

## Investigating the Linguistic and Pragmatic Aspects of Advertising Discourse Based on English Advertising Texts

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### ABSTRACT

*The subject of this research is the analysis of the language of advertising and is dedicated to the analysis of pragmatic factors. The impact of advertising on the modern world is increasing and thus has become a major area of study from a broad multidisciplinary approach. Sociology and psychology attempt to find possible ways of its influence on society, mentality, mind, and human behavior. Linguistics emphasizes the literary norms of the language used in advertising and the stylistic features of written and spoken types of the same. The objective of the sociolinguistic study is to discover the mechanism of the impact of advertising upon language as a variable entity and actual linguistic process, which is demonstrated on the levels of style formation and word formation of the language. New words to mean new ideas and new facts of mass media society are the most broad and active field of new lexical developments in modern languages. The objectives are accomplished by making the following steps: establishing the leading extralinguistic factors, which determine the communication process in advertising; defining the pragmatic aspects of advertising texts and ad-slogans; revealing certain communicative and pragmatic parameters of the ad-slogan. Social speech acts not only semantically and functionally enrich linguistic forms, but also transform them, giving rise to situationally conditioned tools of expression, pertinent to one specific speech genre.*

**Keywords:** Advertising text, ad-slogan, language, communication, pragmatics.

## INTRODUCTION

The pragmatics of advertising texts is concerned with their use in the acts of speech. The approach is based on the fact that an utterance is a linguistic unit, which performs a very important non-structural function – to serve as a unit of speech communication. Nowadays, the linguistic study of mass communication, and advertising in particular, is concerned with pragmatic aspects of communication along with traditional structural and semantic aspects. The object of pragmatics, which is in our case regarded in its narrow sense, is the system of active language means, aimed at the mentality and will of the addressee. The final goal of pragmatics is to reveal the optimal system of linguistic determination of both social and individual human behavior. Therefore, the pragmatic function is that of influence, which includes the effect of speech, interaction, verbal management of human behavior, shaping social and individual human behavior via language. That function is very important for advertising, since its main goal is to create an impact on social and individual behavior.

The theory of pragmatics sets the rules of pragmatic interpretation, that is, the rules assigning a specific illocutionary power and a status of a certain speech act to every utterance on the basis of its pragmatic structure.

The pragmatic understanding is a number of procedures, in the course of which the participants of communication assign specific conventional properties to the utterances (or slogans in our case). These properties make up the illocutionary power of a message, which is decoded by the addressee in the context of the following factors:

- grammatical and structural features of the utterance;
- paralinguistic characteristics, that is, the settings of the slogan (pictures, fonts, placement on the page, etc.)
- perception of the communicative situation (what is the situation around the addressee at the moment of perception);
- previously received information (knowledge and opinion) about the object and the addresser of communication;

- general knowledge (mostly conventional) about the rules of pragmatic interaction in the given context;
- other knowledge about various life situations and aspects. [1]

Approximately, we can single out at least four levels of the information process: creation and preparation of the message; expansion of the social information; involvement of the audience into the action of the communication system; assimilation and perception of the information. Each of these levels can be interpreted, on one hand, as an activity aimed at creation of the messages and their transmission through communication channels, and on the other hand, as an activity of the audience receiving and considering the information. [2]

The influence of advertising is effected at the time when the message is brought into the consciousness of the addressee, which results in forming new beliefs, desires, and eventually – leads to a certain conscious action. For the addresser, this process is an array of consequently solved psychological and communicative problems. At the first level that means to establish a contact. At the second level – to persuade the recipient (addressee) of the significance of the ideas contained in the message.

Any specific activity of a person is operated by motivation, which is a result of a need. Desires, aspirations, intentions, interests, etc. make up the language which is “used” by human needs in order to communicate their contents to the person having them. [3] So, the task of an advertisement which, in fact, reflects the addresser’s intention, is to get the addressee have these feelings and try to make them so intense that the addressee should be sufficiently motivated to act according to the addresser’s intention.

