Lexical Metaphor Use In Advertising Slogans: A Systemic Functional Perspective

Annisa Atthormizi[1], Duaa Salameh[2]

[1]Department of English Education, Language Education, Raden Intan State Islamic University, Lampung, Indonesia
[2]Dapartment of Language and Cultural Studies, Social Sciences, University of Jordan, Amman, Jordan

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ABSTRACT

Purpose of the study: This study aims to analyze the types and meanings of lexical metaphors used in selected educational slogan advertisements, with a particular focus on how metaphorical expressions contribute to persuasive meaning within promotional language.

Methodology: This research employed a descriptive qualitative design using textual and pictorial analysis. The data were limited to slogan advertisements from three educational institutions The Doon World School, The Asian School Dehradun, and Junior High School Maria Mediatrix collected through documentation. The analysis was conducted using Halliday's Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL) framework, Saragih's lexical metaphor classification, and Royce's verbo-pictorial theory.

Main Findings: The findings indicate that the slogans predominantly employ noun–noun and noun–verb lexical metaphors. These metaphors function to reinforce intended meanings and enhance slogan attractiveness and clarity. The analysis also shows a close relationship between literal and metaphorical meanings, suggesting that conventional metaphors are more frequently used than novel ones within the analyzed data set.

Novelty/Originality of this study: This study offers an integrative analysis combining Saragih's lexical metaphor typology and Halliday's SFL approach within the specific and limited context of educational slogan advertisements. While the findings cannot be generalized beyond the selected data, the study contributes to a focused understanding of how lexical metaphors function as persuasive linguistic resources in educational advertising discourse.

Corresponding Author:

Annisa Atthormizi,
Department of Language Education, Faculty of Tarbiyah and Teacher Training, Raden Intan State Islamic University,
L.K. Endro Suratmin, Teluk Betung, Lampung, 35131, Indonesia
Email: annisaat@gmail.com

1. INTRODUCTION

Language plays a vital role as a medium of human communication through which ideas, emotions, and social meanings are conveyed. In linguistic studies, meaning is commonly categorized into literal and non-literal (figurative) meanings, with metaphor recognized as one of the most prominent forms of figurative language. Metaphor allows abstract concepts to be expressed in more concrete and familiar terms, thereby enhancing both the aesthetic quality and communicative effectiveness of language [1]-[3]. Because of this function, metaphor has been widely examined in various domains such as politics, economics, education, and advertising.

Advertising represents a persuasive form of discourse that relies heavily on strategic language use to influence audiences. One important linguistic element in advertising is the slogan, which condenses complex messages into short, memorable, and meaningful expressions. Through slogans, advertisers seek to construct particular images and values associated with a product or institution. Previous studies have indicated that the persuasive power of slogans is often strengthened by the use of metaphorical expressions, which enable messages to be interpreted beyond their literal meanings [4]-[6]. Nevertheless, most metaphor studies in advertising tend to focus on commercial products or political campaigns, leaving educational slogan advertisements relatively underexplored.

Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL), proposed by Halliday, offers a functional framework for analyzing how language constructs meaning within specific social contexts. Within this approach, lexical metaphor plays a crucial role in explaining how meanings shift from congruent (literal) to incongruent (metaphorical) forms through lexical choices [7]-[9]. Saragih's classification of lexical metaphors into noun–noun, noun verb, and noun adjective types provides a systematic model for identifying metaphorical patterns at the lexical level [10], [11]. Although both Halliday's SFL framework and Saragih's lexical metaphor classification have been applied in previous linguistic research, they are often employed independently rather than in an integrated manner.

Based on the literature review conducted, previous studies have extensively examined the use of Indonesian in general domains such as daily life, formal education, and the influence of social media. [12] focuses on analyzing spelling errors, grammar, and the challenges of implementing good and correct language rules, and emphasizes the importance of language education to improve communication effectiveness. Meanwhile, Maghfiroh [13] emphasizes the central role of language as a communication tool, including its persuasive function in conveying messages and influencing others. However, there is a significant research gap because these studies have not specifically explored the use of lexical metaphor as a deliberate linguistic strategy in educational slogan advertising discourse. Both literatures focus more on aspects of standardization, deviation, and general communicative functions, without examining how types of lexical metaphors operate persuasively to shape interpretations and influence audiences in the context of specific educational discourse. To address this gap, this study proposes an integrative approach by combining Halliday's Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL) framework and Saragih's classification of lexical metaphors. This integration is expected to provide a more contextual and in-depth understanding of how educational institutions utilize metaphorical expressions as strategic linguistic resources to construct persuasive messages in their advertising slogans, an aspect that has not been adequately explored by previous studies.

