

## STYLE AND THE CREATIVE USE OF LANGUAGE IN ADVERTISEMENTS\*

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### Özet

#### *Reklamlarda Biçem ve Dilin Yaratıcı Kullanımı*

*Bu çalışmanın amacı The Economist ve SkyLife dergilerinde yayımlanmış havayolu şirketlerinin verdikleri reklamları kullanılan dil ve resim açısından incelemek ve bu reklamları resim, başlık, ana metin, yapı ve kelime kullanımı açısından karşılaştırmaktır. Çalışmada ayrıca, reklamların dil öğretiminde, dilin yaratıcı kullanımını göstermek amacıyla, ne kadar kullanışlı bir kaynak olacağı da tartışılmış ve öğretmenler için birkaç örnek etkinlik sunulmuştur.*

**Anahtar Sözcükler:** Reklamlar, Reklam Dili, Yaratıcı Dil, Dil Öğretimi, Biçem, Dil İncelemesi.

### Abstract

*The intention of this paper is to analyse selected airline advertisements advertised in The Economist and SkyLife, in terms of the relationship between the language and the illustration and to compare and contrast their features such as illustration, headline, body copy, structure and vocabulary. Implications of using advertisements in the classroom as a source of useful material for teaching the creative use of language are discussed and some possible activities for the use of advertisements in EFL classes are suggested.*

**Keywords:** Advertisements, Advertisement Language, Creative Language, Language Teaching, Style, Language Analysis.

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## 1. Introduction

Advertisements are with us all the time: whenever we open our daily newspaper or a magazine, turn on the T.V. or the radio, or look at the hoardings, in tube stations or on buildings, they are all around us. The primary function of advertising is to familiarise customers with, or remind them of the benefit of, particular products in the hope of increasing sales. In its simplest sense, the word 'advertising', according to Dyer (1985:2), means, "drawing attention to something". This may be a service, for example, an airline advertisement or the post office advertisement or it may be a commodity. American Marketing Association defines advertising as "the non-personal communication of information usually paid for and usually persuasive in nature about products, services or ideas by identified sponsors through the various media". Sometimes the advertisements are trying to persuade the consumer to try the service or commodity for the first time, but very often they are reminding us of the benefits of a product or service we use. They often do this by being unusual, breaking out of the normal patterns of language (Short,1996). Advertising language is a style of immediate impact and rapid persuasion.

Most written advertisements share a certain structure, which consists of a 'Headline', 'Body copy', 'Signature line' and a 'Slogan' (Vestergaard and Schroder, 1985). The **headline** serves to attract the reader's attention; it often does not include the name of the product. It is usually accompanied by a photographic illustration, which not only attracts attention, but also serves to explain its content. In advertising texts, the most important linguistic element is the headline. The function of the headline is to persuade readers to continue reading the remaining body text and, ideally, buy the advertised product. The **body copy** is the "main part of the advertising message" (Leech, 1966:20), containing relevant information and persuasive argument. The advertisements almost always end with a **signature line**: the name of the product or company in large and clear type at the bottom right hand corner. A small symbol drawing, a logo and also a slogan usually accompany this.

There are many kinds of advertising but, as Crystal and Davy (1969:222) say, usually "the notion of advertising is identified by reference to commercial consumer advertising only". According to Leech (1966:25), commercial consumer advertising is the kind of advertising "directed towards a mass audience with the aim of promoting sales of a commercial product or service". In newspapers and magazines, display advertisements are placed in prominent place amongst the editorial material. They consist of both an illustration and a text. The function of the illustration is to "attract our attention" (Robinson 1983: 95). Consequently, advertising is "a verbal and non verbal means of

public, one-way communication” (Dyer, 1985:2). It conveys a message from the advertiser to the consumer.

The intention of this paper is to analyse airline advertisements in terms of the relationship between the language and the illustration. The paper will also compare and contrast their features such as illustration, headline, body copy, structure and vocabulary. Finally, implications of using advertisements in the classroom as a source of useful material for teaching the creative use of language will be discussed.

## **2. Comparing and Contrasting Five Airline Advertisements**

Five advertisements are chosen to make a comparative study. Three of them are the Turkish Airlines advertisements and the other two are Lufthansa and Philippine Airlines advertisements. All of the advertisements, except the first one, are taken from the magazine *The Economist*. The first advertisement is taken from the *Skylife* magazine. The constituents of the advertisements are examined first. The overall impression that they create and the techniques used to create this impression are also considered. The advertisements that are chosen do not rely on overtly directive language; in other words, they get the reader to buy but to persuade the consumer to try the service.

### **2.1. Target Audience**

The target audiences of these two magazines are varied. *The Economist* is aimed at the business community and the male end of the market, *Skylife* is a magazine issued by Turkish Airlines and directed towards both a Turkish and foreign audience.

Advertisement-1<sup>1</sup>, which is taken from the *Skylife* magazine, is intended especially for foreign passengers. As the magazine is about a 140-page long magazine and as the average reader spends about two hours reading this magazine, he is not going to spend a lot of time on the advertisements. The advertiser, therefore, decides that for this readership a dominating illustration should be eye-catching. The service they give is not focused on this advert because the reader already sees the service and is able to judge it as he is travelling with them.

The other four advertisements are taken from *The Economist*, which is directed towards a male audience most of whom are businessmen. That is why they give information, mostly about their Business Class programmes. They all introduce the comfort, hospitality and convenient schedules they offer.

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<sup>1</sup> See the images in the Appendices (Advertisement 1-5).

The following sections will investigate how the advertising message is communicated. First, the layout and visual elements of these advertisements will be examined because illustrations are an important part of the overall message, an analysis of what they communicate visually will often be necessary. Then, the language functions, the relationship between the language and the illustration, and vocabulary will be analysed.

## **2.2. The Layout and Visual Image**

When trying to understand the meaning of an advertisement one must consider not only the elements from which it is made up, but also the “overall impression that it creates and the techniques it uses to create it” (Dyer, 1985:93). For this reason, an examination of the layout and visual elements of these advertisements will give us a starting point from which to develop a deeper analysis of the intended message.

Advertisement-1 appears to have a different layout than the other advertisements. According to Davis and Walton (1983), many advertisements are just visually pleasurable. This advertisement is an example of that kind. It has an illustration, which dominates a two-page spread. The illustration occupies almost all of the two pages. The verbal message lies at the bottom of the illustration. Visual emphasis is given priority in this advertisement. One important difference between the verbal text and visual images, according to Vestergaard and Schroder (1985:46), is that the verbal text and its smallest unit, the sentence, have a beginning at the beginning and an end at the end; pictures, on the other hand, “lack this temporal dimension: it is possible to survey a whole picture at once”. However, something corresponding to a beginning and an end can be discovered in the case of images, quite probably because the way in which we scan a picture has been influenced by the way in which we read the page. In this illustration, using a colourful Turkish motive, a map of the world is drawn in order to symbolise that Turkish Airlines is a world airline. The illustration reminds the audience the traditional Turkish tile work that represents the traditional Turkish art and implies that they do their job in an artistic and aesthetic way, taking care of every little detail to give the passengers a better service. At the bottom right hand corner of the second page, forty-six destinations from Turkey to other places in the world are listed. Finally, the eye is guided to the most important part of the advert, the name of the airline and the logo in the lower right corner of the page.

Advertisements 2 and 3 are almost similar in terms of their layout. Both have a small picture and have the same headline “The reason why...”. It is probably the headline of these advertisements, which catches the readers’ attention partly because of its position and partly by arousing the readers’

curiosity. In order to understand “the reason why”, you have to read the body copy. However, in Advertisement-3, a second part gives you the reason “Hospitality and Comfort”. Another thing, which is shared by the two advertisements, is the slogan “we care more”. The illustrations in these advertisements are very small compared to Advertisement-1. The passenger ticket of the airline is right in the “optical centre” of the picture in Advertisement-2 (Vestergaard and Schroder, 1985:47) and the other objects in the picture (a key holder, a wallet, and a passport) are out of focus. In Advertisement-3, there is a close correspondence between the headline and the picture. When we read the headline and then look at the picture, we can understand what they mean by “hospitality and comfort”. A passenger who has fallen asleep whilst reading his newspaper with his eyeglasses in his left hand is pictured and a Turkish airhostess is shown taking the eyeglasses to make him comfortable for the journey. This picture is also very much related to the slogan “we care more”. The larger border of white around the image of these ads may help us to focus on the advertisement itself.

Advertisement-4 has an interesting illustration and a headline. In the palm of a hand, a globe is pictured. With lighting and focus, the globe and the flight connections to cities over the world become a distinguishable part of the illustration. The visible part of the background is out of focus. The headline “Philippine Airlines Puts Asia, Australia, Europe and America Right in the Palm of Your Hand” is the explanation of the illustration. It is intended to help the reader to identify and understand the situation in the illustration. At the lower left corner, there is the body copy and at the bottom right-hand corner, the signature line, slogan and the logo of the airline.

Advertisement-5 has a different layout compared to the others. In the other advertisements the headline occurs either above the illustration or below it or both, but in this one, the headline is put over the illustration, that is to say, the “headline is superimposed on the illustration” (Leech, 1966). A very happy man is pictured. This is probably a Businessman because the advert is talking about the business Class of Lufthansa. The man’s face is in the optical centre of the picture to emphasise the happiness in his face. Probably the advertiser wants to emphasise that the passenger is very happy with the service they offer. The advertiser tries to create the impression that in their new Business Class you will enjoy your trip and feel the joy of flying. Below the picture, the body copy occurs, and again similar to the other ads, we see the signature line, the logo and the slogan in the lower right corner of the page. However, unlike the others, the slogan occurs before the signature line.

### 2.3. Text Structure

In this section, the language function, the stylistic, cohesive, and rhetorical devices will be examined in an attempt to show the extent to which they assist the advertiser in achieving his aims.

Advertisement-1 has a dominating illustration and the verbal message occurs under the illustration. It does not have a body copy but only a verbal message consisting of two sentences. These sentences, especially in the second part of the page, might actually sound like a traditional rhyming couplet if written in a poetic form:

To be a world airline is no reason to forget flying can be an art.

Even on a flight chart.

This makes the advertisement memorable and aesthetically pleasant. It also has an "anchoring" function (Vestergaard and Schroder, 1985:46); the picture illustrates the meaning of the verbal message. In the illustration, using a colourful Turkish tile work, a map of world is drawn in order to symbolise the traditional Turkish art. This is, in fact, a flight chart of the Turkish Airlines. In the verbal message, the word "art" has two meanings; one is "the art of flying" and the other one is "visual art". It may not be possible to catch this second meaning without looking at the illustration. With this illustration, the advertiser shows that flying can be an art both in the air and on a flight chart.

In Advertisement-2, the headline is an example of "suspension" (Dyer, 1985:3). An incomplete sentence is used as headline to attract attention and arouse interest, and there is the logo of the airline embedded into the headline. So the headline can be read as "The reason why Turkish Airlines...". This headline forces the reader to read the body copy of the advert so that he can learn the reason why he had to choose Turkish Airlines.

The body copy of this advertisement consists of four paragraphs and they explain the reasons that are mentioned in the headline. Communication necessarily involves at least two people, the person speaking (the addresser) and the person spoken to (the addressee). In the process of communication, meaning is transmitted in the two participants. In the case of advertising, the addresser is the advertiser and the real addressee is the reader, the meaning transmitted is about the product or the service, the code (in the case of press advertising) is language and some sort of visual code (Vestergaard and Schroder, 1985: 15). Throughout the advertisement, in this example, the reader 'you' is addressed directly by the advertiser 'we'. As in conversation, the style is personal with 'you' and 'we'. 'We' is used six times when talking about their services. Informality is shown, as Robinson (1983) says, with an 'and' at

the beginning of sentences (see line 4 in Advertisement-2 and line 4 in Advertisement-4). The style of the advertisement is friendly, informal and easy to read. This is because as well as “attracting our attention and amusing or entertaining us, the advertiser must also ensure that we have understood the message” (Robinson, 1983:98).

Comparative and superlative structures are, of course, almost essential in an advertisement. They are one of the “main devices to help the advertiser persuade us that his product has no rival” (Robinson, 1983:99). Advertisers generally seek to prove that their product or service is better than its rivals or even the best of all. The use of superlative in line 6 of Advertisement-2, “...one of the best airlines in Europe.”, and the use of the comparative in the slogan of Advertisements 2 and 3 “we care more”, urges the reader to try the service.

As is generally true of advertising, simple present forms pre-dominate infinite sentences and, in general, the past tense and the passive are usually avoided in advertisements (O'Donnell and Todd, 1980). In Advertisement-2, the advertiser uses the positive present tense throughout the body copy. This is the same for the other advertisements. The vocabulary used in this advertisement is from every day, colloquial language. Nouns such as ‘ambition’, ‘goodwill’, ‘enthusiasm’, ‘precision’, ‘service’, and ‘comfort’ are all positive and related to the service they give. The choice of adverbs is also related with their good service (perfectly, highly, carefully). Due to the existence of so much descriptive phrasing, the language of the body copy of Advertisement-2 appears to be informative.

The majority of the advertisements have an ‘endline’ (Leech, 1966), containing the signature line feature. The ‘endline’ may be simply a final mention of the name of the product or service, or a sentence in which the brand name is mentioned (see the last lines of Advertisements 2 and 3). Advertisements 2 and 3 have almost a similar endline “...maybe one of the reasons why more and more people are flying with Turkish Airlines lately”.

The signature line, according to Leech (1966), is a mention of the brand name often accompanied by a price tag, slogan, and trademark. As can be seen in Advertisements 2 and 3, the final part of the advertisements consists of a logo of the airline, a signature line (Turkish Airlines) and the slogan (We care more). Advertising slogans, according to O'Donnell and Todd (1980), resemble newspaper headlines in their tendency to use imperatives, the non-past, and non-finite verb form. In Advertisement-3, to the reader who has read the whole advert, the slogan “We care more” will appear simply as a repetition of the claim, which is made for the service in the information section. It is, in a

way, the summary of the reason why people are advised to choose this airline.

The headline of Advertisement-3 is more detailed compared to Advertisement-2. The first part, which arouses our attention (“the reason why”), is completed in the second part (“hospitality and comfort”). The reader who notices the advert but does not bother to read the body copy will still get an idea of the basic message by looking at the headline and the signature line. Similar to Advertisement-2, the language function of the body copy is informative. It gives information about the service they offer mentioning the legendary hospitality of Turkish people. The noun ‘comfort’ is repeated three times (see lines 2 and 5). Repeating the same noun, the advertiser has probably decided that comfort is the factor, which most influences the reader.

In the headline of Advertisement-4, the reader is addressed directly by the advertiser as in Advertisements 2 and 3. The use of poetical language is a device of literature borrowed by advertisers (Robinson, 1983). The poetic function of language is most obvious when such well-known devices as rhyme, rhythm and metaphor are made use of. In advertising language, metaphor is an extremely frequent device (Vestergaard and Schroder, 1985). In the headline of this advert, there is an example of metaphor. “Philippine Airlines puts Asia, Australia, Europe and America Right in the Palm of Your Hand”. This is impossible in reality but metaphorically, it is possible. It means, Philippine Airlines has flights to many cities over the world and it brings all of those cities within your reach.

The body copy of this advertisement consists of only one paragraph with three short sentences. In the second sentence, Philippine Airlines and cities are personified. The verb ‘touch’ requires an animate object but here PA is touching each and every one (city) with an exceptional warmth and hospitality. Words such as ‘hospitality’ ‘warmth’ and ‘comfort’ are used frequently in airline advertisements (as in Advertisements 2, 3, 4 and 5).

Negatives tend to be used very infrequently in advertisements. When they do occur, they are usually in a stressed position to emphasise the special merits of a product or a service. In Advertisement-4, “exceptional warmth and hospitality found nowhere else”, the negative word ‘nowhere’ is used to emphasise that they are the most hospitable airline in the world. Here, the advertiser prefers to avoid direct comparison using superlatives or comparatives, and instead uses “intensifying and emphatic phrases” (Robinson: 1983:100).

In Advertisement-5, the headline attracts our attention with two very short sentences without a verb (“Our new business class. Your better service”). The reader who reads the headline gets an idea of the basic message of the



advertisement without reading the body copy. Like the other advertisements, the addressing is direct (The addresser 'our' and the addressee; the reader 'your').

The body copy consists of five long sentences. In advertisements, favourite openings according to Leech (1966), are questions, when clauses, and if clauses. In this advertisement, the opening is a 'when' clause. 'You' is almost invariably the subject of a when clause ("When you travel frequently, ..."). 'When' is also used as a conjunction in line 14. The modal auxiliary 'can' is used meaning 'opportunity' ("you can relax or..."). In this sentence, the reader is told that their new Business Class lounge gives them the opportunity to relax and prepare their next meeting.

