



HÁSKÓLI ÍSLANDS

Hugvísindasvið

The Central Role of Language in the Semiotics of Advertising.

B.A. Essay

Malwina Barbara Wejher

January , 2015

University of Iceland
School of Humanities
Department of English

The Central Role of Language in the Semiotics of Advertising.

B.A. Essay

Malwina Barbara Wejher

Kt.: 120588-3469

Supervisor: Matthew Whelpton

January, 2015

Abstract

This thesis argues for the intimate co-dependence of advertising and language, demonstrating some of the ways in which the semiotic properties of language are exploited to achieve the goals of effective advertising. The paper studies communication and its functions in order to provide explanation of language significance in advertisements. Diving deeply into semiotic properties of a language, it argues their exploitation to achieve the goals of effective advertising. Demonstrating approach to the Saussure's perspective of semiology, the thesis reveals usage of important ways of creating meaning by advertisers, such as a syntagm and a paradigm. It examines importance of concepts such as denotation and connotation for advertisements' analysis. Additionally, it indicates exploitation of signs in advertisements by presenting Peirce's theory of signs. It investigates association between language of adverts and signs, such as an icon, an index and a symbol. The thesis also takes into account figures of speech such as metaphor, for better understanding of advertisers' intentions during the advertisement's creation. Taking the semiotic properties of a language under scrutiny, the paper explores reasons of advertisements' dependency on language. Aside from language, the thesis demonstrates significance of paralanguage in advertisements. Examining the motifs for using paralanguage, it argues for its necessity in advertisements, indicating language superiority over paralanguage. Providing an emotional approach to advertisements, it demonstrates advantages and disadvantages of emotion arousing by advertisers and displays several emotions. The paper provides analysis of three various advertisements for presence of paralanguage, emotions and semiotic properties of a language. It reveals interactions between those elements and inquires for the most important element for advertising business. Eventually, the paper presents results of the survey about the need of the language in advertising business. Survey conduction provides evidence for advertisements' dependency on language, by demonstrating language's superiority over paralanguage.

TABLE OF CONTENT

1. INTRODUCTION.....	1
2. BACKGROUND.....	1
2.1. ADVERTISEMENTS AND COMMUNICATION.....	2
2.2. SEMIOTICS AND SEMIOLOGY.....	3
2.3. PARALANGUAGE.....	7
2.4. ADVERTISEMENTS AND EMOTIONS.....	9
2.5. SUMMARY.....	11
3. ANALYSIS OF ADVERTISEMENTS.....	12
3.1. ANALYSIS OF SONY TRINITRON ADVERTISEMENT.....	12
3.2. ANALYSIS OF JOHNSON'S BABY SHAMPOO ADVERTISEMENT.....	17
3.3. ANALYSIS OF WEEK END CHOCOLATES ADVERTISEMENT.....	19
4. DISCUSSION.....	20
5. CONCLUSION.....	21
6. REFERENCES.....	23

1. INTRODUCTION

Language is a method of communication, and therefore indispensable in everyday life. There are many different types of communication and this thesis focuses on communication in advertising. Advertising is specific type of communication, because addresser and addressee do not see each other. Moreover it is a form of public communication, which means that the message included in the advertisement can be interpreted differently by different people. Nevertheless, advertisers can handle that, and the way they do it is astonishing. In order to deliver information which achieves specific aims, the creators of advertisements draw the attention of potential customers by creating advertisements that are soaked with language, exploiting its rich semiotic properties. Not only creators, directors or lawyers are engaged in the creation of an advertisement, but often linguists, whose task is to ensure enhancement of information advantageous for producers and eclipsing information discouraging from buying, by the selection of appropriate words. Therefore, it cannot be denied that language is an inseparable element of effective advertisement and advertising would not exist without language.

This thesis establishes that advertisements are dependent on language because they take advantage of specific semiotic properties that are crucial in advertising in order to obtain particular effects. This thesis argues for the intimate co-dependence of advertising and language, demonstrating some of the ways in which the semiotic properties of language are exploited to achieve the goals of effective advertising. Section 2 demonstrates and explains concepts associated with advertising. Section 3 offers an analysis of three magazine advertisements demonstrating the ways in which the semiotic properties of language are exploited to achieve the goals of effective advertising. Section 4 discusses the general implications of this analysis for language in advertising and Section 5 provides conclusions.

