, it confirms the metaphorical status of UP and DOWN as stated by Lakoff and Johnson (1980). As orientational concepts, their meaning is systematic since the functioning of one has impact on and reveals the functioning of the other. Second, the study confirms that metaphor is a major that drives human thinking and action. Third, the study shows that metaphor is not an option, but something everybody faces everyday through advertising.

CONCLUSION

The purpose of this study is to show that the use of UP and DOWN in advertising is coherent with their theoretical metaphorical meanings, found by advocates of Conceptual Metaphor Theory. To reach this goal, a corpus of forty-nine advertisements were gathered from the internet. Then, the different occurrences of UP and DOWN were retrieved from these advertisements and counted. The objective is to determine the frequency of use of each concept not only by each company but also in the overall corpus. From the frequency of use, the researcher determines the percentage of occurrence of each item, and eventually, the most frequent concept. The results show that the concept UP is more frequent as it stands for more than three times the frequency of DOWN. This difference of use is coherent with the theoretical metaphorical meanings associated with both concepts. Indeed, the idea of positive evaluation associated the concept UP is responsible for its frequent use since the purpose of advertising is to draw a positive picture of the product. The concept DOWN is less frequent because it is theoretically associated with a negative evaluation that contradicts the final goal of advertising. Even when the concept DOWN occurs, it does so in contexts where it can be linked to some action that consumers perceive as being positive and not negative.

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APPENDIX 1

Table 1: List of Advertisements Containing the Concepts UP and DOWN

Nb.	ADVERTISING MESSAGE	OCCURRENCES		AUTHOR	SOURCE
		UP	DOWN		
1	Spice up your life or beef it up	2		McDONALD'S	https://mealsdeals.blogspot.com/2011/01/mcdonalds-rs-100-menu-limited-time.html?m=1
2	Turn up the taste not the calories	1		COCA COLA	https://www.passionateinmarketing.com/coca-cola-and-grofers-tie-up-to-testsprite-zero/
3	Up your game	1		HEINEKEN	https://mobile.twitter.com/heineken_sa/status/839447807232733189
4	Are your stress levels going up?!	1		McDONALD'S	https://mobile.twitter.com/mcdonaldsuae
5	It's time to up the ante	1		MERCEDES	https://www.whatsinaname.in/portfolio/5/mercedes-benz-dealer
6	Fire up your internet	1		HUAWEI	https://c.76.my/Malaysia/huawei-e5788-4g-lte-1gbps-speed-mifi-portable-hotspot-e5787-e5885-sing4g-1804-12-sing4G@2.jpg
7	Lightning uplives	1		PEPSICO	insider.pk/sponsored/no-darkness-pepsis-lightninguplives-campaign/
8	Spark up your holiday with sprite	1		COCA COLA	no3design.com/?works=sprite-holiday
9	Light up your weekend with looong chicken for just rs.290	1		BURGER KING	https://mobile.twitter.com/BurgerKingPak/status/919558825455308800
10	Morning has woken	1		NESTLÉ	https://www.behance.net/gallery/6746201/Nescafe-posters
11	We know what keeps you up. Let's talk	1		MTN	www.brandessencenigeria.com/smes-begin-enjoying-free-digital-outdooradvertising-courtesy-mtn/
12	Dress up your Nissan. Take it out	1		NISSAN	www.greemissan.com/nissan-geniune-accessories.html
13	Big up the up! -We'll big you up back	3		VOLKSWAGEN	https://jaimemclennan.wordpress.com/2012/03/05/volkswagen-up/