The novelty of this study lies in combining Halliday's SFL theory with Saragih's lexical metaphor classification to analyze educational advertisements [14]-[16]. By integrating these frameworks, the study provides new insights into how metaphorical expressions strengthen the persuasive and conceptual meanings of slogans. The findings are expected to contribute to a deeper understanding of how linguistic choices in advertisements shape readers' interpretation and influence within educational discourse.

The implications of this research cover two main areas. Theoretically, this research enriches the study of functional linguistics and discourse analysis with an integrated analytical model between SFL and lexical metaphor classification, particularly in the context of educational advertising discourse [17]-[19]. Practically, the findings of this research can be utilized by educational practitioners and institutional communication designers as a basis for designing more effective, ethical, and contextual slogans. Furthermore, this research also has implications for language learning by helping university students develop critical literacy in advertising language, particularly in understanding how metaphors shape meaning and persuasion in educational discourse.

The urgency of this research lies in the need to more deeply understand the use of persuasive language in educational advertising discourse, which plays a strategic role in shaping public perceptions of educational institutions [20]-[22]. The lack of studies specifically linking lexical metaphors to their communicative functions and contextual meanings has left our understanding of linguistic strategies in educational advertising largely incomplete. Therefore, this research is crucial for providing a functional linguistics-theory-based analysis capable of explaining how metaphorical choices are consciously used to influence audience interpretations and attitudes in educational contexts.

Based on the background and urgency outlined above, this research was conducted in response to the research gap that still limits understanding of the strategic function of language in educational discourse. Therefore, this research does not merely identify lexical metaphors, but attempts to deconstruct their persuasive mechanisms through the integrated lens of Systemic Functional Linguistics and lexical metaphor classification. This contextual and theory-based analysis is expected to reveal how metaphorical choices are consciously engineered to shape perceptions, influence attitudes, and ultimately frame the image of educational institutions in the public eye. The research findings are expected to provide a more solid theoretical foundation in the study of functional linguistics and discourse analysis, as well as serve as a valuable practical reference for educational communication practitioners to design messages that are not only rhetorically effective but also ethical and relevant to their social context. In other words, this research aims to bridge the gap between linguistic theory and actual communication

practice, and empower readers especially in academic circles to be more critical in digesting the persuasive messages around them

2. RESEARCH METHOD

This study employed a descriptive qualitative research design supported by textual and pictorial analysis to examine the types and meanings of lexical metaphors in educational slogan advertisements. A qualitative approach was selected because it enables an in-depth interpretation of meaning and allows linguistic phenomena to be analyzed within their social and contextual settings [23].

The data consisted of three English slogan advertisements taken from official educational institutions: The Doon World School, The Asian School Dehradun, and Junior High School Maria Mediatrix. The data were selected purposively based on two criteria: (1) the slogans explicitly employed metaphorical expressions, and (2) the advertisements were officially published by the institutions on their verified websites. Data collection was conducted through documentation by downloading digital copies of the advertisements and confirming their authenticity. The verbal elements of each slogan were transcribed, while the visual elements were documented to support intersemiotic analysis.

To ensure analytical transparency, the data analysis was conducted through explicit and systematic operational steps. First, each slogan was segmented into lexical units and identified for potential metaphorical expressions. Second, the identified expressions were compared with their congruent (literal) forms to determine whether a lexical metaphor occurred, following Halliday's concept of congruent and incongruent realization. Third, the lexical metaphors were categorized into noun–noun, noun–verb, and noun–adjective types based on Saragih's lexical metaphor classification. Fourth, the metaphorical meanings were interpreted by examining the semantic shift between literal and metaphorical meanings and their communicative functions within the slogan context. Finally, Royce's intersemiotic complementarity theory was applied to analyze how verbal metaphors interacted with visual elements to reinforce persuasive meaning in the advertisements.