2. BACKGROUND

Effective advertising is not just about selling the product. According to Dębski (2006), the main task of advertising is to inform potential customers about the product or service and induce interest in a product or service. Advertising objectives include improving opinion about the product, the promotion of new products entering the market, the launch or consolidation of the brand in the market and acquiring new customers, which in turn should increase the sales and profit of the company (p. 251). Additionally, advertising follows the AIDA rule, that aims at: raising awareness of the product; stimulation of interest about the product, brand,

company; excitation of lust, desire for a purchase; and making a purchase (Jones, 1999, p. 220). Since goals of effective advertising are so complex, advertisers need to use specific ways to make sure those goals will be achieved. And those ways include exploitation of the semiotic properties of language.

Advertising is a powerful force, in which every word is significant, and its use is studied repeatedly. Even though most advertisements are based on a visual code, all advertisements, to a lesser or greater extent, are always associated with language. Cook (1992) claims: "Whether finally destined for television or a magazine, the words of an ad are almost always written down at some stage in its creation" (p. 87). Preparing of television or magazine's advertisement requires written or spoken language. At least, a television advertisement has to be directed based on written scenario, and principal of an advertisement must somehow communicate the advertisement creator about concept of an ad, and it involves language. What is more Cook (1992) affirms that: "The words in contemporary ads are always carefully scripted and subjected to so much scrutiny and rewriting that in this respect they stand comparison with the drafting of laws or poetry" (p. 74). Therefore, semiotic properties of a language are enormously significant in communication such as advertising.

2.1 ADVERTISEMENTS AND COMMUNICATION

To begin, we need to inquire why advertisements are associated with language. Dyer (1982) considers advertisements to be deliberate and consciously articulated messages (p. 9). According to Dyer (1982), advertisers employ language and assemble a message to the audiences (p. 9). Delivering a message involves communication, and since a language is method of communication, those two interact. Communication involves at least two persons, the addresser and the addressee, the code, transmitting the information which is to be delivered, and some kind of channel, through which the message will be transmitted. In advertising, the advertisement is this channel and language is the code (Vestergaard & Schrøder, 1985, p. 15). Communication, however is a broad concept and in order to avoid confusion, we need to categorize communication used in ads. Communication used in ads can be both verbal or non-verbal, because the language used in ads can be spoken or written. From the point of view of situation, ads employ public and one- way communication, because there is one speaker addressing an anonymous public (Vestergaard & Schrøder, 1985, p. 14).

Communication involves six types of language function and they are as follows: expressive, directive, informational, contextual, poetic and interactional (Vestergaard &

Schrøder, 1985, p. 16 -17). The expressive function employs language that focuses on the addresser's feelings and wishes. Forgiveness, apology, praise or approbation are types of language expressive function. Communication based on the directive function influences the addressee's actions, beliefs or emotions. An example of directive speech acts would be persuasion, recommendation or advice. When language focuses on the meaning, we are dealing with the informational function of a language. To inform, report or describe are informational speech acts. The contextual and poetic function are both associated with the meaning, with the proviso that poetic function additionally uses poetic devices, such as metaphors or rhymes. The function that is mostly associated with advertising is interactional, because it is used to express, maintain and terminate contact between messenger and the message recipient. Although addresser and addressee are not in visual contact, they communicate through the channel, which in this case is an advertisement (Vestergaard & Schrøder, 1985, p. 16 -17). Nevertheless, it should be noted that advertising can employ each of these functions during a process of communication. After all, an advertisement praises, recommends and informs about a product or service, and sometimes even uses metaphors and rhymes. Praising, recommending or informing about the product or service requires language, it is not enough to present an image of the product, which can only call our attention to it. Whereas language in advertisements, whether written or spoken goes beyond calling attention to the product, it creates a positive feeling by introducing complex layered meaning and by fixing specific informational content. According to Percy & Elliot (2001), language used in an appropriate way facilitates learning and therefore make communication more effective (p. 218). Accordingly, advertisers devote much attention to the language used in ads and employ various language forms, properties and techniques. These are the focus of the semiotic perspective to advertising, which adopts semiotics as an analytic system to unpack information transmitted in advertising (Percy & Elliot, 2001, p. 24). However, another analytic system of advertising can be distinguished, which is Saussure's concept of semiology. The following section investigate the concepts of semiotics and semiology to analyze the relationship between linguistic properties and advertising.

