

READER CONTACT IN ADVERTISING DISCOURSE

Advertising is a form of communication which is initiated by organizations and businesses to reach the public through different commercial advertising media: wall painting, street furniture components, printed flyers, radio, cinema and television adverts, web banners, mobile telephone screens, shopping carts, bus stop benches, human billboards, magazines, newspapers, town criers, sides of buses, musical stage shows, subway platforms and trains, posters, and the backs of event tickets and supermarket receipts, etc.

Press advertising describes advertising in a printed medium such as a newspaper, magazine, or trade journal. This may be a medium with a very broad readership base, such as a major national newspaper or magazine, or a narrowly targeted medium such as a local newspaper. The object of our investigation is the peculiarities of reader contact in press advertising.

The pragmatic orientation of an advertisement is determined by its communicative purpose to persuade viewers, readers or listeners to take some action, for example, to buy a product. Besides this predominant function, advertising also performs other functions such as amusing, informing, pleading, warning, etc.

An advertisement usually includes the name of a product or service and how that product or service could benefit the consumer; it tries to persuade potential customers to purchase or to consume that particular brand.

Researchers of advertising texts point out that the process of communication between addresser and addressee can be described as a relation which involves four participant worlds: (1) the world of the sender, where the product is manufactured, (2) the fictional world where characters present the product or are associated with it, (3) the fantasy world of the receiver and (4) the real world of the receiver. The aim of senders is “to push the product, via the world of fiction and fantasy, into the real world of the consumer” [1].

So we must differentiate between the creator/sender of the advertisement who belongs to the real world and the story-teller who is created by the author as a character of the fictional world. The advertising text can be written either from the third person or from the first person. When the text is presented from the third person, the creator of the advertising text and its story-teller coincide: *When forest products are your business, planting 1.7 million trees every day is a smart investment [2:209]*. In this case the story-teller is an observer of the situation, which makes the text more objective.

When the advertising text is written from the first person, the story-teller may be associated with:

- the author of the text: *We can never be second [2: 254]*
- or its characters: *Can you believe we travel 38,400 miles to get enough beeswax for this one little tin? [3:173]*. Here the story –teller is associated with the bees.

Advertising is a specific form of group communication. Traditionally, any conversation, a speech before a group included, is understood as a process of exchanging utterances. Press advertising is a more subtle version of the same kind of exchange although usually only the sender of the advertisement is talking. While reading an advertisement, the readers either do not speak or their commentaries are not heard by the writer of the advertisement. Nevertheless the reader participates in the discussion by following the writer's argument, agreeing or disagreeing, and thinking about the points being made.

The writer of advertisements is constantly aware of the different kinds of contacts that are occurring with the readers. Interaction is dependent on such basic elements as whether or not the message has been well designed to meet the needs and interests of those who see it.

To establish physical, emotional, and mental contact with the reader, press advertising writers use a variety of linguistic and paralinguistic techniques which deal with pictures, type and size of letters, the properties and relations of objects and people in the vicinity of the text, the situation as perceived by the participants, the

conversational tone of the text, represented in the text intentions of the addressers/senders and the perception of the text by the addressees/receivers.

The conversational tone of advertising discourse is created by a great variety of linguistic means: the use of pronouns, and presupposition, colloquial lexical units, contracted forms and syntactical structures characteristic of colloquial style:

1. *If you haven't looked at Ford lately... Look again. [4: 56].*

In the given example the personal pronoun “you” is used to address us, readers and consumers. The imperative sentence “*Look again*” tells the readers what to do. “*Haven't*” belongs to contracted forms which are common in informal writing representing the pronunciation of informal speech. The first sentence is not completed. This “break-in-the-narrative” is caused by the supposition that what remains to be said can be understood by the implication embodied in what has been said.

2. *Hot. Cool. [2: 125].* The advertised Xerox Phaser 8400 is described with the help of slang words “hot” and “cool”:

hot stuff – (sl) sb/sth of first-rate quality [5: 414]

cool – (US sl) pleasant; fine [5: 189].

3. *Of course the forward plan doesn't say how. Or by whom. [2: 71]*

Parcellation is also characteristic of colloquial speech.

4. *Let's get started [2: 99].* The informal structure “let's” makes suggestion or gives orders to a group that includes the speaker.

5. *How can something that doesn't move be so moving? [2: 183].* This rhetorical question is used to draw the readers' attention, to raise the emotional tone of the utterance.

6. *Why do we work? To keep the future growing. [2: 193]* This question-in-the-narrative is asked and answered by the author of the advertising discourse. It chains the attention of the reader to the matter the advertisement deals with and gives the impression of an intimate talk between the writer and the reader. The second sentence of this example is incomplete (elliptical) as the primary parts of the sentence (the

subject, the predicate) are left out. Such structures are characteristic of colloquial syntax.

An effective relationship between advertisement writers and readers can result in the powerful exchange of information, and it is the author's responsibility to make sure that all the elements are in place to facilitate such an exchange. The reader's role in advertising communication consists in the reader's attempts to make sense of what the writer says.

References

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