

IMPLICIT INFORMATION AS A MANIPULATIVE PLOY IN SOCIAL ADVERTISING

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ABSTRACT

This article deals with one of ploys of manipulative influence – implicit information in social advertising. It reveals implicit information's essence and ability to control the public mind in an advertisement copy. The article gives consideration to ploys used to manipulate implicitly: semantic and pragmatic presuppositions, conversational implicatures, constructions with negation, genre and stylistic shifts etc.

Key words: social advertising, manipulative ploy, implicit information

1. INTRODUCTION

Social advertising is a phenomenon which is thriving but at the moment still not sufficiently covered by linguistic studies. However, social advertising issues its main challenge not only to reflect social problems but also to call for their solving; for this it uses manipulative linguistic means. This task draws attention of both Russian and foreign linguists [1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6 etc.].

Notwithstanding the fact that the issue of linguistic manipulation was raised by many psycholinguistics researchers [7, 8], it is still not worked out enough. And what concerns linguistic manipulation ploy – implicit information – in social advertising, due to its main tasks (to influence a consumer) it can be recognized as a completely manipulative sphere of language application.

2. METHODS

Described in this article, implicit information as a communication ploy in social advertising is studied within the frames of a discursive stylistic approach, which includes studying of a text from the perspectives of discursive and functional-stylistic analysis at the same time.

Functional-stylistic component of the applied approach deals with qualification of material chosen for the research. The author analyzes a certain type of texts – social advertising copies, in which some functional style fixes information influencing consumer. Discursive component is oriented towards accounting extratextual factors' impact on text generation [9, 10, 11]. Discourse's nature determines specificity of subjects' speech interaction, the character of purposes they accomplish [12, 13], which is implemented in corresponding manipulative ploys. Communication targeting of advertising copies is subject to aims of denunciation and assertion: it is connected with expression of appraisive attitude to advertised objects.

3. MAIN PART

The essence of the linguistic manipulation in advertising is presenting information in such a way that a consumer draws a certain conclusion on its basis. Because the consumer comes to these conclusions by himself/herself, he/she accepts this knowledge as his/her own one automatically, and therefore treats the information less critically, with more trust.

Social advertising presents implicit information as a subtext:

- advertisement speaks about facts, but implies values;
- advertisement shows not the actual product, but its image;
- advertisement speaks about freedom of choice, but orients towards specific acts [14].

Implicit information gives foundation to the ploy of lateral programming [14] – impact on consciousness and behaviour of a consumer. The main point in lateral utterances is always left in the background and perceived by the consumer as something evident. For example, it is supposed that from the slogan *"Buckle up. Or you'll be buckled to stretcher"* we should draw a conclusion on necessity for using safety belt. The text of antismoking advertisement *"Smoking is the most stupid way to commit a suicide"* is also directed towards a certain conclusion: smoking unavoidably leads to death.

There are many types of implicit information (different classifications are presented in particular in books [15, 16, 17 etc.].

Let's turn our attention to some sources and types of implicit information and analyze using them for the purposes of communicative influence and manipulation. The source of implicit information is, first of all, components forming part of conventional semantics of word and constructions. They give foundation to so-called conventional, theoretical and speech implicatures, to which, in particular, semantic presuppositions and implicit components, creating conditions for speech act's success, usually belong [17, 18].

There is such type of implicit information as **semantic presuppositions** [17].

Proposition *P* is called a semantic presupposition of proposition *S*, if it follows from trueness or falseness of *S* that *P* is true. It means that falseness of proposition *P* leads to that *S* is neither true nor false, so it becomes anomalous. Let's exemplify:

We work to preserve your health (the motto of narcological dispensary). This proposition has presupposition: "You trust us", which remains true even when the following propositions are negated: "It is false that (we work to preserve your health)" or "We work not to (preserve your trust)". Implicit information's source in this case is semantic structure of the predicate "preserve". It should be noted that if the presuppositional part of proposition would have been presented in an explicit form in the motto, such motto would have drawn an inner protest in many people:

You trust us, and we work to preserve your health. We won your trust and work to preserve it. Thus, information which is accepted as presupposition without objection can draw a protest when presented in an explicit form (why did you decide that we trust you?).

In other words, presuppositions can be used to embed a proposition needed for ad makers into addressee's consciousness without fear that this proposition will be perceived by addressee as the doubtful one.

There is other type of implicit information – conditions of speech act's success, for example, **presurmise of a question**. The answer is usually implied to an addressee and "conjectured" by him/her, for instance:

How much have you still to smoke? (Cigarette on the poster is stylized as a Bickford fuse which leads to the bomb).

You pay a bribe? Art.291 of the Criminal Code of the Russian Federation p.2. Punishable with deprivation of freedom for a term of up to eight years. (Anti-corruption advertisement in Saint Petersburg).

Original assumption of the question creates for consumers of advertising such communicative conditions, when the variant of an answer is practically excluded. In fact, this answer variant can arise, but it conflicts with the question's original assumption, and that makes its emerging unlikely: to give such an answer, a person should voluntarily overcome communicative limits forced by advertising and violate "the rules of the game".

Let's give an example how failure to discover **the pragmatic presupposition** gave ad makers a lot of trouble. In Perm there were Internet-clips "Against Drugs", where the handshake of a patient and a doctor was shown. One of possible interpretations of this, generally speaking, ambiguous message was just about the following: natives of Perm would unanimously support treatment of the patient in Perm's clinic (according to conversational implicature). Handshake of two persons in this case is interpreted as cooperation and mutual support. This is the interpretation which is coherent with pragmatic presupposition of any advertising message: "Advertisement contains positive evaluation of an advertised object, this information is useful for this advertised objects"[17]. Due to this presupposition common consumers of advertising had not thought about a conceptually other possible interpretation of this message, until it was published in some Perm newspaper: "Clips on the Internet, where doctor parts with patient". As a result the advertising clip gained an equivocal meaning: two interpretations which contradicted one another. This situation forced marketing specialists and ad makers to add running letters into the Internet-clip, which eliminated undesirable interpretation: "Only together!".

It is evident that this situation would not have developed if ad makers would have studied all interpretations of this message in advance, including those which conflict with the specified pragmatic presupposition.

There are other types of implicit information, including **conversational implicatures**, derived according to so-called conversational postulates and principles of politeness, phrased in works of H.P. Grice, G.Leech [19, 20 etc.]:

Belt perhaps won't make you a long-liver, but it will save your life

Image. In the left part there is a photo of a young man with fear on his face; under it there is a signature: "Alexander, 25 year old". In the right part – a photo of a smiling, old lady, under it a signature: "His mother". The advertisement continues with the following text:

Of course, there are many factors influencing life duration, but we claim that a buckled belt will help you to live longer.

There is a lot of implicit information sources in this message. One of them is omission of mother's age, though the son's age is specified. Perhaps the author just complied with the principle of politeness. But in this message this omission also plays an important persuasive role. This ploy makes a reader to "find out" on himself/herself, how old is mother, and whatever she still looks so fresh, maybe owing to rules of safety.

The other type of implicit information, which is subordinate to impact intentions, is created in this advertisement with the help of communicatory distribution of main semantic concepts in the text. The main concept (the advertised object) of this advertisement message is the buckled belt. At the same time the topic of "a long life" is brought in and elaborated in title, illustration, at the beginning of the sentence (rising action of the text), and also at the end. Thus, in this text two concepts have the highest grade of prominence: "long life" and "buckled belt". According to relevance postulate of H.P. Grice [19], in this case it implies possibility of cause and effect relationship. Notwithstanding the fact that the text explicitly says: "we do not say that the belt will help you to

live longer”, the topics prominence hierarchy is such that it is the implicit message about relationship between buckled belt and life duration is brought to the forefront.

To our mind, it is ploys of message’s communicative organization (hierarchy of topics’ prominence in a text, text’s sentences macrostructural connections) which serve as the conversational implicatures source in this case, and that allows to brought such a strong advertising promise in consumers’ mind.

Also **constructions with negation** are used as the source of conversational implicatures. For example: *Let’s say **NO!** to drugs // The future starts now. OMSK without drugs // Regional narcological dispensary: 30-26-89.* The billboard on the red and white background with the image of a stopping cardiogram undoubtedly draws attention and sets people thinking about the problem.

Say **NO** to asthma (on the billboard we can see a tween pigtailed girl).

Conclusions based on constructions with negation can be encountered in advertising copies quite often. This is an advantageous method for ad makers to highlight an advertised [3] object and to underline its merits in comparison with some competitive objects.

Among conversational implicatures we can mention **cardinal and ordinal numbers**:

300 000 child-soldiers dream about being just children (the implicature is that many children are forced to participate in military activities).

They were born third... The series of maquettes with names and photographs of famous people: Y.A. Gagarin, Charles de Gaulle, A.A. Akhmatova, G. Garbo, D.A. Furmanov, L. Carroll, A. de Saint-Exupéry and others (the implicit information is that these great people were born in large families).

The third child is the triple wealth in the third millenium... (this billboard implicitly expresses orientation towards large families).

Conversational implicatures are also created by such ploy as **analogy**. Let’s study an example of a print advertising: *Will you buy this apple?* (The image of a dozed apple). *That’s how your skin will look after 20 years of smoking two cigarettes per day.* This advertisement uses the faulty analogy. This impression is intensified by quantitative indices too.

The analysis of social advertising copies showed that they use implicatures expressed by different linguistic units:

Think about future. About future child. (Implicit information enclosed in a compositional juncture; it calls women to abstain from alcohol).

Pasha. 4 years old. He can be a king, but wants just to be. (The implicature lies in that a child needs nothing if he/she has no health).

One more possible source of implicit information is **genre and stylistical shifts** [21]. The essence of this communication ploy lies in that an advertisement or an PR-message is partially or fully disguised as other genres, moreover that ones which people treat more seriously and trust more. For example, a direct mail advertising can be disguised as a summon to some government agency, advertisement message is sometimes partially disguised as a doctor’s recommendation, offer to take part in a contest is disguised as an information message about alleged victory in this contest etc. In this regard the so-called hidden advertising is an interesting phenomenon. Hidden advertising is an advertising information disguised as a non-advertising information, for instance, as an editorial. This means, firstly, that an addresser hides true goals of communication, and secondly, gives the status of objective data, which publication’s editorial staff usually verifies and takes responsibility for, to this information. Therefore advertising information disguise on itself in this case can be regarded as the communication ploy, introducing implicit information about objectivity of represented information and communicative goals of a message.

4. CONCLUSION

Thus, depending on author’s communicative goals there are such types of implicatures in social advertising copies: semantic and pragmatic presuppositions, conversational implicatures, analogies, constructions with negation, genre and stylistic shifts and so on.

5. RESUME

Ability to reveal and to use purposefully implicit information in order to influence an addressee helps professionals of the sphere of PR and advertising to pursue their aims. However, implicit information can be the method of manipulation, confusion of addressees, so using it should be subject to ethical and sometimes legal evaluation.

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