2.2 SEMIOTICS AND SEMIOLOGY

Both, semiotics and semiology are the studies of signs, however based on different approaches. Saussurean semiology is the study of relationship between the signs and their meaning. For Saussure each sign is composed of a signifier, which is a word form, and signified,

which is the meaning (Cook, 1992, p. 61). For instance the word *heart* is a signifier and the meaning that it is an organ in the body that has a physical function of pumping the blood is signified. To make things even more complicated, a word *heart* has also associated with it- the connotational meaning of emotion or love. At this point, it is significant to distinguish between connotation and denotation. According to Goddard (1998) a denotation is "the literal, dictionary definition of a word, its barest factual meaning" (p. 125). A connotation on the other hand is "the vague association which a word may have for a whole speech community or for groups of individuals within it" (Cook, 1992, p. 101). Therefore, it can be said that a word *heart* is a signifier, its signified and also denotation is the literal definition of an organ pumping the blood and its connotation is *love*.

Advertising is interesting from this point of view, because it has the power to create new connotational meanings. This can be seen by considering the example of toothpaste. Formerly a toothpaste was intended to clean teeth, nowadays however it is identified with freshness, protection and even teeth whitening, which would be connotations of the word *toothpaste*. Advertisers invent and enhance newer features of advertised products and use them in their campaigns. The product is then associated with new features and the product's name gains new connotations or previous connotations change. Advertisers raise the value of their products by enhancing new characteristics of their product, thereby contributing to the creation of new meaning.

Saussure in his concept of semiology proposes two ways of creating meaning: a syntagm and paradigm. "The syntagm is creating meaning by ordered combination of interacting meanings, by their relationships to the sign before or after them - by their order" (Cook, 1992, p. 61). Considering a sentence "*I know what I eat*" used in an ad about eating healthily, we can draw the conclusion that the person speaking checks the ingredients list for additives and preservatives or simply knows that the foods she or he promotes is healthy. If in the same ad, word order was changed, it would mean something completely different. For instance: "*I eat what I know*" would indicate that the person eats only what is familiar to him or her and doesn't try new food, in this case the healthy foods he or she promotes (Cook, 1992, p. 61). Therefore, by changing the word order, advertisers create new meanings.

The other way of creating meaning proposed by Saussure is the paradigm. Paradigms exploit replacement of one or few words in a given sentence to change its meaning (Cook, 1992, p. 61). I found an interesting example of a paradigm in a Polish slogan in an advertisement about a television channel called TVN. Previously their slogan was: "*TVN here*

and here" which simply meant that it was available on television and in the internet. After some time the slogan was changed to "TVN everywhere" and now the meaning, advertisers wanted to convey was that television was available everywhere, in the north or south, in the bus or on the beach. By using paradigm, that is using alternatives in the same position in their slogan, advertisers altered its meaning and made their product more accessible and attractive.

Talking about the ways of changing meaning, we should consider metaphor, as another way of modifying the meaning. According to Vestergaard and Schrøder (1985) what advertisers use most is the metaphor. They provide an example of Esso's campaign of "put a tiger in your tank" and explain that a word "tiger" is used metaphorically in order to demonstrate that Esso petrol has a strength comparable to tiger strength (p. 38). Whereby, the quality of Esso petrol seems to be superior to that of other petrol. Advertisers therefore created a new connotation for petrol, indicating that it is strong as "tiger". It is evident that metaphor as a sign process that constructs meaning is used in advertising.