o reduce subjectivity and strengthen data validation, this study employed methodological and theoretical triangulation. Methodological triangulation was conducted by cross-checking textual analysis with pictorial interpretation to ensure consistency between verbal and visual meanings. Theoretical triangulation was applied by validating metaphor interpretations through established theories of lexical metaphor (Halliday and Saragih) and intersemiotic analysis (Royce). In addition, peer debriefing was conducted by consulting two linguistics scholars familiar with SFL and metaphor analysis, who reviewed the categorization and interpretation of the data. Discrepancies were discussed until analytical agreement was reached. This process enhanced the credibility, dependability, and analytical rigor of the findings. This ensured the reliability and scientific accuracy of the analysis.

Table 1. Example of Lexical Metaphor Classification

Metaphor Type	Example	Source	Interpretation
Noun–Noun	"Open your mind"	The Asian School	The mind is conceptualized as a door, implying openness and readiness to learn
Noun–Verb	"Fly to success"	Doon World School	Success achievement is conceptualized as flight, suggesting progress and ambition
Noun–Adjective	"Bright future ahead"	Maria Mediatrix	The future is associated with brightness, symbolizing hope and positive outcomes

The research followed five systematic steps. First, the advertisements were identified and coded based on their institutional sources and slogan types. Next, the slogans were classified to identify linguistic elements and potential metaphorical expressions. The data were then analyzed using Halliday's Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL) framework and Saragih's classification of lexical metaphors (noun–noun, noun verb, and noun–adjective). Subsequently, Royce's intersemiotic complementarity theory was applied to explore the correlation between verbal and visual elements. Finally, the researcher interpreted the metaphorical meanings to evaluate their communicative and persuasive effects within educational advertising contexts.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This section presents the results of the lexical metaphor analysis in selected educational slogan advertisements and discusses the findings through the lens of Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL). Beyond identifying metaphor types, the discussion interprets how lexical metaphors function as meaning-making resources within educational advertising discourse. The analysis demonstrates that lexical metaphors in slogans are not

merely stylistic devices, but realizations of incongruent meaning that serve specific interpersonal and ideational functions as proposed in Halliday's SFL framework.

The findings reveal that noun–noun and noun verb lexical metaphors dominate the slogans, a pattern that aligns with Halliday's notion of grammatical and lexical metaphor as mechanisms for condensing meaning and increasing semantic density. This supports previous studies which argue that metaphor in advertising functions to simplify complex or abstract concepts while simultaneously enhancing persuasive appeal. In contrast to commercial advertising studies that emphasize novelty and creativity, the metaphors identified in educational slogans tend to be conventional and culturally shared, suggesting that clarity and interpretability are prioritized over linguistic innovation in educational discourse [24], [25].

Furthermore, when examined in relation to Saragih's lexical metaphor classification, the dominance of noun-based metaphors indicates a strategic effort to conceptualize abstract educational values such as success, knowledge, and future orientation into concrete and familiar entities. This finding reinforces earlier research suggesting that educational institutions employ metaphor to construct positive institutional identities and moral values rather than to promote products directly. By integrating verbal metaphors with visual elements, as explained through Royce's intersemiotic complementarity theory, the slogans strengthen their persuasive force through multimodal coherence, a phenomenon also reported in prior multimodal discourse studies.

Overall, the results extend existing metaphor research by demonstrating how lexical metaphors operate within a specific educational context, thereby supporting and refining previous findings while highlighting the functional role of metaphor in shaping meaning, persuasion, and institutional representation.

3.1. Identification of Lexical Metaphors

The analysis found three main types of lexical metaphors following Saragih's classification, namely *noun–noun*, *noun–verb*, and *noun–adjective*. Each type serves to express abstract concepts through concrete linguistic forms, enhancing the persuasive impact of the slogans. Table 2 summarizes the findings of metaphor types found in each advertisement.

