

Advertising Communication in Electronic Discourse



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One of the main characteristic features of today's linguistic research is the functional approach to discourse studies, i.e. the study of functional peculiarities of linguistic units in different communicative situations. In this respect, not only the pure linguistic (intra-linguistic) factors are important, but also the extra-linguistic (social, cultural, technological) context which includes many different aspects. Functional styles (discourse types, speech varieties, registers of speech) are actually realizations of one common national language which, however, fundamentally differ from one another. Language appears in diverse forms in different spheres of human activity and thus it determines its expressions through various particular realizations. This means that the same stylistic categories and linguistic units are realized in different meanings and tones in different styles of language.

The development of the extra-linguistic reality causes major and minor modifications in the stylistic characteristics and the ways they are related to one another in actual communication. Such dynamism is present in all the phases of the historical development of the language but it is more evident today due to the present socio-political and technological processes taking place in the society. Of importance are not only texts representing the traditional speech varieties, but also other sub-styles and genres budding off present extra-linguistic reality.

The advertising language and the electronic discourse represent the above mentioned non-traditional registers of speech. In fact, it is difficult to define their place in the system of functional styles. Advertising is either considered a variety of publicistic style for realizing the persuasive function typical of the latter, or scientific style as evidenced in scientific-technical advertising. It is also referred to as a type of mass communication along with other means of traditional mass-media. The same can be said about the electronic discourse which, despite the fact of including numerous types of texts (fiction, academic writing, advertisements, letters), as a whole can be considered a new form of mass communication. With their numerous minor expressions and forms, the two types of this modern discourse have created opportunities of developing fundamentally new stylistic rules and new forms of linguistic interaction. Thus, in recent years scholarly attention has been given to a new type of discourse which enrolls not only common internet texts and advertising proper, but also **Net Advertising** or **Online Advertising**. This speech variety is one form of internet discourse and has become an indispensable part of modern communication today, characterizing not only a new level

of technological development which influences the life of people in general, but also a means of influencing their language in particular. It is a well-known fact that the language is a part of human cognitive activity providing a tool for categorizing the world around.

Net Advertising is first of all a means of communication. It is the art and business of persuasive communication. It is not merely words and pictures that appear on computers. It aims at communicating information about products, services and ideas to people: information designed to persuade them to make action decisions. Traditional advertising has been principally a one-way process, but with today's new internet technology consumers can give feedback to advertising message in real time using the same channels as the sender. The basic communication begins when one party (the source) formulates an idea, encodes it (a message) and sends it to another party (the receiver). The latter must decode the message in order to understand it. Then, to respond, the receiver formulates a new idea, encodes that concept and sends a new message back through some channel. A message that acknowledges or responds to the original one is feedback, and it affects the encoding of a new message. The communication process is complex because of multidimensional nature of the source, the message and the recipient.

The first form of the World Wide Web was entirely text-based, it had no graphics and the initial advertisements resembled simple classified print. The result of the latest development in Online Advertising is a variety of verbal and non-verbal forms, the number of which continues to expand. All these forms are expressed in advertising opportunities classified as Web Sites, Banners, Buttons, Sponsorships, Interstitials.

In all the above mentioned forms of Online Advertising the language has to be employed with care in order to deliver the message effectively and efficiently. Most obviously the language must be positive, unreserved, emphasizing the uniqueness of the things offered (*There is nothing like..., This is the only chance to...*). Figurative expressions are common (*sunshine* - cereals, *smiling colours* - hair shampoo). Rhythm, rhyme and other phonetic effects, deviant spelling are noticeable (*Wot a lot I got. Milk has gotten with bottle.*). Considerable use is made of inexplicit grammatical constructions [*X costs less. (than what?)*].

As in newspaper advertising, the basic elements for an online advertisement are the headline, the subhead, the body copy, the visual (illustrations or illustration captions and logos) and the layout, all of which are done more elaborately.

As in newspaper English, the most important function of the headline is the attractive function which leads to the stimulation of the consumers' interest in the rest of the message. While the visual portion of the ad is obviously important, the headline often shoulders most of the responsibility of attracting the readers' attention, referring to the words in the leading position of the advertisement – the words that will be read first or positioned to draw most attention. Headlines are usually set in larger, darker type and are often set apart from the body copy or text portion of the ad to give them prominence.

The headline is usually the first thing people look at in any ad; only very few people will go beyond the headline and read the body copy. So in addition to attracting attention,

the headline must encourage and give a good reason to the reader to pass to the body copy portion, which contains more detailed and persuasive information about the product or service. To do this, the headline must put forth the main informational theme, appeal or proposition of the advertisement in a few words. Some ads contain little of body copy, so the headline must work with the illustration to communicate the entire advertising message.