However, advertising is not only about creating or changing the meaning, but most importantly it is based on signs and what they stand for. After all advertisers seek appropriate words under scrutiny to obtain expected effects. For this purpose, they investigate and take advantage of semiotics and its relation between signs and their meaning. Peirce (1960, p. 156 - 73) distinguishes three types of relation between a sign: a symbol, an icon and an index (as cited in Vestergaard & Schrøder, 1985, p. 36).

As Vestergaard & Schrøder (1985) explain, a symbol is a sign in which the connection between the sign and its object is based more or less purely on convention. For instance a symbol of *love* is a heart, because it is considered that this feeling has its origin in the heart. New visual symbols such as *heart* are rare in advertising, because it is difficult to establish a link between an arbitrary image and a product. Nevertheless, there are a few exceptions such as car symbols. On the contrary, the occurrence of verbal symbols is more frequent in advertisements, because the link between an image and the product is easier to establish through the intercession of verbal expression. We can recall example of Esso petrol, to demonstrate verbal symbol in advertising. The tiger became a symbol of Esso petrol (p. 38 - 40).

The second type of signs used by advertisers is an icon. The icon is a relation between sign and signified, and particularly a pattern that resembles what it "stands for" (Vestergaard and Schrøder (1985, p. 36). Cook (1992) presents an interesting example of iconicity with words in the Maxwell House advertisement:

The television version showed a suburban family drinking coffee in the garden of a semi-detached house. This house - a Maxwell House - is secure, friendly and homely. The photograph merges into a stylized drawing, in which the angle of the roof is represented by two lines, one saying "Is yours a Max", the other "- well House" (p. 78).

Iconicity is therefore presented by letters that imitate the roof. The quality of the coffee is thus increased by features of the house - it becomes secure, friendly and homely (Cook, 1992, p. 78). According to Vastergaard and Schrøder (1985) iconic signs in language are rare, especially in advertisement, and if they occur they are usually present by image, that is a picture of product on the neutral background (p. 36). Although an icon is commonly associated with an illustration and the meaning of it, there are examples of iconicity by the form of words presentation on the page, especially in advertisements.

Cook (1992) demonstrates an example of advertisement for the perfume Elizabeth Taylor's Passion (Image 1). He indicates that the bottle shape is imitated by the words, which are intentionally shifted to emerge hexagonally - exactly like the perfume's bottle. The shape of words is therefore iconic (Cook, 1992, p. 78).



Image 1

Not only words but also letters can be used iconically. As Cook (1992) reports the letter A in Alitalia (Image 2) has the shape of a plane tail, and therefore create an iconic representation of the product (p. 78).



Image 2

Additionally, Cook (1992) demonstrates that writing evokes iconic behavior. He illustrates with an interesting example of an advertisement for a Philips TV in a double page magazine spread, which displays a following sentence by scattered words on two pages, constraining the reader to move his eyes from side to side, what resemble a tennis match (p. 83):

You	haven't
Seen	tennis
On	television
Until	you've
Seen	it

On

a

Philips 41"

screen

Moving eyes from side to side is an example of iconic behavior and it is definitely provoked by the manner of text presentation.

The third sign from Peirce's semiotics is an index. Cook (1992) states that: "an index is a sign which points to something else by virtue of a causal relationship" (p. 69). In other words, an index is a word that correlates with, and thus implies, something else, for example dark clouds mean rain. Percy & Elliot (2001) say that: "Indexicality is particularly relevant to photography and relates to the fact that photographic image can serve as documentary evidence or proof of an advert's claims because of its 'authenticity' " (p. 28). In a particular advertisement, a man wearing a dental apron- would be correlated with dental knowledge and experience and therefore his words would be endowed with trust. It is true that an image of a man in a dental apron would suggest that the advertisement is associated with dental matter. An image is not however enough to interpret the context of the advertisement. The man in dental apron can advertise a toothpaste or a toothbrush. He can even advertise antibacterial liquid, lollipops that prevent tooth decay or denture adhesive. It is the language and its functions that complete the context of an advertisement.

A field which is intimately associated with Peirce's semiotics is pragmatics, which is the study of meaning. It is a study about the meaning in particular context, that is utterance meaning. Thus pragmatics addresses the interaction of semantic meaning with context (Cook, 1992, p. 99). For Leech (1983), pragmatics is "the study of meaning in relation to speech situation" (as cited in Herbst, 2010, p. 267), and therefore it is mostly associated with spoken language. All in all pragmatics is the study of meaning in particular context and is useful in advertising business and its analysis, because "it provides reasonably clear- cut procedures for formulating the meaning" (Cook, 1992, p. 100). According to Cook (1992), context, among the others includes paralanguage (p. 1) and it is the subject of the following subsection.

2.3 PARALANGUAGE

Paralanguage relates to the form of linguistic signs, whether spoken, written or gestured, sound components of speech and the possibility of communicating additional

information by the form of the signs. It includes effective characteristics of spoken sound, forms of written symbols and all aspects of the sensory environment which work in tandem with linguistic expression and so influence its interpretation. Therefore paralinguistics carries the meaning, regardless of the content contained in words. Paralinguistics is an element classified as non-verbal communication, because it includes among other things, pitch, resonance, articulation, tempo, the volume, rhythm, tone, speed and volume of speech, silence, and other non-linguistic behavior, for example a yawn, sigh, or grunt. It betrays our mood and attitude. Regardless of what we say, tone and manner of expression reveals a lot about who we are and what we feel. According to Cook (1994) paralinguistics is not only associated with sound components of speech, but also the physiological part of communication, that is eye contact, gesture, body movement, clothing, and touch. This physiological part of communication cannot exist on its own, but rather complements information needed to achieve effective advertising. According to Twardowska and Olczyk (n.d.) the first and foremost reason why paralinguistics is used in advertisements is to obtain the viewer's credibility. For example when a person wearing a dental apron talks about toothpaste, we are more likely to believe that the person knows what is best for our teeth. Paralinguistics of clothing in this case carries a message that the person is a dentist and therefore he or she has knowledge about teeth, toothpastes and how to care for teeth.

Thus, it is evident that paralinguistics complements the information needed for effective advertising, but just as the signifier can never be separated from signified, so Cook (1994) claims language and paralinguistics are not separable and language cannot occur without paralinguistics. He considers that paralinguistics carries meaning, which may reinforce or contradict the linguistic meaning of the signs which they accompany. To demonstrate this, Cook gives an example of a person sobbing, while saying: "I am not upset" (p. 66). This instance demonstrates the case, where meaning carried by language is contradicted by the meaning carried by paralinguistics. An interesting example of such contradiction was presented in the study by Argyle et al. (as cited in Cook, 1994, p. 66 - 67):

In one study undergraduate subjects, under the false impression that they were taking part in a quite different experiment, were told one of two things after the experiment: to leave quickly so as not to waste the researchers' time or to stay and chat, as the researchers were always pleased to meet students. These two linguistic messages were combined with two paralinguistic messages, with a similar polarity of meaning. Either the experimenters shook the subjects' hands, smiled and looked them in the eye while speaking; or they avoided eye contact and touch, and wore unfriendly

facial expressions. Each subject thus experienced one of four possible combinations of behavior. When subjects were asked, sometime later, to recall whether they had been treated in friendly or unfriendly manner, their replies correlated only with the paralinguistic behavior. It did not matter what had been said to them, but only what had been done.

Therefore a person, who was told to leave quickly so as not to waste the researchers' time, claims that he or she was treated in a friendly manner, due to the decoding of the paralinguistic message. And conversely, a person, who was told to stay and chat as the researchers were always pleased to meet students, claims that he or she was treated in unfriendly manner, because the paralinguistic message was undesirable. It can be concluded from the study that paralinguistic meaning can contradict linguistic meaning, because it carries a message that sometimes is more significant than the linguistic message. This may seem to indicate that paralinguistic and language are separable but as Cook (1994) states:

It is possible to argue, as many linguists do, that paralinguistic is of no concern to linguistics, because language is best understood when it is rigorously isolated from such distracting phenomena. This is an odd view, for language never occurs without paralinguistic. The two constantly interact, and communicative competence involves using both together (p. 68 - 69).

