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## **DEPICTING PRAGMATICS OF ADVERTISING DISCOURSE**

The current research paper aims to articulate pragmatic strategies of advertising discourse. Advertising discourse is pragmatic in itself as it deals with particular communication strategies. These strategies are implemented within speech acts, presupposition and deixis. Advertisement has a persuasive and urging effect if it takes into account psychological and social factors of its target audience. Even if the potential consumers are not named explicitly a certain profile is presumed to exist. It may not match the real consumers, however, it is created as an ideal image that the real consumers would like to match. In identifying themselves with this profile, the potential consumers become both the narratees and the narrators of the advertising text. Advertising strategies and 'desired self' profile creation depend on a number of social factors, such as nationality, age, gender, education, social and family status, etc., that advertisers take into account making targeted marketing extremely powerful.

*Keywords:* pragmatics, advertising discourse, advertising strategies, presupposition, deixis, speech act, social factors, targeted advertising.

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## **К ВОПРОСУ О ПРАГМАТИКЕ РЕКЛАМНОГО ДИСКУРСА**

В статье рассматриваются прагматические стратегии рекламного дискурса. Рекламный дискурс прагматичен сам по себе, поскольку он включен в процесс персуазивной коммуникации, осуществляемой на основе определенных типов текста и реализующей попытку преиму-

ственно вербального воздействия на реципиента посредством коммуникативных стратегий убеждения с целью добиться от него действий в интересах рекламодателя. Эти стратегии реализуются в пресуппозиции, дейксисе и речевых актах. Рекламный дискурс для достижения персуазивных целей принимает во внимание определенные социальные характеристики целевой аудитории (национальность, возраст, гендер, образование и др.), при этом пытаясь их изменить, создавая некий идеальный образ, с которым ассоциирует себя реципиент, в рамках коммуникативного эффекта, запланированного рекламодателем.

*Ключевые слова:* прагматика, рекламный дискурс, рекламные стратегии, пресуппозиция, дейксис, речевой акт, социальные факторы, таргетированная реклама.

The linguistic interest for the advertising discourse arises from the function of advertising texts in modern society. Advertising represents the society, mirroring its cultural dominants, moral values, etc. It is connected with the mass and mosaic character of sociocultural situation and the existence of 'mind industry'. The ability of advertising to affect human minds, create, shape, alter and dictate moral values, and, to a certain extent, to influence the social status of its potential consumers is of interest to researchers.

Advertising is referred to as a form of a discourse in the sense that it has influenced not only the structure of the language and the modality of lifestyle, but also the content of routine daily acts of communicative exchanges.

From the sociolinguistic point of view, advertising discourse is, in V. I. Karasik's terms, institutional discourse [3, c. 7]. Contrary to personal discourse, in which the speaker is presented with their rich inner world, institutional discourse represents a social institute. Institutional discourse presupposes communication within a specific framework of roles and statuses [4, c. 17]. It is the template character that distinguishes institutional discourse from personal one. Institutional discourse has two system-forming features: the aim and the participants of communication. The aim of advertising text is not only to attract potential consumers' attention, but also to motivate them (or at least the bigger the part of them) to act, i.e. to buy the product advertised. The main participants of advertising discourse are agents and

recipients, for example, an advertiser and a consumer. It should be noted that communicative clichés within institutional discourse are the keys to understanding of the relations system in a certain institution [5, c. 198–199].

Pragmatics is said to bridge the gap between the theoretical and the functional use of the language. It is, it seems, closer to 'the reality of the language' and values its immense possibilities of expression. Pragmatics is defined as the study of the aspects of meaning and ways of language use that are dependent on the speaker, the addressee and other features of the context of utterance, such as the following: the effect that the following have on the speaker's choice of expression and the addressee's interpretation of an utterance: the context of utterance, the observed principles of communication, the goals of the speaker. Pragmatics concerns given versus new information, including presupposition; deixis and speech acts [6, p. 21].

D. Crystal views presupposition from two different angles. From the semantic point of view it is defined as a condition which must be satisfied if a particular state of affairs is to obtain, or, in other words, what a speaker assumes producing an utterance prior to making an utterance as opposed to what is actually asserted. Presupposition is also analysed as a certain type of logical relationship between statements, contrasting with *entailment*. D. Crystal underlines that some linguists use the term presupposition in a narrower sense, in a two-part analysis of sentences which contrasts the information assumed

(or presupposed) by the speaker, and that which is at the centre of the speaker's communicative interest; in this sense presupposition is opposed to *focus* [1, p. 410].

The Glossary of Linguistic terms defines presupposition as a background belief, relating to an utterance that must be mutually known or assumed by the speaker and the addressee for the utterance to be considered appropriate in context, placed in the form of assertion, denial or question, and can generally be associated with specific lexical item or grammatical feature (presupposition trigger) in the utterance [7].

It is the presupposition trigger that has a strong impact on the reader/listener of the advertisement and that enables linguists to perform a more profound linguistic analysis. In linguistics there exists a taxonomy of presupposition triggers, presented by S. Levinson [6, p 26] (examples are ours).

1. Definite descriptions: *Watch in titanium ceramic, a new highly-scratch-resistant. Its unique colour and shine are obtained by the addition of titanium to ceramic and diamond power polishing. Self-winding mechanical movement. 42-hour power reserve* (Esquire).

2. Factive verbs: realize, (it) be odd that, be sorry/proud/indifferent/glad/sad that, know that, regret that: *What's more, nearly 80 % of women over the age of 30 don't get their recommended intake of milk products. Why? Because too often, they simply don't know what a serving size is or how many they need to have every day* (More Magazine).

3. Implicative verbs: managed (>> tried to), avoided (>> was expected to), forgot to (>> ought to have), happened to (>> didn't plan/intend to), intended to: *Forget blisters... High heel comfort all day long. Relieves pain instantly* (Cosmopolitan).

4. Change of state verbs: continue, arrive, begin, come, enter, go, leave, stop, take (>>X was in/at/with Y): *Visible signs*

*of aging hair can begin to appear as early as your 20s* (More Magazine).

5. Repetition on semantic (lexical units, such as return, again, another time, any more, come back, repeat, restore), lexical and syntactical levels: *Do your thing, sister. Do your thing. Unlimited youth. Just do it Nike* (Nike).

6. Expressions of temporal relations: while, after, as, before, during, since, whenever: *After exhaustive research on more than 20,000 effective ingredients, Shisheido discovered a remarkable Asian plant extract* (More Magazine).

7. Stressed constituents: *Treat your INNER GODDESS. SHE DESERVES IT* (Cosmopolitan).

8. Returned actions: back, in return, too: *Satisfaction guaranteed, or your money back* (More Magazine).

9. Comparisons: *Stop living with your wrinkles, start seeing smoother, younger-looking skin... 88 % of women saw firmer skin... Because you're worth it. L'Oreal. PARIS* (More Magazine).

10. Counterfactual conditionals: *If the notice had only said 'mine-field' in English as well as Welsh, we would/would never have lost poor Llewellyn* (Esquire).

11. Questions:

a) questions presenting alternatives that tend to trigger a presupposition that one of the two is true: *Are you into Length & Definition? (next page) ...or Length & Drama?* (Cosmopolitan);

b) questions containing interrogative pro-forms tend to trigger a presupposition containing an indefinite pro-form: *What can a car maker learn from a horse and a rider? (>> a car maker can learn something from a horse and a rider)* (Esquire).

Presupposition analysis focuses on presupposition triggers in the text of advertisement and their interpretation in order to find out the overall presupposition and hidden message of the advertisement [2, p. 55]. Let us decode presuppositions in the following example.

*Stop living with your wrinkles... start seeing smoother, younger-looking skin. Give us 8 weeks, you'll see the results on deep-set wrinkles. Revi-talift. The world's #1 anti-wrinkle brand. More than smoothing. Advanced repair: 88 % of women saw firmer skin. 84 % saw revitalized skin. Because you're worth it. L'Oreal. PARIS (More Magazine).*

The presuppositions found in this advertisement are as follows:

1. Stop living with your wrinkles (>> you have wrinkles, they are noticeable, you do not do anything about it).

2. Start seeing smoother, younger-looking skin (>> you have wrinkles; your skin is not smooth; your skin is not young; you see your old wrinkled skin).

3. Give us 8 weeks, you'll see the results on deep-set wrinkles (>> you have wrinkles; your skin has been neglected for so long, that deep wrinkles set in; we are professionals; we perform miracles; miracles take time).

4. The world's #1 anti-wrinkle brand (>> you have wrinkles; you want to get rid of them; there are other brands as well; we are the best).

5. More than smoothing (>> you have wrinkles; wrinkles may set in again; our product performs 'advanced' miracles).

6. Advanced repair (>> your skin is ruined; your skin needs extra effort; the process is rocket science; the product provides complicated professional treatment).

7. 88 % of women saw firmer skin. 84 % saw revitalized skin (>> there are other women with wrinkles; there are a lot of other women who have wrinkles; all women try our product; most women report a miraculous experience; most women have young skin now; we are professionals, we conduct research; you can trust both us and other women).

8. Because you're worth it (>> the product is for the selected few; you have been selected; it is expensive; you can afford it; you deserve your miracle).

Looking at the presuppositions, it is obvious that they serve a single purpose: to show the product in favourable light, claiming that the products is either the best or better than competitors'. The presuppositions of this advertisement fall into two groups: those describing the sphere of the product and those describing the target audience. Hence, the latter enables us to extract the abovementioned presuppositions to model a stereotypical image of the target consumer, namely, an aging woman who is worried about aging processes and wants to stop them, she is ready to wait and pay money as she needs the result – the younger self.

Along with presupposition, pragmatics is also concerned with deixis. Deixis is a technical term (derived from Greek) that means 'pointing' via language. Any linguistic term used to accomplish this 'pointing' is called a deictic expression [9, p. 13]. These expressions can be used to indicate people – *person deixis* ('me', 'you'), location – *spatial deixis* ('here', 'there'), or time – *temporal deixis* ('now', 'then'). G. Yule states that all these expressions depend, for their interpretation, on the speaker and the hearer sharing the same context.

Deixis is a form of referring that is tied to the speaker's context, with the most basic distinction between deictic expressions being 'near the speaker' versus 'away from the speaker'. In English *proximal terms* are 'this', 'here', 'now', and *distal terms* – 'that', 'there', 'then'. Person deixis operates on a basic three-part division, exemplified by the pronouns for the first person ('I'), second person ('you') and third person ('he', 'she', 'it'). It is quite obvious that third person pronouns are distal forms in terms of person deixis. Thus, their usage is a way of communicating the distance and professional expertise.

Personal deixis is widely used in advertisements, performing various functions there. It has been noted that

extensive use of the pronoun 'you' makes the customer an active participant of the action: they can change life, they can control natural processes. This is characteristic of advertising texts for seniors. For example, Nike advertisement features imperative sentences which contain deictic expressions indicating the power of an aging person to take control of the natural processes and prolong her youth: *Do your thing, sister. Do your thing. Unlimited youth. Just do it* (Nike).

Exclusive pronoun 'we' is used to signify a team of people working for the benefit of the customer. This kind of deictic expressions can be seen in advertisements targeted at older women concerned with the quality of the products and money paid for them:

*Stop living with your wrinkles...start seeing smoother, younger-looking skin. Give us 8 weeks, you'll see the results on deep-set wrinkles. Revitalift. The world's #1 anti-wrinkle brand. More than smoothing. Advanced repair: 88 % of women saw firmer skin. 84 % saw revitalized skin. Because you're worth it. L'Oreal. PARIS* (More Magazine).

Exclusion can be achieved through impersonal sentences, that is observable in the male-oriented advertising texts. The use of passive constructions assures the recipient that the information presented is objective and impartial:

*IWC Pilot. Engineered for aviators. Big pilot's watch. Your wrist never felt this big before. The case of the top model in the IWC Pilot's Watch range is a gigantic 46,2 mm in diameter. And the technology inside it is even more impressive: the largest IWC-manufactured automatic movement with its Pellaton winding system is protected against strong magnetic fields by a soft iron inner case. And needless to say, envious glances. IWC. Engineered for men who know life* (Esquire).

Seeing the technical characteristics of the product presented within the frame of

orientational conceptual metaphor 'more is up', the male recipient is ready to associate himself with the product advertised. The deictic 'we' would disperse the attention and that is not what either the customer or the advertiser wants.

The concept of distance mentioned above is also relevant to spacial deixis, where the relative location of people is being indicated. The truly pragmatic basis of special deixis is psychological distance. Physically close objects will tend to be treated by the speaker as psychologically close. Also, something that is physically distant will generally be treated as psychologically distant.

In temporal deixis the relative form 'now' indicates both the time coinciding with the speaker's utterance and the time of the speaker's voice being heard. In contrast, the distal expression 'then' applies to both past and future, as being distant from the present moment. One basic type of temporal deixis in English, as mentioned by G. Yule, is the choice of verb tense. The present tense is a proximal form and the past tense is the distal form. The ideas not likely to happen are presented with the distal verb forms as well, which mark their psychological distance from the present moment [9, p. 16].

The temporal deixis usually works in two spheres: the point from the moment of speaking lasting into the future (used to speak about the problems recipients might be having and the appearance of a completely new product which would change life from now on), and within the period from a point in the past with the result available in the present (used to present results of product testing or studying the market).

*Shiseido. Imagine your skin without its age. After exhaustive research on more than 20,000 effective ingredients, Shiseido discovered a remarkable Asian plant extract, Makurossi, that inhibits damage caused by the wrinkle-triggering*

enzyme. Using this unprecedented power of nature, Wrinkle-Resist24 comprehensively overrides the visible signs of aging. Now, smooth, youthful looking skin can be yours, for life. Benefiance WrinkleResist24. (More Magazine)

In attempt to express themselves, people do not only produce utterances containing grammatical structures and words, they perform actions via those utterances. According to G. Yule, actions performed via utterances are called speech acts. All the five main categories and, therefore, five different functions performed by speech acts: declarations, representatives, expressives, directives and commissives that G. Yule differentiates [9, p. 35] can be seen in advertising discourse:

- declarations in advertising are speech acts that are intended to change the world via utterance: *Priest, 'I now pronounce you husband and wife'.* <...> Sometimes a car lasts even longer than a marriage;

- representatives are speech acts that state what the speaker believes to be true, these are statements of facts, assertions, conclusions, and descriptions: *Visible signs of aging hair can begin to appear as early as your 20s. Be Ageless* (More Magazine);

- expressives state what the speaker feels or experiences, they can be statements of pleasure, pain, likes, dislikes, joy, or sorrow: *Now, smooth, youthful looking skin can be yours, for life!* (Shiseido Benefiance WrinkleResist24);

- directives express what the speaker wants in the form of commands, orders, requests, suggestions, either positive or negative: *Enhance your life* (Finn Comfort Shoes);

- commissives express what the speaker intends, committing themselves to some future action. Those are promises, threats, refusals, pledges that can be performed either alone, or as a member of a group or a community: *So what are you going to do now? – Grow up. Be a good parent. Drive* (Mercedes Benz).

As advertising texts belong to pragmatic genre, they have target audience and specific functions. According to A. M. Makedontseva, there are three basic functions of advertisement: informative, persuasive (or suggestive) and urging (stimulating) [8].

The informative function is realised primarily in the verbal component of the advertisement by means of naming the product, its characteristics, and advantages over similar products, giving information about its producer or dealer. It may also be realised in the iconic component, my means of images showing the product or something that depicts emotional response to it.

Advertising informs its consumers about its products and services with the only goal – to make consumer believe in high quality and superiority of the product and to generate consumer demand for it. So, we can speak of the informative-persuasive function of advertising, i. e. influencing mind and subconscious of the consumer in order to make them buy more. Persuasive function finds its realisation in both verbal and iconic components and is aimed at imposing a certain feeling, opinion, desire on the recipients of the message. Thus, the persuasive function of advertising discourse transforms into urging. In that case advertisements are oriented not only to the conscious but also to the subconscious of the recipient and the means employed are not logically grounded arguments supported by facts but the control mechanisms of latent desires of the recipients, their self-identification, fears etc. The urging function is aimed at making the consumer act in accordance with the advertisement and here its verbal component appears to be crucial.

Advertisements exert their persuasive and urging effect if they target their appeal to their potential consumers. Thus, breaking large market into smaller segments to concentrate on a specific group of

customers within this segmentation, allows advertising to exploit the information on psychological and social factors of the target segment, implement this information into its pragmatic strategies, which eventually makes marketing extremely powerful. Even though advertisements might not explicitly name their narratees they are likely to indicate a 'kind of person', a profile that is presumed to exist. This kind of person, may not match the real recipients of the advertising, but could be someone that they would like to match. In identifying themselves with this profile, the recipients 'become' both the narrators and the narratees of the advertising text.

Advertising strategies and narratee profile creation depend on a number of social factors, such as nationality, age, gender, education, social and family status, etc., and every factor requires its own research. However, in the examples given below aimed at only one particular age group, namely elderly customers, we can already observe advertisers taking into account information on social characteristics of the targeted group members in an attempt to sell a product/service to them.

The analysis of the advertising corpus selected for this study (150 texts in total) revealed the following range of thematic groups: skin care (43 %), health and medicine (15 %), hair care (14 %), food and drinks (8 %), hobbies and activities: travel, vacation packages, equipment, supplies (5 %), finance: investment, donations (5 %), home: kitchen appliances, home accessories (5 %), footwear (2 %), accessories (2 %), fragrance (1 %).

Interestingly, advertisers offer a wide range of topics for the targeted age group. It seems also noteworthy that there is transformation of the money topic from the sphere of loans and taxation discounts in, for example, Today's Parent Magazine which is targeted at working adults, into the sphere of donations in the More magazine –

which is suggestive of the material gain throughout the life. There is presupposition that the target audience (both male and female) has financial stability. This idea is supported by producers of expensive product range (Neutrogena, Olay, NeoStrata, RoC, L'Oreal Paris; Mercedes Benz, Rolex, Richard Mille, etc.). Beauty industry companies presume that aging female customers realise inevitability of aging processes and are ready to pay to stop them. Among other presuppositions about this age group the following deserve special attention: women are still preoccupied with their looks, though the purpose is not to stand out but to look younger, they have the desire for visible results, and are inclined to appeal to professionals for help. Hence, advertising for this age group often includes expert discourse. Presuppositions about aging male consumers' financial stability are: men's hard work has finally earned them freedom, luxury and time for themselves; life is short but there is still time to regain control of their life.

*Have you noticed your hair changing? New Be Ageless breakthrough anti-aging scalp detoxifying collection with Advanced Color Protection. Be ageless. (More Magazine)*

*Now, smooth, youthful looking skin can be yours, for life. (Shiseido Benefiance WrinkleResist24)*

*You follow the same path your whole life. And one day you wake up and wonder... Is this it? I did something I didn't love for 35 years. So, if you love it, do it, do it with all your might. – So what are you going to do now? Grow up. Be a good parent. Drive. (Mercedes Benz)*

*Enhance your life. The most exquisite handmade walking shoes on Earth. (Finn Comfort Shoes)*

As seen in the examples above, the most frequent linguistic patterns in the advertisements are rhetorical questions, imperatives, epithets, modal verbs, puns, metaphor, etc. Of all the abovementioned

expressive means, modal verbs require a commentary. On the one hand, they sound as a promise, a chance, on the other hand, they help the recipients feel more powerful to change their life. Puns and metaphors are closely connected with the conceptual metaphor and blending processes employed in the advertisements. The most typical structures are 'abstract is concrete' (which make the problem more clear-cut), 'life is a journey (way)', metonymical transfer 'you are your hair', which underlines the importance of hair care, 'food is fuel' and a novel one 'chewing gum is dental clinic staff'. Also, targeting at elderly audience advertisers use nostalgic references in their marketing materials, especially while applying storytelling techniques, which can help elderly customers relate to advertising message or spark their interest in the product or service advertised by

a company.

So, all of the abovementioned pragmatic strategies acting together can produce the desired effect and make advertisements both reflect and construct the reality, persuading its target audience that the constructed reality is not only more desirable but is achievable via product purchase.

Thus, focus on a specific group of customers, exploitation of socio-demographic and even personal data, and developing coherent pragmatic strategies accordingly, makes advertising in particular and marketing in general extremely powerful.

Further carefully designed studies of personalised and targeted advertising would shed more light on pragmatics in advertising discourse.

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