Very often the headline is stripping away of grammatical clues leaving the reader to guess what stands in relation to what.

Shop Go Red
Exclusive merchandise and name brand products!
Live a Go Red Lifestyle.
Share the Power with your girlfriends and your doctor.

The above headline appearing on a red background does not suggest anything to the reader. Perhaps the deteriorated grammatical structure and the absence of punctuation (*shop go red*) make the meaning so vague that the reader is encouraged to read the body copy following the headline to understand that *go red* is a shop for women where only red dresses are sold and that wearing red gives women powers to prevent diseases. Here we deal with a benefit headline, which promises the audience that experiencing the utility of the product will be rewarding. Besides, the headline is good enough to draw attention and induce the visitors to read the body copy thus realizing one of its main functions. The syntactical inversion of the subhead (*name brand products*) is used to intensify the meaning of the headline.

Watch the new
Levi's
Commercials
Walk
Levi's What to

W @ @ r

Often nothing more than intonation gives us crucial signals how a sentence should be understood. From the headline the reader is expected to guess whether *walk* is a noun or a verb, whether *is* should be supplied, whether two words beside each other belong together, and what relates to what in a sentence. So, when communication takes an unexpected turn, we may be amused and get stimulated to read the body copy. The ability to draw attention verbally and non-verbally (through illustrations), brevity and appeal to the target are characteristic of the *Levi's* above headline. It seems to be a question (without the interrogation mark) and a call to watch the collection. Its non-verbal part (not illustrated here) is the TV-set placed in the human body. The headline is written on the screen. Even with the bare name of the company on the screen, the headline would realize its non-verbal attractive function.

The subhead is unique in the way that if the advertisement has only one headline

(the main head), it can have one or more secondary heads or subheads. They are usually smaller than the headline. They appear above or below the main headline or within the body copy. Subheads are usually used to enhance the readability of the message by breaking up the large amounts of body copy and highlighting key sales points. Their content reinforces the headline and advertising slogan or theme. The function of the subhead is informative, i.e. it lets the visitor know briefly what the text that follows is about. It reinforces the headline and the ad's overall theme and serves as a stepping stone from the headline to the body copy. The structure is mostly in the form of a sentence.

FOLGERS

Stay connected with her this Mother's Day

Give Your Mom What She Really Wants This Mother's Day - To Hear From You.

In this advertisement of the coffee company "Folgers" the meaning of the subheads is vague. It just makes hints of *staying connected* and *giving a call* to mothers or sending something to them, but the brand name stands out clearly suggesting coffee. Both subheads perform the function of instructing the visitor through the use of imperative mood which usually seems to be negative but of course this is not the case. The sentence presents new information or at least highlights the older one.

A common strategy in advertising language is to use very short potential utterances as sentences to maximize the amount of highlighted information that is being presented. The subhead usually introduces the non-verbal means of communication: the illustration, followed by a caption, which is a set of three line sentence, put in smaller type to explain the illustration of the advertisement.

The body copy is the main textual part of an ad and has its main function: to satisfy the curiosity resulting from the realization of the attractive function of the headline with the illustrations and the small portion of the informative function of the subhead. If the aim of the headline and subhead is to attract and instruct, the aim of the text is to amplify the instructions. If the headline asks a question, the text answers it. If the illustration shows someone who failed to use the product, the body copy tells how to correct the mistake. In general the body copy tells visitors how to satisfy their needs and solve their problems. It is done in clear, concise, personal language.

The body copy is the heart of advertising communication and aims at having the target audience read it. This is a difficult task. The dilemma here is that it should be long enough to communicate the advertiser's message and short enough to hold the readers' interest.

Body copy content often flows from the points made in the headline or various subheads, but the specific content depends on the type of the advertising appeal or executive style being used. For example, the straight sell copy that presents relevant information, product features and benefits, or competitive advantages, is often used with the various types of rational appeals. Emotional appeals often use narrative copy that tells a story or provides an interesting account of a problem or situation involving the

product. This means that the advertising body copy is written to go along with various types of creative appeal on the one hand and executions on the other: comparisons, price appeals, demonstrations, humour, dramatized life situations and the like. The style chosen is appropriate for the type of appeal being used and effective for executing the creative strategy and communicating the advertiser's message to the target audience.

The main (body) copy of advertising language probably uses words from a restricted subset of English word stock often with some emotional as well as literal value. In advertisements aimed at teenagers, the pronoun *you, he, him, she, her* are highly frequent. In other advertising domains some interesting contrast in the use of pronouns is found. It is probably more useful to look at usage and statistics in restricted domains of advertising, rather than to generalize across all cases. However, an overview of a number of ads shows quite clearly the frequency of adjectives and verbs in a sample of Internet Advertising.