According to Dyer (1985), adverbs and adjectives are the key parts of speech for advertiser; the most common adjectives used in advertising are *good/better/best*, *special*, *fine*, *big*, *great*, *easy*, *bright*, *new* and *extra*. According to Leech (1966), *good/better/best* and *new* are over twice as popular as any other adjectives. 'Better' and 'new' occur in this advert and 'new' is repeated four times throughout Advertisement-5 (see the headline and lines 5, 11, 16). 'New' is generally taken to be absolute enough in meaning to require no extra intensification (ibid.). The signature line and the slogan, as in other advertisements, occur in the lower right corner of the page. The rhythm of the slogan allows the reader to remember it easily ("Our Lufthansa. Your Airline").

### 3. Using Advertisements in EFL Classes

Advertisements are a well-known source of useful material for classroom exploitation. As the above analysis shows, advertisements provide students with, as Tokdemir (1997) says, helpful models of authentic use of the target language in communicative activities.

Smith (1989) suggests that using advertisements enable the teachers to prepare activities especially for reading comprehension. These activities provide students with the awareness of the creative possibilities of language usage.

Below are suggestions of some possible activities for the use of advertisements in EFL classes:

1. Collect different advertisements from all kinds of popular magazines. Cut off any slogan already appearing in the advertisement, but leave the product itself visible. Next, make a list of possible advertising slogans, the shorter the better, the more ambiguous the better. For example, *The Sound of Quality* (for a hi-fi equipment advertisement), *Sparkling Gold* (for champagne advertisement.), *A Dream Come True* (for a travel agency advertisement for

exotic destinations for holidays), etc. As discussed in the above sections, the most effective advertising is that which uses the fewest possible words to suggest an idea, combined with a suitably striking photo. A slogan catches our attention very often because of its apparent simplicity, unusual turn of phrase, or use of double meaning, together with some humorous implication. Therefore, you can invent your own slogans. They will probably never sell the product in question, but they might serve a linguistic purpose. Then, give out the photocopied slogan sheets to the students. Go through the slogans one by one, asking students to tell you what they think they could be used to advertise. Here the students will have the chance to practice hypothetical structures such as “it might be..., it could be..., I wonder if it’s..., etc”. Later, ask for all the possible interpretations of ambiguous words or phrases. Then, give out the magazine ads to the students and ask them to match the slogans with the pictures. Later, collect the ads and go through them asking for suggestions. Let them draw their own conclusions about the double meanings involved and about the creative use of language necessary in this type of context.

2. Collect several advertisements for the same type of product from different sources. Ask the students to compare and contrast their features - illustration, headline, structure, vocabulary, etc. Ask them to relate these to the difference in intended audience.

3. Collect some advertisements (e.g. from the underground), which tell a story. Ask the students to compare their structuring with that of other types of story (e.g. folk tales).

The simple and enjoyable activities suggested above provide useful exercises for the development of overall language skills and encourage the students to use the language in an imaginative and creative way.


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Advertisement-1


(From "Skylife" Magazine, September 1992, issued by Turkish Airlines)

**To be a world airline is no reason to forget flying can be an art. Even on a flight chart.**

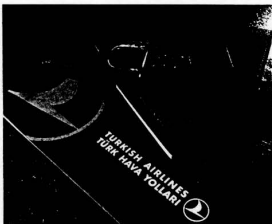


AMSTERDAM ANKARA BANGKOK BASTI BEKRADE BIRINGAZI BIRNIN BODRUM BRUSSELS CANTO COCUMI CORFU/ANTALYA DAMASKUS DUBAI  
 DUSSELDORF HANNOVER ISTANBUL KAHIRAH KANAKOVA HELSINKI JEDDAH KAKCHI LERKSA TORONTO LYON MADRID MIAMI MOSKOW MUNICH  
 NEW YORK NINNIERKE PARIS PRAGUE ROME SINGAPORE SOFIA STOCKHOLM  
 STUTTGART TIRANEN TEL AVIV TOKYO ZURICH TURKISH AIRLINES



**Advertisement-2**(From "The Economist", September, 26<sup>th</sup> - October, 2<sup>nd</sup> 1992)


the reason why ..




Four major tasks confront airline companies in air travelling today: Reliability... Precision... Service and Comfort.

At Turkish Airlines, we believe that we are well equipped with all the necessary factors to meet these challenges carefully. And what's more; we're full of goodwill...ambition and enthusiasm to be one of the best airlines in Europe.