We have to keep in mind that intention is a system of partially reflected psychic images of reality linked with the sphere of needs and motivations of a person. Intention of the addresser correlates with the pragmatic function. Therefore, the notions “pragmatic” and “intentional” are often regarded as close, or even synonymous ones. The addresser’s intention is a crucial

point in communication, since it lies at the core of the speech planning strategy.

Should the message successfully pass the addressee's resistance to the unwanted or at least unexpected message, we have the following output of the "influence-perception" process: knowledge, convictions, and actions. A conviction is knowledge which became a motivation for action. If the motivation is strong enough to get the addressee to take the actual action, the influence is successful. This result is stimulated if the recipient's needs and desires are considered when the text is being compiled. [4]

Schematically, we can represent it in the following way (see Figure 1):

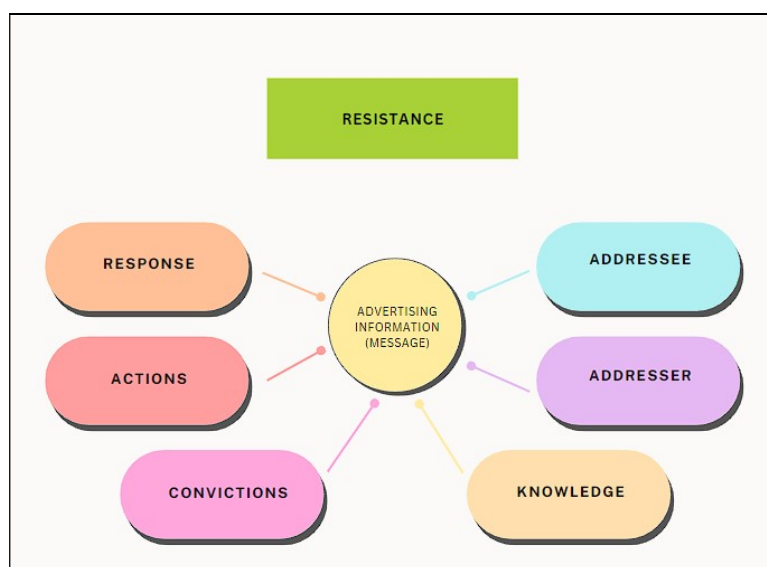


Figure 1. *Representation of advertising information*

The main and only goal of advertising is to make the addressee buy the product or use the service advertised, and therefore an ad has to be very argumentative and even aggressive, although subtle at the same time. That necessity conditions advertising and makes it a very distinctive linguistic and pragmatic type.

The advertising text is a finalized act of speech with a defined formal (composition) and semantic (content) structure, including two principal aspects –informative and persuasive (voluntative). It serves as a communicative message, which has the pragmatic purpose of transmitting the information concerning the object of advertising, adequate to the author's intention, which aims eventually at encouraging the recipient to take an action – to buy the product. The formal structure of an ad-text includes elements reflecting informative and persuasive features of advertising. We need to stress that linguistic and stylistic devices, expressing information and appeal, are organized in such a way that except the explicit persuasive element, the whole text, including its informative aspect, is permeated with implicit voluntative semantics and pragmatic orientation, which motivates the addressee. It should be added that the advertising text functions within the sphere of mass communication, it combines linguistic and extralinguistic means and has the basic qualities of a text, with positive pragmatic orientation as the leading quality. As mentioned above, the functional and pragmatic aspects of general advertising are determined by a combination of information and motivation (persuasion). The specific character of advertising lies in the fact that the motivating (recruiting) function is closely linked with the informative one with a clear tendency for dominance of motivating elements in the communicative structure of the text.

#### MATERIAL AND METHODS

##### *Concept of appeal*

The principal feature characteristic of the advertising language is ultimate persuasiveness. To make a certain action the addressee of the advertising message must be sufficiently motivated, and therefore, the message should contain an irresistible appeal. Consequently, the appeal is the crucial element of advertising, the key position which conditions subsequent actions of the target recipient.

The main success factor in ad-slogan creation is strict conformity with the experience accumulated by generations of

copywriters. The development of an idea for a slogan relies on the analysis of principal addressee's motivations and the extent of their satisfaction. As a result of speech planning, the addresser makes a complex speech product in the form of advertising concepts and appeals.

Almost every appeal imaginable has been used in advertising. Some ads have traded on prestige; others have used fear. Some have promised glamour and good life. Some have embraced fantasy, and others have been firmly fixed in reality. To make these appeals, advertisers associate their product, verbally and visually, with other images, symbols, and values that are likely to attract consumers. [5] For example, advertising for the auto rental firm Avis appealed to love of the underdog when it promised "We try harder". Another advertising which informs that staying at Hilton one can earn free airline miles with certain air companies, uses one's inmost desires when it says: "This Summer Hilton Is Giving Away 13,000,000 Airline Miles. That's Kind Of Like Having Your Own Private Jet".

An appeal that is very frequently used in advertising is the purchasing passion of the consumer society: "If you're itching to own a new car, scratch here" /Toyota/. In fact, purchasing passion is relied upon in most ads, in a combination with other appeals. In the consumer society, when consumption becomes the basic value and people are judged on the basis of their purchasing power, consumers (recipients of the advertising message) are always prepared to make a purchase, should it be presented in an attractive form. That is why advertisers try to do their best to override each other in the extent of influence upon the purchasing passion of their potential consumers, trying to create an atmosphere which would stimulate that passion

Results of the research undertaken have revealed that the most typical appeals are based on the following factors: 1) desire to use quality things: The new Bose acoustic Wave music system is quite advanced. Yet so easy to grasp; 2) desire for reliability: United Leeds teaching hospitals asked us to conduct a major operation. /AHCemstar/; 3) desire to know things (to be in tune with time): Open your eyes to new horizons, see the world through Newsweek; 4) love/fondness and sex: Fresh and tenderly

seductive /Tendre Poison/; 5) desire for perfection: Hemisphere is near PERFECT; 6) desire to resemble one's idol, to worship heroes and celebrities: Cindy Crawford's choice. "Trust your judgment, trust Omega" - Cindy Crawford /watch/; 7) happy family life: You've waited five whole days for the weekend. Why ruin it by going out? /bed clothing/; 8) desire for pleasure/comfort Your can contour your body. Hanes becomes you. /hosiery/; 9) desire to look good: See how GREAT your HAIR can be; 10) appeal to senses: Light... Gently... Plays on my skin... illuminating colors. New tinted moisturizing creme from NIVEA visage; 11) health: The complete treatment in one capsule /Diflucan/; 12) fear: Identify the threat... Use environmental systems... Avoid the threat... /computer systems to locate environmental risks/; 13) curiosity: Discover the delightful new spirit in fragrance; 14) desire to save: 30 off music at our price. It's enough to make your Woofer throb; 15) egotism: Noone understands your skin better /Clarins skincare/; 16) prestige: Gaz de France. An image built on performance. Besides, advertising makes use of such appeals as safety, pride, desire to be in tune with time, leadership abilities, personal taste, efficiency, ambition, as well as reluctance to be criticized, risk of unsuccessful purchase, fear of physical pain, bad reputation, trouble, money loss and lots of others. If there is no real necessity or feeling which can be addressed by the advertising slogan, advertisers try to make up an idea about the product or service which would put it on the same row with things that the recipient already needs or wants. [6]

#### RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The system of appeals in advertising is based on the causal consecutive relations, meaning that the information contained in the message either indicates directly or implies a certain consequence of the message. As a rule, these relations can be described in terms of the relational formula: "If A, then B". (For instance: "If it's got to be clean, it's got to be Tide" /Tide bleach/, which can be paraphrased as "If A (you want to have clean things), then B (you have to use Tide)"; or another, less

explicit example: “The first and only international Chinese newsweekly” /YazhouZhoukan/, which in fact means: “If A (you want to know anything about China), then B (you have to read our edition)”.) The dominance of causal consecutive relations provides for high frequency of conditional utterances of various forms, meanings and functions. In advertising, conditional utterances express not only logical and grammatical causal consecutive relations, but also secondary subjective modal evaluated implications, characteristic of the functional properties of the Adspeak.

Since causal consecutive relations presuppose a certain consequential action of the addressee, we can conclude that the speech acts used in advertising are distinguished for imperative modality, which can be explicit or implicit, expressed by any motivating element or structure. The motivating function is expressed through direct imperative mode, that is, direct persuasion, appealing to the recipient’s mind, which is expressed through direct explicit logical motivation (“Ask your doctor for a trial of once-a-day CLARITIN. Experience 24-hour relief from seasonal nasal allergy symptoms: itchy, watery eyes; itchy palate; runny nose; and sneezing.”/allergy relief/). Logical influence is effected in a synthesis with the appealing and emotive functions, therefore persuasion, motivation are expressed by means of oblique explicit influence (“Here are a few benefits you won't find in our catalogue: a dramatic drop in overtime; an addiction to fresh air; periodic lapses from reality; improved outlook on life; decreased fear of heights...”).

Imperative aspects of the Adspeak show mostly through activation of emotive factor and appeal. The addressee’s will undergoes the most implicit influence. This is accounted for by a number of factors: 1) implicitly transmitted information can not be exposed to a truthfulness check, and the addresser is not liable for it in the court of law; 2) indirect methods of information transmission can be more efficient, since in that case the addressee does not feel the pressure on behalf of the addresser, which makes the object of advertising more attractive for them; 3) memorability of advertising is increased in that way, which is explained by the extent of the addressee’s involvement into



information processing - implication is a subjective product of the recipient's cognitive activity.

Both in the cases of direct persuasion and oblique influence imperative modality is closely linked with conditional modality. When persuasion is direct, the imperative is combined with the modal meaning of proposition, possibility. When there is oblique influence, the imperative is united with such subjective modal meanings as assumption, advice, warning, etc.

Imperativity may be expressed by a combination of explicit and implicit forms of speech influence, as in the following example: "Discover Spa, and you'll jump at our 99 2 for 1 offer" /mineral water/. Imperativity in the synthesis with information is expressed by two constructions, imperative and declarative, and the modality of persuasion is transmitted explicitly. The relation between the cause and consequence is a variety of the relational formula "If A (you discover Spa), then B (you'll jump at our offer)".

Subjective and modal meanings, their contextual realization provide for displacement of logical stresses, change in the theme and rheme of a text. For example: "Want to buy a home? Let us point you in the right direction" /Fannie Mae Foundation/. The text includes two segments: a question to the addressee, expressing supposition (you probably want to buy a home, don't you?) and intimate advice (come to us, we'll get you there). These segments form a logical structure which fits into the implicit formula: "If A (you want to buy a home), then B (tell us, we'll do it for you)". Thus, the communicative nucleus of the text under review is a conditional utterance, organized in separate segments –questive and constative. The modality of the theme and rheme expresses the principal objective of advertising - to attract the consumer, shaping the message in a way which would accentuate the addressee's interests, that is, interests of the potential client. As far as persuasive modality is concerned, it is softened by the shades of interest in the addressee's needs, sympathetic attitude towards him or her, friendly advice.

*Speech acts in advertising*

In advertising texts, where the informative and persuasive functions are closely bound, compilers have worked out a specific form of implicit influence upon the addressee, which imitates a conversation between a seller and a customer. This conversation involves a number of intentional categories assigned to the advertiser (the addresser), which can be described in terms of the theory of speech acts.

The use of speech acts in advertising fits into the general concepts of the theory of speech acts, which states that pronouncing an utterance we can not only transmit information, but make a lot of other actions at the same time. nowadays, it is widely recognized that communication involves a much larger range of actions than simple sentence-creating. Verbal means can serve to express a request, a question, an order, a warning, as well as advice, gratitude, and lots of other meanings. That ability of utterances is widely exploited in advertising, since implicit nominations play a dominant role in it.

In advertising, we can find various types of speech acts, depending on the communicative and pragmatic goal of the addressee. The most productive pragmatic types in ad-slogans are constatives (e.g. "Every day, we help thousands of people like Zoe fight cancer" /Imperial Cancer Research Fund/) and directives (e.g. "Be our partner in energy saving" /Eaga-energy efficiency systems/), making up 75,31% and 21,16% accordingly. The next one on the list is the questive speech act (e.g. "Where is your mustache?" /Milk/), making up 7,30% of the total. The other speech acts can be found as well. For instance, the performative speech act can be used in a sentence like: "You're invited to discover the power of Ceramides, the future of anti-aging skincare" /Elizabeth Arden skincare/; or promissive: "We'll get you there on time" /Saudi Arabian Airlines/. However, the frequency of their usage is much lower. Therefore, we shall analyze the three most common types of speech acts: constative, directive, and questive.

We can say that the texts of advertising are represented by two varieties: monologue advertising, which does not contain structures presupposing a response from the addressee, as in the

slogan: “Choosy moms choose Jif” /peanut butter/; and dialogue advertising, which either implies a response from the addressee, or the response is provided in the text itself, for instance: “What does it take to make tap water taste like this? /picture of a waterfall/ Not much. Brita” /picture of a water filter/. The use of these two varieties shapes the use of speech acts in advertising, which also falls under the influence of a great number of communicative factors.

In monologue advertising, the mostly wide-spread speech act is constative, since it is used as a rule to transmit information without any concern about the consequence of the act. Certainly, in advertising the consequences are of vital importance and of great concern at any time, but the use of indifferent tone and absolute, seemingly unquestionable constructions, creates a certain persuasive effect which is likely to serve the goal of advertising – to convince the recipient. The absolute certainty of the addresser is passed on to the addressee. For example, the slogan “Car insurance just for girls” makes us think that there must be something about it that is really just for girls, although, if we think about it logically, the idea does not seem plausible. In the same manner, we have little doubt that “No other camcorder can do all this” /for Panasonic camera/ when we read the slogan, though it is probably not true and not so absolute, in any event.

Constative speech acts are used as well in dialogue advertising. Besides, it makes extensive use of questives and directives, as well as various combinations of those, as described below.

Ad-slogans often make use of a combination of the constative and questive speech acts. These can be used for different semantic purposes. For instance, in the following text: “Born in mystery or mastery? Is emotion revealed or concealed? An elegant timepiece... or timeless piece of jewelry? There is only one certainty. The beauty of Shanta” /EBEL jewelry/, questive acts are used to create the atmosphere of uncertainty, which is then contrasted with the certainty of Shanta beauty. In the next example: “You can get softness and body under one condition. Softness and body? That takes Finesse” /conditioner/, the question serves to express surprise, supposedly felt by the

recipient. This slogan fits into formula of causal consecutive relations: "If A (you want to get softness and body), then B (use Finesse)". In the next example, the question is used to make a stunning impression, to stress the contrast, to shock the reader: "The princess dream. The pony dream. The pretty bride dream. Ready for the kick butt dream?" /Levi's jeans for women/). The questive speech act finalizes the general structure and emphasizes the climax.