Since paralinguistic carries linguistic meaning, it can be assumed that paralinguistic is a form of language and it needs to be treated in that way. Especially in advertising, paralinguistic plays a significant role because the form of presentation is just as important as the information being presented and paralinguistic can both reinforce and undermine the explicit informational content, according to the advertisers' intentions. Therefore, language and paralinguistic are inseparable and both carry linguistic meaning. Language and paralinguistic are both used in advertising to achieve goals of effective advertising. An advertisement cannot be based on language or paralinguistic alone and the most effective advertising is achieved when language and paralinguistic act together. Such a combination elicits the viewer's emotions most effectively.

2.4 ADVERTISEMENTS AND EMOTIONS

Eliciting emotions is an important aspect of advertising. Percy & Elliot (2001) describe research in which advertising of the same product, a washing powder, was presented with two different

images. One image presented a smiling child, whereas the other a child and a mother. Although the child on the first image was alone, it scored for more positive responses than the other image. This is due to the fact that there was nothing sincere in the mother's expression and she was not even looking directly at the child. The research demonstrates a large difference between viewer's responses (p. 202). Thus eliciting emotions is significant in advertising.

Tellis (2004) suggests several advantages of eliciting emotions in advertisements. Firstly, emotions require far less cognitive effort from the viewers. Emotions are also more interesting than arguments and therefore easier to recall. Finally, emotions may lead to a change of behavior more immediately than logic, because they draw the viewers into the action and distract them from the advertiser's intention to persuade (p. 150). It must be remembered that there are also disadvantages of arousing emotions in the ads. First of all, the central message might be missed if the negative emotions are unpleasant or if viewers get deeply involved in the emotions. The other disadvantage is that the arousal of strong emotions may lead the target to feel that the advertiser is exploiting the situation (Tellis, 2004, p. 151).

Additionally, three modes of persuasion can be identified in advertising. In the implicit mode, there may be no arguments or direct attribute claims and emotions are aroused by characters involved in the plot, which usually involves only paralinguistic. Similarly, the associative mode, arouses emotions through paralinguistic only, because it engages stimuli that are only associated with the product and there is a lack of claims about product benefits. In contrast to the previous modes, in the explicit mode, advertisers explicitly make claims and may support them with arguments. However, persuasion occurs primarily through the arousal of emotion rather than the force of argument (Tellis, 2004, p. 148). Percy & Elliot (2001) suggest six elements for eliciting emotions in advertising, which are: sound, music, pictures, color, movement, VisCAP and written or spoken words (p. 237 - 238). These elements are both language and paralinguistic. And the most powerful effect is obtained when both language and paralinguistic are used for emotions eliciting.

Many different emotions can be aroused in advertising, but this thesis focuses only on the ones that are useful for the analysis of the advertisements analyzed here. Nowadays, the most effective emotion that advertisers arouse is humor. People love to laugh and humor is the most attractive tool in advertisements. Humor in ads is usually aroused by means of language. Nevertheless, it is humorous if paralinguistic contradicts the linguistic message or if

something fun is presented in an advertisement. People want to watch humorous advertisements, talk about them and this is what advertisers want to achieve.

Second effective emotion is sympathy to the product, service or company. It is often associated with advertisements that employ stars or public people to play a role in the advertisement. Sympathy for the star is therefore transferred to the product or service, which the star advertises. Additionally, music can be treated as a tool to evoke viewer's sympathy, since advertisers use the hit songs that are liked by many people. Sympathy can also be aroused by the language used in the advertisement, because viewer's can like wording or rhymes.

Another emotion is empathy. Viewers empathize or feel with the characters and believe the linguistic message. The advertisement for Pampers diapers for children still uses this emotion. It says: "One pack of pampers is on vaccination for children in Africa". If you feel empathy or compassion for those children, you are going to choose Pampers over other diapers.