With this goal in mind, we are constantly in the process of improvement...introducing new services like the Company Club program and Business Class programs where we offer first class service. Our Frequent Flyer program has already become highly reputable among our passengers.

Our wide-spread network owns a large and young fleet of modern Airbus (A-310) and latest Boeing (737-400) which enable you to reach 68 destinations from Turkey to the world... and from the world to Turkey. We provide non-stop flights as well as perfectly coordinated connections to over 250 cities around the world. Whatever your destination is; you can always find a suitable and convenient schedule to make the most of your day. Turkish Airlines is on the move and maybe that's one of the reasons why more and more people are flying with us lately.



**TURKISH AIRLINES**  
" We care more "

**Advertisement-3**  
 (From "The Economist", October, 24<sup>th</sup>-30<sup>th</sup> 1992)

the reason why...



**HOSPITALITY  
 AND COMFORT...**

There's more than sufficient legroom in THY's interior for your comfort. But of course, comfort isn't merely a question of space between seats.

Turkish Airlines is bringing new dimensions to the art of flying, by offering a unique perspective in service and comfort for those who wish to fly at a higher level.

Our commitment to excellent service is just an expression of our legendary hospitality. You feel it the moment you step on board... that genuine warm welcoming spirit of Turkish people. It's an experience which should not be missed and maybe one of the reasons why more and more people are flying with Turkish Airlines lately.

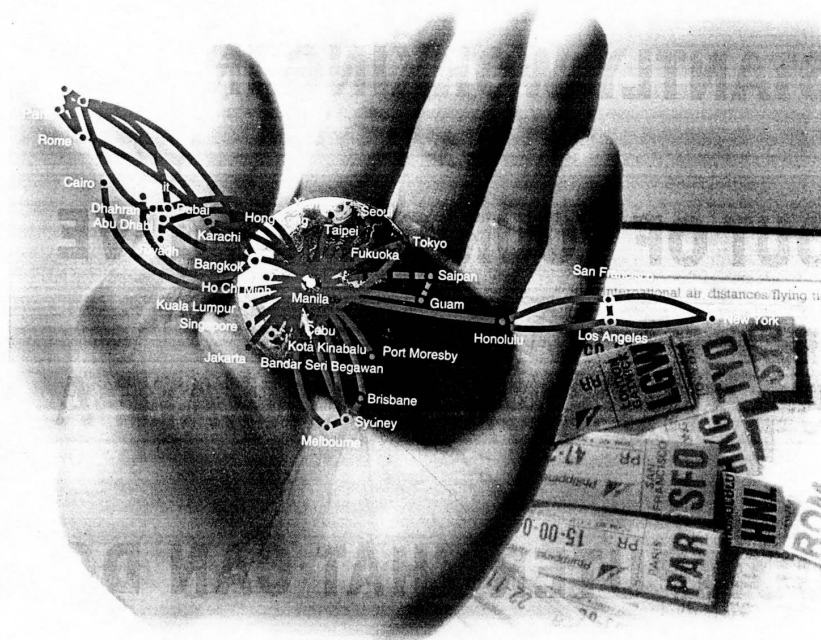


**TURKISH AIRLINES**

" We care more "

**Advertisement-4**  
(From "The Economist", September, 19<sup>th</sup>-25<sup>th</sup> 1992)

PHILIPPINE AIRLINES PUTS ASIA,  
AUSTRALIA, EUROPE, AND AMERICA



RIGHT IN THE PALM  
OF YOUR HAND.

Across vast oceans and continents we fly to 35 cities all over the world. Touching each and every one with an exceptional warmth and hospitality found nowhere else. And bringing them all within your reach.

 **Philippine Airlines**  
SHINING THROUGH

**Advertisement-5**  
 (From "The Economist", September, 19<sup>th</sup>-25<sup>th</sup> 1992)



**Our new  
 business class.  
 Your better**

When you travel frequently, comfortable and convenient flying is essential to your well-being. That's why we offer you a new and improved business class within Europe this fall. A preferential baggage claim

and an extended menu on board make travel easier and more enjoyable for you. In Lufthansa's new business class lounge in Frankfurt you can relax or prepare your next meeting when transferring.

These are only three among a variety of new product features we introduce to make business travel as pleasant as possible for you.

**Our Lufthansa. Your airline.**



**Lufthansa**



**Dil ve Tarih-Coğrafya Fakültesi Dergisi**  
**2010, Cilt 50, Sayı 2**

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