The most frequent adjectives are: *big, bright, cheap, clean, crisp, delicious, easy, extra, fine, free, fresh, full, good (better, best), great, new, real, rich, safe, special, sure, wonderful*. The most frequent verbs are: *buy, choose, come, feel, get, give, go, have, see, know, keep, like, look, love, make, need, start, take, taste, use*.

A DIAMOND IS FOREVER

Engagement

THIS IS THE MOMENT SHE HAS BEEN DREAMING ABOUT SINCE SHE WAS A LITTLE GIRL: THE LOVE OF HER LIFE IS PROPOSING TO HER, ASKING HER TO JOIN HIM FOR ETERNITY. BECAUSE DIAMONDS HAVE MAINTAINED THEIR BEAUTY AND STRENGTH THROUGHOUT TIME. THE DIAMOND ENGAGEMENT RING HE PRESENTS TO HER IS A PERFECT SYMBOL OF HIS PROMISE TO LOVE HER ETERNALLY.

Advertising as a planned message, helps to convey the product message. As stated above, it is difficult to get the target audience to read the body copy. In this example of the advertisement of *Diamond is forever*, we have a romantic text of the body copy which seems to be a fairy tale, where the conceptions of eternity of love and diamonds are somehow fused together. The headline is a metaphorical allusion to the eternity of love and diamonds. The parallel is drawn between the ever-lasting character of diamonds and the wish to have such a long-lasting relationship in marriage. Any bride reading the content of the advertisement would be interested in going on and looking through all the suggested styles.

There are no strict rules of writing outstanding body copies. Different people work successfully in different ways with different approaches and styles. However, there are some regularities common to most body copies that have been observed:

- Short sentences with short familiar words are used.
- Either positive forms or strong negatives are used. Strong negatives are *never, avoid* and *can not*.

- Contractions of literary character (*don't, can't, weren't*) are employed widely.
- The active voice is more common. For example, *Floors clean better with....* is stronger than *Floors can be cleaned better by....*
- The present tense is more common. *My floor is cleaner with....* is stronger than *I used...and my floor was cleaner.*
- Only the most necessary words – as many or as few as needed should be used to communicate the message.
- The message should be personal, directed to the interlocutor and at the same time should express the reader's point of view.

Visual elements (illustrations or illustration captions and logos) are the fourth major component of advertising communication. The illustration is often a dominant part of an advertisement and plays an important role in determining its effectiveness. The visual portion must attract attention, communicate an idea or image, and work in a synergistic fashion with the headline and body copy to produce an effective message. Many decisions have to be made regarding the visual portion of an advertisement: what identification marks should be included (brand name, company or trade name, trademark, logos), whether to use photos or hand-drawn or painted illustrations, what colours to use (black and white, vivid colours or just a splash of colour) and what the focus of the visual should be. The style may be too simple but at the same time it causes to take interest in it, to go on reading the message which is made clear in the reader's mind just by the visual. The mere sight of the visual creates an immediate mental association with the brand. Contrast in colour is an effective way of drawing attention to a particular element. The visual breaks through the visitor's psychological screens to create the kind of attention that leads to perception. The colours, pictures and logos are perfect means to communicate an idea through a non-verbal way of expression.

The layout is the finalization of an Internet Advertisement. While each individual component of an advertisement is important, the key factor is how the verbal and non-verbal elements are blended into a finished advertisement. A layout is the physical arrangement of the various parts of the advertisement, including the headline, the subhead, the body copy, illustrations and identifying marks. Capitalization, the fonts and the font sizes are important elements of the layout to realize a non-verbal communication.

The linguistic study of Electronic Advertising makes it clear that this new variety of speech is a type of informative communication which is characterized by persuasive style. The study of this type of communication is important for students of business, journalism, sociology, psychology, political science, economics, history, science or art. Besides, this variety of speech, which has appeared recently, calls for special linguistic analysis.

The concept that technological advance (viewed as an extra-linguistic factor) has been responsible for fundamental intra-linguistic changes in the way people communicate throughout history is quite real for the Internet Discourse and its sub-style of Internet Advertising which is an indispensable part of modern communication,

characterizing not only a new level of technological development which influences the life of people in general but also a means of influencing their language in particular.

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Գովազդները էլեկտրոնային դիսկուրսում

Անգլերենի գործառական-ոճական ժամանակակից դրսևորում համարվող էլեկտրոնային գովազդի դիսկուրսը աչքի է ընկնում մի շարք ոճական առանձնահատկություններով, որոնցից են փոխաբերական արտահայտությունների, կարճ նախադասությունների, գրական բնույթի կրճատումների, ներգործական սեռի բայերի լայն կիրառությունը և դրական կամ ծայրահեղ բացասական իմաստ արտահայտող բառային միավորների գործածությունը: