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im interdisziplinären und
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Mit einem einleitenden Beitrag
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Functional and communicative features of advertising in the press

In the present article I have decided to focus on the analysis of one of the most 'traditional', but still fast-developing and ever-changing type of advertising – on the analysis of advertising in the press.

The more my colleagues, students, and I try to analyse, scrutinise and describe particular aspects of advertising, the more obvious it is that to make this analysis authentic and reliable from the theoretical point of view and important from the practical point of view, it is necessary to suggest a universal approach to the study.

Advertising is a complex phenomenon. The language of advertising influences our everyday speech and its images affect our behaviour. It involves the intersection of various professional fields and its analysis involves various fields of human knowledge and activities.

Being a linguist, I am first of all interested in finding an answer to the question (or a group of questions): what are these features of the language of ads which make them informative, productive and expressive; and whether it is possible to use at least some of those most effective language devices which appear in ads in order to make our own speech better organised and more expressive? At the same time, working with such topical and heterogeneous material, one should always bear in mind that advertising should be considered not as a text created for analysis, but first and foremost as a tool of promotion. It is well known that advertising plays a great role in promotion and therefore also in business. Advertising is an integral element of the system of marketing communications.¹

Thus, before we start any kind of analysis of advertising (and this concerns not only advertising, but any other type of human practice – be it Public Relations or modern tendencies in the development of the chemical industry), it is important to examine it from various aspects and to apply a categorial approach to its analysis. More than that, before we start the analysis of advertising texts, it is a must to consider a broader phenomenon – advertising practice.

¹ The role and place of advertising among other elements of the promotional mix as well as its functions were discussed in an article by Ksenzenko (2003).

The commercial nature of advertising is reflected in its definition suggested by the Definitions Committee of the American Marketing Association: “Advertising is any paid-for form of non-personal representation of the fact about goods, services and ideas to a group.” (Edwards 1981, p. 3).

The task of advertising is to create competition and to help manufacturers (or politicians) to win the competition it has created. The main goal advertisers seek to achieve has been convincingly presented in a well-known formula: AIDA (A – for attention; I – for interest; D – for desire; A – for activity). Thus, the ultimate aim of advertising is to sell a product. To achieve this, it is necessary to make sure that the message reaches its audience and that it is adequately decoded. As a type of communication, advertising is defined as public, one-way, verbal/non-verbal (see Vestergaard/Schröder 1985). This means that admen have a limited spectrum of mechanisms which may help to communicate the message successfully and to influence the audience.

Therefore, in order to reach the goals, admen try to use various language means and stylistic devices. The use of expressive stylistic devices is conditioned by various factors, such as: the character of the target audience, the type of advertising, the advertising medium, the impression ad-makers aim to produce, the type of communicative situation, the type of advertised product, and the character of the advertising campaign.

From this follows that the typological approach to advertising and its study should form the basis of the creation and analysis of advertising messages.

Modern advertising presents a whole system regulated by certain rules. It involves various types of advertising and advertising media. Each type of advertising is characterized by certain distinctive features, or – speaking in linguistic terms – by stylistic features. Numerous classifications of advertising exist – and, therefore, of advertising texts – according to various bases of classification.

Advertising texts may be differentiated according to the subject they deal with. Thus, it is possible to mention texts advertising everyday commodities and consumer services; texts advertising travelling commodities and agencies; texts telling the audience about certain political and social events, etc.; and even advertising of advertising services and advertising agencies, of different TV and radio programmes, channels, movies, etc.;

On the basis of the aim (the objective) and the object of advertising (a product, i.e., a good, a service, or an idea) we may distinguish between commercial and

non-commercial advertising. According to the classification suggested by Vestergaard/Schrøder (1985), commercial advertising is subdivided into three main groups: prestige (or good-will), industrial (or trade), and consumer. Leech (1966) also singled out retail advertising.

Industrial advertising lays greater emphasis on factual information, therefore, the function of message comes first (the same applies to classified advertising). As for consumer advertising, it is the most widely spread and varied type of advertising. Prestige advertising performs, first and foremost, the function of impact.

Another classification is based on the characteristics of the target audience (the receiver of the message). Characteristics of the audience are interconnected with the choice of advertising media and, consequently, influence the choice of linguistic means used to create a successful advertising message.

Among advertising media it is possible to mention the following: print, broadcast, direct, and location (see Schoell/Guiltinan 1990). On this basis advertising is classified into: radio, TV advertising, advertising in newspapers and magazines, direct mail, outdoor advertising, etc. In terms of the present study, it should be underlined that not infrequently specialists do not make clear distinctions between the terms 'print advertising' and 'advertising in the press', whereas the latter is one of the constituents of the former. Thus, print advertising implies advertisements printed in any form: a brochure, a leaflet, a placard, a poster – all these represent certain genres of print advertising. Advertising in the press includes advertisements disseminated through newspapers, magazines, and journals.

Advertising in the press, in its turn, is also subdivided into a whole number of various types. Some of the grounds of classification have been mentioned above (the type of advertised products, the objectives, etc.). As well as any other type of advertising, advertising in the press may be classified on geographical grounds. International, national, and local types of advertising in the press published in the media exist which have an international, national, and local area of spreading accordingly.

Since international advertisements are published in those newspapers and magazines that have editions in a number of different countries, they are targeted at audiences with a specific set of characteristics. These advertisements deserve special attention in terms of their cognitive analysis and in terms of the process of their apprehension by different and diversified target audiences.

In order to make sure that the message is decoded adequately, the overlapping (if not identity or sameness) of the cognitive bases of the participants of communication is essential. This means that ad-makers should possess a certain knowledge about the cognitive bases of their target audiences.

When deciding upon the type of edition in which to advertise, it is necessary to consider a whole number of criteria: distribution, size, characteristics of the target audience, and type of media discourse.

In the article “Термин ‘дискурс’ и типология медиадискурса” the following types of print media discourse have been singled out: discourse of quality press, discourse of popular press, and discourse of specialized editions, such as academic periodicals and popular science journals (see Mendzheritskaya 2006a and b). This classification is of special importance for the present study for it allows the outlining of the methodological principles of analysis of advertisements published in various types of editions.

It is quite understandable that the target audience of the advertisement disseminated through a certain type of edition overlaps the target audience of this edition in terms of a whole number of basic characteristics. No newspaper or magazine can be ‘all things to all people’: they target audiences which differ in terms of a whole number of factors, and these factors are to be taken into account when planning an advertising campaign and creating advertising messages which are meant to be published in a certain edition or in a group of similar editions. Among these factors are the following: the educational level of the readers, their hobbies and interests, sex, age, the financial status of the audience as well as its social status, place of residence, political affiliation, religious beliefs, the level of vocabulary, etc.

Taking this into account, it makes sense to apply the method of contrastive analysis and to compare texts advertising, for example, similar types of products (i.e., texts which are similar in terms of their objectives) but published in different types of editions (i.e., directed at different audiences). Let me illustrate this principle and compare the following texts published in various types of magazines.

Ironic that something so safe
can still take your breath away.

- E-class. Far be it from us to let something as utilitarian as a door-mounted side impact air bag stand in the way of creating a breathtakingly beautiful automobile. Form and function at its collective best. The E-Class presents a lengthy and varied list of safety innovations.

- The Supplemental Restraint System; comprised of 6 air bags (including multi-chambered Head Protection Curtains), plus Emergency Tensioning Retractors and belt force limiters. As well as ABC anti-lock brakes, Acceleration Slip Control, and Brake Assist, to ensure control under the most adverse driving conditions.
 - For passenger protection, the E-Class utilizes high-strength steel, a web of crumple zones, and cross members that span the full width of the car.
 - With its safety innovations, bold captivating design, and richly accented interior, the Mercedes-Benz E-Class is certain to leave you breathless.
 - For a test drive, call 1-800-378-0100 to locate your nearest dealer. Or visit our website at www.mercedes-benz.ca.
- (“The Economist”)

For the girl-about-town, our Clio Initiale Automatic is the thing to be seen in. Like her, it is devastatingly stylish. Unlike her, it comes with power steering, remote control hi-fi, electric sunroof, automatic headlamps, rain-sensitive wipers and climate control. It's fashioned in leather and alcantara upholstery and is available in a range of metallic colours that makes it the must-have item this season.

For more details call 0800 52 51 50 or visit www.renault.co.uk.

Va Va Voom
for people
who don't do
gear sticks
(“Cosmopolitan UK”)

The first advertisement was published in “The Economist”, it promotes a new E-class Mercedes Benz. The target audience of “The Economist” – and consequently of the advertising text published in it – is formed people who may have good knowledge in the field of the automobile industry. This accounts for the use of such phrases as: “The Supplemental Restraint System”, “Emergency Tensioning Retractors”, “AMB anti-lock brakes”, “Acceleration Slip Control”, which definitely help ad-makers to describe the technical advantages of the advertised product, but will hardly be understood by the customers who do not possess sufficient knowledge.