Nb.	ADVERTISING MESSAGE	OCCURRENCES		AUTHOR	SOURCE
		UP	DOWN		
14	This car will help you up the corporate ladder. Just drive it to work early and work really hard.	1		VOLKSWAGEN	https://www.oneclub.org/awards/theoneshow/-award/24294/volkswagen-the-carthat-takes-you-places
15	Huawei ascends into top 100	1		HUAWEI	www.mixofeverything.net/2016/12/huawei-debuts-new-concepts-storedesign.html?m=1
16	Meet up with a good friend	1		AUDI	https://www.audi.com/ci/en/guides/communication-edia/advertisements.html
17	Drink up. Grow up.	2		KEVENTER	https://www.keventer.com/marketing/marketing/press-advertisements/page/2/
18	Fed Up?	1		DHL	https://airows.com/lifestyle/40-impossibly-creative-advertisements
19	Time to change up	1		ADIDAS	https://mrkt360.com/hierarchy-how-to-attract-intrigue-deliver-a-message-with-your-ad-designs/
20	Blu it up!	1		BLU	https://tobacco.stanford.edu/cigarettes/african-americans/recent-black-ads/
21	Newport pleasure! Fire it up!	1		NEWPORT	https://tobacco.stanford.edu/cigarettes/african-americans/recent-black-ads/
22	Upside down whopper	1	1	BURGER KING	https://www.bizadmark.com/fast-food-advertising/
23	Speed up thunder car!	1		MERCEDES	https://www.applegraphicstudio.com/2021/03/car-advertising-billboard-design.html
24	New refreshingly uplifting	1		UNILEVER	https://www.creatopy.com/blog/soda-companies-ad-campaign/
25	Your back-up when backing up.	2		VOLKSWAGEN	http://polodriver.com/polo-2017/european-advertising-campaign-for-new-volkswagen-polo-begins/
26	Turn up your day	1		COCA COLA	https://brandequity.economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/marketing/ranbir-kapoor-urges-to-beat-lethargic-moments-in-coca-cola-campaign/74458822
27	Turn up the moment!	1		COCA COLA	https://www.facebook.com/maldivescocacola/posts/afternoon-slump-getting-you-down-turn-up-the-moment-with-coke-cocacolamaldives-c/540197340182956/
28	Shaking it up	1		COCA COLA	https://www.axios.com/2020/10/24/coke-coca-cola-business-stock-covid
29	Turn up your rhythm	1		COCA COLA	https://id.prosple.com/graduate-employers/coca-cola
30	Stir it up	1		POT NOODLE	https://www.ft.com/content/a0494db5-c38b-45b9-b3e6-01cab87a9e23
31	Warming up for their big moment.	1		FIVE GUYS	https://neilpatel.com/blog/food-advertisement/
32	Breaks down dirt and stains faster	1		UNILEVER	https://www.facebook.com/PasifikaComms/posts/5373384379358673/?paipv=0&eav=AfaeF3Vocw yqflpvtEhx3Jbmc_QOXJyL8ZbOjUjVsbRkUjBP JEXvNFYhmSuFDadTY&_rdr
33	Cools you down by 6°	1		UNILEVER	http://www.boyraket.com/2021/07/keepyour-chill-as-unilever-beauty-store.html
34	New double down sandwich	1		KFC	https://www.al.com/bargain-mom/2010/04/kfc_double_down_printable_coup.html
35	Help lock down fraud.	1		CONTINENTAL BANK	https://twitter.com/MY100BANK
36	Get down down to coles.com.au: save time, shop online	2		COLES	https://www.crn.com.au/news/coles-resells-windows-81-tablet-for-just-89-398190
37	Put the top down and relax.	1		WINDOWS	https://newsroom.intel.com/editorials/tech-titans-advertising-blitz/#gs.oh7r5f
38	Up down, up down, left right, left right, B A start	2	2	DISNEY	https://knowyourmeme.com/photos/23569-konami-code
39	Doesn't let you fall asleep	1		VOLKSWAGEN	https://www.adsoftheworld.com/media/print/volkswagen_golf_3
TOTAL		38	11		

APPENDIX 2

Table 1: Percentage of Occurrence of UP and DOWN per Company

Nb.	COMPANY	OCCURRENCES		PERCENTAGE	
		UP	DOWN	UP	DOWN
1	McDONALD'S	3		7.89%	
2	COCA COLA	6		15.78%	
3	HEINEKEN	1		2.63%	
4	MERCEDES	2		5.26%	
5	HUAWEI	2		5.26%	
6	PEPSICO	1		2.63%	
7	NESTLÉ	1		2.63%	
8	BURGER KING	2	1	5.26%	9%
9	MTN	1		2.63%	
10	NISSAN	1		2.63%	
11	VOLKSWAGEN	6	1	15.78%	9%
12	AUDI	1		2.63%	
13	KEVENTER	2		5.26%	
14	DHL	1		2.63%	
15	ADIDAS	1		2.63%	
16	BLU	1		2.63%	
17	NEWPORT	1		2.63%	
18	UNILEVER	1	2	2.63%	18%
19	POT NOODLE	1		2.63%	
20	FIVE GUYS	1		2.63%	
21	KFC		1		9%
22	CONTINENTAL BANK		1		9%
23	COLES		2		18%
24	WINDOWS		1		9%
25	DISNEY	2	2	5.26%	18%
TOTAL		38	11		

APPENDIX 3

Table 3: Overall percentage of UP and DOWN in the Corpus

	Number of instances found	Percentage
UP	38	77.55%
DOWN	11	22.45%
TOTAL	49	100%
