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WORD – FORMATION TYPES IN THE ENGLISH FOR MARKETING

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Abstract

The present paper deals with some linguistic phenomena specific to the language of marketing, such as: collocations, blends, contractions/clippings, acronyms and abbreviations. Firstly, the theoretical concepts are briefly presented and illustrated by examples specific to the language of marketing; then certain pedagogical implications are discussed, while the final section is devoted to suggest a variety of tasks meant to raise students' awareness of such phenomena and to improve their communication in the field of marketing and advertising.

Key-words: collocations, blends, contractions, back-formation, abbreviations, acronyms

Introduction

The aim of the present paper is to deal with the main issues related to the teaching of marketing vocabulary, the emphasis being laid on several word-formation types very frequent in this vocabulary, such as: collocations, contractions, blends, abbreviations and acronyms.

First I will approach the issues related to collocations, also called word partnerships, as from my teaching experience I have noticed that students of marketing encounter a lot of difficulties in acquiring and mastering these lexical units.

Defining collocations

The term ‘collocation’ has been defined in various ways in the specialist literature. Thus, *the Collins Cobuild Dictionary* (1987) gives the following definition:

- *collocation* – the way that some words occur regularly whenever another word is used.

In a similar way, *the Longman Advanced American Dictionary* (2002) defines a collocation as “the way in which some words are often used together”. The number of words in a collocation varies from two to seven.

The lexicographical literature provides many views and collocations are classified according to different criteria, standing proof of the fact that the concept is difficult to approach.

The origin of the term is attributed to J.R. Firth (1957) and to M.A.K. Halliday.

Collocations can be classified into grammatical and lexical collocations. For the aim of the present paper I will focus on lexical collocations alone. Structurally speaking, lexical collocations consist of nouns, adjectives, verbs, adverbs and propositions.

A classification of such collocations has been made by M. Benson et al in the *BBJ Combinatory Dictionary of English* (1986) and was taken over and refined by A. Hollinger in *A Lexical Approach to Financial and Business English* (2005) to make it more suitable for the study of collocations in Business English.

Collocation patterns

In the lines below I will try to illustrate the most common patterns of collocations to be encountered in the language of marketing:

Type 1 collocation

It is represented by *Verb + Noun/Prepositional phrase*

to build a brand/loyalty/relationship/strategy

to carry out/conduct/do research

to design/complete/fill in a questionnaire

to break into/enter/penetrate a market

to brand a product/a country

to establish/stretch/reposition/enhance a brand

to market a product/a brand

to set a goal/an objective/a price/a strategy

Type 2 collocation

This type consists of an *Adjective + Noun*

aggressive/corporate/misleading/subliminal advertising

lookalike/me-too products

fair/tough competition

durable/non-durable/perishable goods

white/brown/yellow/orange/red/green goods

Type 3 collocation

It is represented by *Noun + Noun*

consumer advertising/behaviour/goods/profile/research

market research/share/segmentation

product development/launch

brand awareness/equity/name/image/recognition/management/war

Type 4 collocation

It is represented by *Noun + Verb* (naming an action characteristic of the noun)

A competitor outbids/outsells/undercuts

Market is booming/brisk/flourishing/slack/thriving/falling/saturated/glutted/buoyant/
sluggish

Type 5 collocation

It consists of *Noun + Adjective*

cost-effective

price-conscious

reader friendly

user friendly

price-sensitive

Type 6 collocation

This type is made up of a *Link verb + Adjective*

to run/be/come short

to come expensive/cheap

to go bankrupt/global/public

to stay local

to be/lie/stand idle

Type 7 collocation

This consists of *Verb + Adverb*

to compete fiercely/keenly

to decline/drop/fall/shrink slightly/sharply/dramatically

to increase/rise/climb steeply/abruptly

Type 8 collocation

Adverb + Adjective

fiercely/keenly competitive

slightly/dramatically higher/lower/weaker

Type 9 collocation

Preposition/Adverb + Noun

above-the-line

below-the-line

through-the-line

at the bottom

at the market

down market

up market

in-depth (analysis/interview)

over-the counter

under-the-counter

in (your) face (marketing) (= aggressive marketing)

after sales (services)

out-of-home (advertising)

Type 10 collocation

Noun + Preposition + Noun

call-to-action
door-to-door (sale)
business-to-business
business-to-consumer
consumer to consumer
company-to company (marketing)
point-of-sale
point-of-purchase
face-to-face (interview)
word-of-mouth (advertising)
route-to-market
money-off-coupon
return-on-investment

Special cases

to do and *to make*

to do advertising	to make an offer
to do business	to make a bid
to do research	to make a forecast
to do shopping	to make an enquiry
to do trade	to make purchases
to do a study/survey	to make a market
	to make payment

Other Word-Formation Types

● ***Blends***

A *blend* is the outcome of the combination of parts of two or several words as to form one sense unit. According to R. Quirk (1972, 1030-1031) “blends are often conscious deliberate formations, and hence --- particularly common in commercial language”.