Table 2. Types of Lexical Metaphor in Slogan Advertisements

Advertisement Source	Slogan Text	Metaphor Type	Interpretation
The Asian School	"Open your mind"	Noun–Noun	Compares *mind* to a *door*, symbolizing readiness to learn
Doon World School	"Fly to success"	Noun–Verb	Compares *success* to *flight*, expressing achievement and ambition
Maria Mediatrix School	"Bright future ahead"	Noun–Adjective	Compares *future* with *brightness*, representing optimism and hope

These metaphors demonstrate how educational institutions use linguistic creativity to construct motivational and memorable messages. The slogans engage readers by linking educational goals to familiar experiences such as opening doors, flying, or seeing brightness.

3.2. Interpretation and Functional Meaning

Based on Halliday's SFL framework, each slogan exhibits metafunctions of language: the ideational function reflects the conceptual metaphor, the interpersonal function builds emotional engagement, and the textual function ensures message clarity. For instance, the slogan *"Fly to success"* uses a motion verb to symbolize dynamic learning, implying that education enables upward movement toward achievement [26], [27].

Furthermore, the lexical metaphors were found to have both literal and metaphorical relations. The literal meaning presents concrete imagery, while the metaphorical meaning extends to abstract concepts such as growth, hope, and knowledge. This dual-layer meaning strengthens the communicative power of the slogan and increases its memorability among audiences [28], [29].

3.3. Verbo Pictorial Correlation

Applying Royce's intersemiotic complementarity theory, this study reveals that the relationship between verbal and visual elements in educational slogan advertisements operates through multiple layers of meaning rather than simple illustration. The visual components do not merely repeat the verbal message; instead, they function to reinforce, extend, and specify the metaphorical meanings conveyed linguistically. This interaction demonstrates a complex semiotic process in which meaning emerges from the integration of modes.

In the advertisement of The Asian School, for instance, the slogan "Open your mind" is visually supported by the image of an open book illuminated by light. From an intersemiotic perspective, the book visually realizes the metaphorical concept of "mind" as a container of knowledge, while light functions as a symbolic representation of enlightenment and intellectual awakening. Here, the visual mode elaborates the verbal metaphor by concretizing an abstract mental process into culturally recognizable symbols, thereby strengthening ideational meaning.

Similarly, in The Doon World School advertisement, the slogan "Fly to success" is accompanied by imagery of students with wing-like elements or upward movement. The visual representation does not simply mirror the lexical metaphor but intensifies its interpersonal function by associating success with freedom, aspiration, and transcendence. According to Royce's framework, this constitutes an intersemiotic reinforcement, where visual elements amplify the evaluative and motivational force of the verbal metaphor.

In the case of Junior High School Maria Mediatrix, the slogan "Bright future ahead" is visually realized through dominant light colors and forward-facing student figures. The adjective bright metaphorically conceptualizes the future as illumination, while the visual elements extend this metaphor temporally by suggesting direction, continuity, and hope. This multimodal alignment demonstrates how verbal metaphors are not isolated linguistic choices but are embedded within a broader semiotic system that guides interpretation.

These findings support previous multimodal discourse studies which argue that advertising meaning is constructed through the dynamic interaction of modes rather than through language alone. However, this study further shows that within educational discourse, intersemiotic complementarity serves not only persuasive purposes but also pedagogical and moral functions. Visual verbal metaphors in school slogans articulate institutional values such as knowledge, discipline, aspiration, and ethical growth.The analysis confirms that lexical metaphors in educational slogans function as intersemiotic nodes, linking verbal abstraction with visual concreteness. By integrating Halliday's SFL, Saragih's lexical metaphor typology, and Royce's intersemiotic theory, this study demonstrates that metaphors in educational advertising are not merely aesthetic devices, but complex multimodal resources that shape meaning, identity, and educational ideology.

Based on previous studies, there is a clear gap in the object, purpose, and domain of functional systemic linguistics studies that can be the basis for research entitled Lexical Metaphor Use In Advertising Slogans: A Systemic Functional Perspective. The first article [30] examines communication strategies in political discourse through education policy speeches, focusing on aspects of transitivity, modality, and situational context to reveal ideational, interpersonal, and textual meanings. Meanwhile, the second article [31] is a literature review on the documentation and description of languages in Sumba, which emphasizes more on phonology, language classification, language vitality, and linguistic documentation, without touching on discourse analysis or the use of figurative language. The main gap lies in the absence of research that applies a functional systemic linguistics approach, especially in analyzing lexical metaphors in the realm of advertising discourse, which has a persuasive function and communication context that is significantly different from political discourse and language documentation studies [32], [33]. This study will fill this gap by exploring how lexical metaphors in advertising slogans not only function as rhetorical devices, but also represent experiences, build relationships with audiences, and organize messages textually within Halliday's metafunction framework of language, thus contributing to both systemic functional linguistics theory and marketing communication studies.