Another productive combination is that of the questive and directive speech acts. Semantic implication of such utterances usually denotes, that if you haven't done or had something until now, you should go and do it or obtain it now. These are usually constructed along the lines of "If A, Then B", the A part being questive, and the B part – directive. For example, in the slogan "Client dinner? Be sure to use the good silver", the recipient is supposed to give an answer to the question in his/her mind, which may be "Yes", and in that case, which is certainly a crucial one for a business person, there is a ready-made solution which enables to facilitate the event. the slogan can be paraphrased in the following way: "If you are having a client dinner, then use the good silver". Similar intention can be traced in the slogan "Meeting someone special after work? Dress... Like you mean business!". The target recipient is supposed to be concerned with what he/she should wear to a date and answer "Yes" to the question, and immediately they are told what they can do in order to be successful. One could say: "If you are meeting someone special after work, then dress like you mean business".

The directive speech act is frequently used without "softeners" like 'please', etc. The question is, whether we should regard such acts as injunctive or requestive, and the most probable answer is that it is a merge of those, since the Imperative Mood in ad-slogans pretends to suggest to the recipient what he or she should do, but in most cases that suggestion is rather firm, and sometimes even rough. For instance: "Take precise aim. Target the best" /for advertising space in Financial Times/. The slogan basically tells the recipient that if he or she wants to target the best aim precisely the only choice they have is to place an advertisement in Financial Times,

which is certainly not the case. However, without any explanation the ad dictates a subjective viewpoint, which does not seem very tactful, though gives an impression of a good will of the addresser. The suggestion becomes too pressing to be a requestive one. In a similar way, in the slogan: "Choose peace of mind. Choose to cut your image's cost, even on small routine orders. Choose smiling. Choose meals with your family. Choose to know exactly how much your employees are spending. (And where.) Choose to make your business life easier"/VISA card/ the text structure and its meaning create an impression that a person is sure to be unhappy if he or she does not use the VISA service. The effect is increased by repetition of the word choose, which suggests two opposite implications: (1) the choice is yours; (2) you don't really have any choice. Please choose whatever you like, but what we are offering you is the only way to happiness. Consequently, by no means can we say that this is a neutral request. On the contrary, growing persuasion runs through the entire text.

#### CONCLUSION

The language of advertising is a specific linguistic variety with its own laws and structures, which combines, but is not limited to linguistic devices characteristic of other varieties. The speech and non-speech planning activity in advertising lies in coordinating the overall preliminary knowledge and the strategies known to the advertiser both with the needs and motivations of the addressee and with the object of advertising, and eventually producing the subjective motivation. Speech planning is coordinated by the semantic and pragmatic intention of the addresser.

The pragmatic effect of an advertising message depends upon the following factors:

- the addresser's intention, which results in the creation of the content of a message, and subsequently leads to the creation of certain addressee's motivations;

- the output of the addressee's decoding procedure, which in its turn depends on the content of the message and the situational at the moment of reception

In case of successful completion of the transmission procedure the advertiser receives the desired response from the addressee, which comprises three stages: knowledge, convictions, and actions.

The key component of an advertising message is its appeal. Various appeals used in advertising tend to recruit the recipient by means of addressing his needs and desires, and camouflaging the real addresser's intention, which is to convince the addressee to take certain actions.

Ad-slogans are characterized by predominant causal consecutive relations, which may be both explicit and implicit. Analysis of contextual realization shows that persuasive and informative objective in an ad-slogan can be expressed by various combinations of causal consecutive relations, and therefore these relations make up one of the basic structural models in ad-slogans.

The implication of causal consecutive relations serves to convince the addressee to make a logical conclusion and to act accordingly, which means that they display imperative modality. The texts of advertising are represented by two varieties: monologue advertising, which does not contain structures presupposing a reply from the addressee, and dialogue advertising, which either implies a reply from the addressee, or the reply is provided in the text itself.

A typical feature of advertising is the peculiar use of speech acts, resulting in displacement of logical stresses in advertising texts. The most productive speech acts in the language of advertising are constative, directive, and questive, as well as various combinations of those. The use of speech acts in advertising provides for realization of the persuasive intention of the addresser.

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