Examples from the English for marketing:

advertorial (<advertising + editorial)

glocalization (<globalization + localization)

infomercial (<information + commercial)

magalog (<magazine + catalog)
webzine (<web + magazine)
advergames (<advertising + games)

• **Contractions**

This linguistic phenomenon is also called *clipping* or *shortening*. Words can be contracted in the first part, this being called *apheresis* or in the last part, this being called *apocope*. The reduction of the middle part of a word is called *syncope*.

Examples of *apheresis*:

phone (from telephone), *bus* (from omnibus), *change* (from exchange), *sample* (from example).

Examples of apocope:

ad/advert (from advertisement), *demo* (from demonstration), *prospect* (from prospective customer), a (sales) *rep* (from representative), *biz* (from business), *gen y* (from generation y).

Examples of *syncope*:

fridge (from refrigerator), *mart* (from market). This type is not very common.

• **Back formation**

This is also called regressive derivation as it means the formation of a shorter form from a longer one.

Examples: to finger-print (from finger-printing)

to televise (from television)

to hawk (from hawker)

to edit (from editor)

• **Abbreviations**

Abbreviations based on the reduction of a word or group of words to initial letters is a device extremely frequent in the English for marketing and in business English in general.

In point of pronunciation, abbreviations can be divided into:

- cases when the respective initials are read as a combination of the alphabet letters, such as:

ABC (socio-economic categories)

PLC (product life cycle)

B2B (business-to-business)

B2C (business-to-consumer)

C2C (consumer-to-consumer)

POP (point of purchase)

POS (point of sale)

USP (unique selling proposition)

- cases when the group of initials is pronounced as if it formed a word

Examples: BOGOF (buy one get one free)

CAD (computer-assisted design)

STEP (analysis) (the analysis of sociological, technological economic and political factors affecting the marketing environment)

SMART (objectives) (specific, measurable, achievable, realistic and timed objectives)

- in other cases both possibilities can exist: either to pronounce the abbreviation as in the alphabet or to pronounce it as a word of its own.

Example: VAT [vi ei ti] or [v æ t]

Certain abbreviations have also plural forms:

Examples: the four As, the four Cs, the four Os, the five Ms, the VIPs

Some of the abbreviations are polysemantic and their meaning depend on the context in which they occur.

Examples: PLC may mean 'product life cycle' or 'public limited liability company'

p. a. may mean 'per annum' or 'personal assistant'.

Therefore the contextual interpretation of their meaning is of utmost importance for the correct understanding of a text.

● **Acronyms**

Acronyms are words formed from the initial letters or larger parts of words that make up a descriptive phrase or proper names. New acronyms are freely produced in the language of marketing, particularly for names of organizations, marketing phenomena, sociological groups. An acronym is similar to an abbreviation, but it is pronounced as a word.

Examples:

AIDA (from attention, interest, desire, action)

AMA (from American Marketing Association)

ACORN (A Classification of Residential Neighbourhoods)

Acronyms for various sociological groups, most of them became usual in 1980's:

yuppies (from Young Upwardly Mobile Professional Persons)

dinkies (from Double Incomes No Kids)

droppies (from Disillusioned, Relatively Ordinary Professionals Preferring Independent Employment Situations)

puppies (from Previously Upwardly Mobile Professional Persons)

There is also a relatively recent creation: NYLONS (from New York – London) – a new class of high earners who spend their time shuttling between the twin capitals of globalization. They are DJs, chefs, games designers, internet entrepreneurs, fashion designers (fashionistas), publishers, journalists and writers.

Pedagogical implications

According to Lewis (1997), teachers should not assume that the students will notice all these types of word formation and record them by themselves. They are unable to do so unless they are trained to. As researchers have revealed learners need to encounter a word/phrase about seven times in different contexts to be able to acquire it. Therefore vocabulary acquisition is a gradual process and it takes time and training.

For instance, collocations associated with a situation familiar to students (e.g. a case study) will stimulate the students to use them.

According to Y Catelly (2005, 15) one criterion in designing tasks based on collocations could be that of the educational objectives aimed at, for example: increasing the learner's knowledge of lexis in its most natural use, refining the oral and written communication of meaning and building up the learner's study independence by using the dictionary and other resources".

Designing tasks for acquiring the marketing vocabulary

The range of tasks varies from more controlled types, through the use of vocabulary in meaningful and through dictionary work (inclusive of on-line dictionaries) to integrating them in free production, using the new vocabulary in authentic communication.

Types of tasks and exercises:

- gap filling
- flow-chart filling

- multiple choice
- developing word ladders
- contextualized exercises
- paraphrasing
- problem-solving in case studies
- dictionary work

Conclusion

In recent times it has become ever more obvious that the good knowledge of the specialist vocabulary plays a crucial part in enhancing the learner's communicative competence and improving in this way the overall communication process. That is the main reasons why teachers should introduce tasks based on vocabulary on a regular basis.

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