In the headline of this advertisement (“Ironic that something so safe can still take your breath away”) we come across the play upon the set expression “*to take one's breath away*”. According to Brewer's Dictionary of Phrase and Fable, the phrase “*It takes away one's breath*” means that something “is so astounding it causes one to hold his breath with surprise”.² According to the

² See more in Brewer's Dictionary of Phrase and Fable (2006).

Macmillan English Dictionary for Advanced Learners, the expression “*to take one's breath away*” means to “to be extremely impressive or beautiful”.³ The underlying idea of the message is that the advertised E-class Mercedes Benz is a *safe* car which is “not likely to cause damage, injury or harm and does not involve a lot of risk”, and this new E-class Mercedes Benz will make you hold your breath with excitement because it is so extremely beautiful.

The second advertisement promotes a new Renault Clio. It was published in the “UK Cosmopolitan”. This magazine belongs to the so-called ‘glossy’ or ‘glamour’ magazines. As a rule, these magazines contain a large proportion of entertaining materials, as well as information about fashion and the life of celebrities. This group of magazines has its own subdivision. Thus, some ‘glossy’ magazines are aimed at teenagers (“Seventeen”, “Gloria”), some at younger women (“Cosmopolitan”, “Marie Claire”), some at more mature and exacting women (“Vogue”, “Elle”, “Madame Figaro”), some at men (“Esquire”, “Men's Health”).

The expressivity of the advertisement published in “Cosmopolitan” is based on the use of onomatopoeia: in the last lines of this advertisement ad-makers use onomatopoeia reproducing the sound of a starting engine: “*va va voom*”.

I would also like to pay attention to the use of such words as “*the girl-about-town*” and “*must-have*” which are very typical of articles published in this type of magazines, and therefore, are part of the vocabulary of the target audience. “*The girl-about-town*” is the type of girl who lives in the city, who likes shopping and goes to a lot of fashionable parties, restaurants, clubs, etc. In the Macmillan English Dictionary for Advanced Learners the word “*must-have*” is marked as informal. The dictionary explains the meaning of the word “*must-have*” as “something that is so exciting, modern, or useful that everyone wants to have it”.⁴ In modern glamour magazines there are even special sections called “*must-haves*” which feature photographs of stylish clothes with season's fashion tips.

As the audience of “Cosmopolitan” is mostly women who are not interested in technical terms of the automobile industry, the use of onomatopoeia and words which are characteristic of the vocabulary of those who read this magazine help the admen to attract the audience's attention to the advertisement for the Renault Clio.

³ See more in the Macmillan English Dictionary for Advanced Learners. International Student Edition (2002).

⁴ See more in the Macmillan English Dictionary for Advanced Learners. International Student Edition (2002).

Thus, it is possible to conclude that the same type of product is promoted differently in the advertisements published in “The Economist” and in “Cosmopolitan”. The advertisement (published in “The Economist”) which promotes a new E-class Mercedes Benz gives the customer more detailed information about the technical characteristics of the product, whereas the advertising text promoting a new Renault Clio mostly describes its fashionable outward appearance.⁵

It is quite understandable that advertisements published in various newspapers and magazines still share a whole number of features. Thus, for example, repetition is a highly expressive stylistic device that we often come across in advertising texts. As we know, repetition is used when we want to make a text more memorable, and memorability is one of the characteristic features of advertising texts. In this connection, it should be pointed out that the syntactical arrangement of advertising texts is highly valuable from the practical point of view and important from the theoretical point of view in the field of advertological studies. The format and the scope of the present article do not allow me to concentrate on its discussion. Research in this field is being conducted at the English Department of the Faculty of Philology at Moscow State University (MSU) as well as in other academic schools, and the results of this research have been presented in a number of publications.⁶ In terms of the comparative analysis of advertisements published in various types of print media, it should be pointed out that quite often advertising texts published in various types of print media consist of several declarative sentences missing both principle parts. These are the so-called incomplete, or one-member sentences. This structural type of sentences is emotionally coloured. For example:

Overseas. Born of centuries of experience. Designed to weather any challenge.
Now ready to share your horizons. Case and bracelet fashioned in solid gold.
Water-resistant to 150 m. Folding bracelet clasp with double safety catch.
Overseas. The world is yours. Overseas. Time set Free.

Thus, a sentence is divided into more informal units so that the same sequence of words contains two focal elements rather than one. Leech (1966) refers to this phenomenon as “disjunctive syntax”.

Special attention is to be paid to the cognitive study of parenthetical insertions used in advertising texts. While analyzing advertising texts, it is possible to

⁵ The differences between the promotion of various types of products, that is, goods and services, has been described in the study by Darbisheva conducted under the supervision of Nazarova/Darbisheva (2009).

⁶ See, for example, Ksenzenko (1998).

come across a lot of parenthetical insertions used. At first sight it may seem rather strange to notice so many parenthetical insertions in comparatively short texts of advertisement. However, the analysis of the texts from this point of view has shown that in the majority of cases, parenthetical insertions are not clichéd. Therefore, we may say that the use of unusual parenthetical insertions helps the authors to realize the function of impact. As we know, very often parenthetical insertions have modal character, and the category of modality is of course present in advertising texts, since, as it has been indicated, these texts are supposed to influence people, to produce a certain impression. For example:

Financial Restructuring Enabling A Timber Company To Go Public.
(We Planted The Seeds For Their Growth.)

A growing timber company needed to restructure in order to go public. They turned to us for financial advice, interim financing and a commitment for the long term funding they needed to grow. We specialize in helping our clients to reach new heights.

Bank of America.

The parenthetical insertion “We Planted The Seeds For Their Growth“ is used metaphorically and immediately attracts the attention of the reader persuading him/her that the advertised company is very fruitful and trustworthy.

Generally speaking, parenthetical insertions and composite sentences (both complex and compound) are more characteristic of advertisements published in quality press.

A distinctive feature of advertising texts published in glamour magazines, especially in teen magazines, is the use of slang, which may be accounted for by an attempt by ad-makers to ‘imitate’ the grammar and vocabulary of everyday speech among teenagers.

Let me provide an illustration of this statement by considering an advertisement promoting EXACT products published in the teen magazine “Seventeen”.

“#S*@!”

Zit happens.

When you're stressed out,
your skin goes into overdrive,
pumping out excess oil and zits.
You need EXACT with the miracle
Microsponge System. Only EXACT
has it. Zillions of invisible microscopic
sponges suck up 50% more oil!
And deliver the strongest acne medicine

when and where you need it, fast.
 Oil's out. Medicine's in. Zits are history.
 Now that's huge.

To help stop zits before they start,
 use ExACT Face Wash and
 ExACT Pore Treatment Gel everyday.
 (“Seventeen”)

Slang functions here as a way of recognizing members of the same group, and to differentiate that group from the society at large. The headline of this text appeals to the background knowledge of the reader. As modern teenagers use computer and the Internet very often, they know that such symbols, as “#”, “\$”, “*”, “@” are used to substitute swearwords. In this case, the admen used an exclamatory sentence with a hidden oath: “#*\$#@!”.

The next phrase “Zit happens” is an allusion to the phrase “Shit happens” which is a slang phrase. The Macmillan English Dictionary for Advanced Learners marks the word “zit” (meaning “a small raised infected mark on one's face”) as informal.⁷ Here the phrase “Zit happens” functions as a euphemism and as a direct indication of the medical problem which the use of advertised ointment will help to cure.

As teenagers have certain knowledge about the use of “#”, “\$”, “*”, “@” symbols instead of oaths, they will easily interpret the message as follows: If you have a zit, do not worry, that happens to everybody, just use ExACT products and everything will be fine. Thus, general background knowledge helps the customers to see an allusion in the advertising text and interpret the message properly.

Another distinction is to be made on the basis of where an advertisement is located in an edition. From this point of view, advertising can be classified into display (placed among editorial materials) and classified (placed on special pages). It is obvious that in classified advertising, the function of message comes to the fore. These texts are, as a rule, very laconic and lack those highly expressive devices which are extensively used in display advertising. For example:

At the same time it does not mean that classified advertising lacks expressivity at all. It is the character of expressivity and the type of expressive devices which are to be taken into account. Thus, for example, the use of nominative sentences and other types of elliptical constructions is widely spread in classified advertisement. The same applies to the ‘play upon’ type (the use of small,

⁷ See more in the Macmillan English Dictionary for Advanced Learners. International Student Edition (2002).

large and bold type, the use of italics, etc.) and a highly extensive use of abbreviations. The latter is easily accounted for by the tendency toward linguistic economy.⁸

An advertising text is a specific kind of text because its aim is not only to inform the audience of a product, but also to persuade people. The function of message and the function of impact are so closely connected in advertising texts that in many cases it is hard to say which of them prevails. Advertising is aimed at attracting attention and arousing interest, it should also stimulate desire and “create conviction”. Thus, the language used in advertising should be very expressive, and easy to understand and remember. In order to reach these goals, advertising texts should be created with special reference to the results of the linguostylistic and cognitive analysis of advertising texts, as well as of media studies.

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⁸ For more detailed information about the use of abbreviations in advertising texts see Ksenzenko (2003, p. 348f.).

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