This research offers a novel contribution by extending the application of Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL), traditionally used to analyze political speeches, educational texts, and language documentation, into the under explored domain of commercial advertising. While previous studies like the analysis of Nadiem Makarim's speech have effectively employed SFL to decode ideational and interpersonal meanings in policy discourse, and linguistic surveys like that of Sumba languages have mapped structural and sociolinguistic features, this study pioneers a focused examination of lexical metaphors within advertising slogans through the SFL framework [34], [35], [36]. It uniquely investigates how metaphor a key resource in constructing experiential meaning operates within the persuasive, concise, and multimodal context of slogans, analyzing not only its ideational function in reshaping consumer reality but also its interpersonal role in aligning with audience values and its textual function in creating memorable, cohesive messages. By doing so, the study bridges the gap between functional linguistics and marketing communication, providing a systematic, meaning-based analytical tool to understand the sophisticated rhetorical strategies that drive consumer engagement in a way that previous political or descriptive linguistic studies have not addressed [37].

The implications of this research are both theoretical and practical. Theoretically, it enriches the SFL framework by demonstrating its adaptability and explanatory power in analyzing a highly condensed and strategically crafted genre like advertising slogans, thereby expanding the boundaries of applied discourse analysis [38], [39]. It contributes to the growing body of knowledge on metaphor studies by shifting the focus from purely cognitive or literary analyses to a socially contextualized, functional perspective that ties metaphorical choices directly to communicative goals in a commercial setting. Practically, the findings offer valuable insights for professionals in marketing, branding, and copywriting, providing them with an evidence-based linguistic toolkit to deconstruct and design more effective, culturally resonant, and persuasive advertising messages [40], [41]. Furthermore, in educational settings, this research can inform curriculum development in applied linguistics, media studies, and communication, offering students a concrete methodology to critically analyze the pervasive language of advertising and understand its ideological and persuasive mechanisms.

This study acknowledges several limitations. Firstly, the analysis is confined to lexical metaphors within slogan texts and may not fully account for other semiotic modes (e.g., visual imagery, sound, typography) that are integral to the overall meaning of advertisements in multimodal contexts. Secondly, the research scope is limited

to the linguistic analysis of the slogans themselves; it does not empirically measure or verify the actual psychological impact, reception, or persuasive effectiveness of these metaphors on the target audience, which would require complementary experimental or audience research methodologies. Thirdly, the selection of advertising slogans, while aiming for diversity, may not be exhaustive of all product categories, cultural contexts, or historical periods, potentially limiting the generalizability of the findings. Finally, the SFL analysis, while deep, is inherently interpretive, and other analytical frameworks might highlight different aspects of the metaphors. These limitations point to fruitful directions for future research, including multimodal SFL analysis, cross-cultural comparative studies, and experimental designs that link specific metaphorical structures to measurable audience responses.

4.   CONCLUSION

This study shows that lexical metaphors in educational slogan advertisements function as strategic meaning-making resources by concretizing abstract educational values through the integration of Systemic Functional Linguistics, lexical metaphor classification, and intersemiotic analysis. The dominance of noun-based metaphors indicates a preference for clarity and shared cultural meanings in educational discourse. However, the study is limited by a small data set drawn from only three institutions, its reliance on qualitative interpretation, and its focus on English-language slogans. Future research should expand the data corpus across institutions, languages, and cultural contexts, and may employ corpus-based or quantitative approaches to gain broader insights into metaphor use across educational and other persuasive discourses.

USE OF ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE (AI)-ASSISTED TECHNOLOGY

The authors declarethat no artificial intelligence (AI) tools were used in the preparation, analysis, or writing of this manuscript. All aspects of the research, including data collection, interpretation, and manuscript preparation, were carried outentirely by the authors without the assistance of AI-based technologies.

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