2.5 SUMMARY

Some advertisements contain paralanguage, which often contradict linguistic meaning. Nevertheless, it cannot be denied that language always occurs during the advertisement interpretation. Addressees code information about the product, what involves language. What more they memorize the product, service or brand name, what is possible only by language. Obviously, language is present during the creation of advertisements, because the idea and the theme of the advertisement has to be discussed before creation. In television advertisements, language is used to communicate with actors engaged to play roles, because there is no other way to tell them what they are expected to do. If language is not present in the advertisement, then at least it occurs during the advertisements' creation and interpretation. Therefore it is appropriate to say that advertising and language are inseparable.

The foremost important aspect of advertising is that it is type of communication, therefore it requires language. Second of all its semiotic properties are present in every advertisement. What more language in advertisements is used to arouse emotions, that produce various effects. Williamson (1978), states that:

Language can make very precise references, which we decipher as a part of the 'real world', since it is the most accessible to us of all the forms used in ads, and we use it

ourselves - it almost becomes our speech. Ads can use language closer to or further from our own, to produce different effects - we decipher a certain meaning from the style of the language used, the way in which it is written (p. 85).

Therefore, it is appropriate to say that advertisements are dependent on language because they take advantage of specific semiotic properties that are crucial in advertising in order to obtain particular effects. The following section demonstrates co-dependence of three different advertisements and language.

3. ANALYSIS OF ADVERTISEMENTS

3.1 ANALYSIS OF SONY TRINITRON TV ADVERTISEMENT

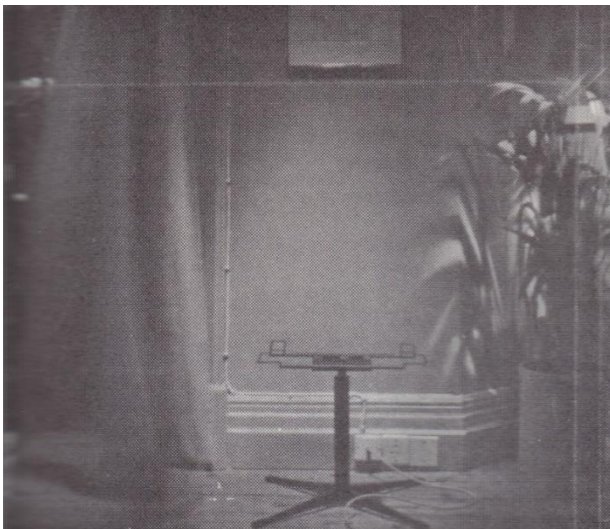


Image 3

Image 3 (retrieved from: <http://www.old-ads.com/category/old-stereo-ads>) shows part of an advertisement, the text attached to it was deleted in order to investigate advertisement dependency on language. An image presents a part of a room, with some curtain on the left side and a plant on the right side. On the floor, there are some cables and in the middle there is some kind of rack. The picture is taken so that the empty rack

occupies its central part and indicates the lack of an object. The central part of the image is brighter than the rest of the picture, what creates some kind of aura that places the lost object in the realm of desire.

At first sight, this ad is little bit confusing. We assume that it is a TV advertisement. But what is the nature of this advertisement? Perhaps the TV was stolen and it is a security company advertisement. Perhaps the TV was discarded, because it broke and it is an advertisement of a new TV. It can even be assumed that it is an advertisement of a transport company, because the owners of the missing item are moving into another place. The image gives the audience a sense of ambiguity. To know the real context of that advertisement, we need to read the attached text.



Image 4

Image 4 (retrieved from: <http://www.old-ads.com/category/old-stereo-ads>) demonstrates the same advertisement, but with the attached text. Only the text gives the real context to the audience. After reading the text, we are sure that the TV was stolen and it is an advertisement for a Sony Trinitron TV. The text also gives the audience the information about the most important virtue of the TV and that is its picture quality. The picture was excellent- clear and sharp, with no trace of interference or fuzziness, until the TV was stolen. Praising the virtues of Sony Trinitron TV, the advertisement fulfills the expressive function of a language. Since the advertisement inform about the product and its virtues, it meets the informational function of a language.

The speaker of the advertisement is a consumer, who certifies that the item he has been using was perfect. Although the speaker is anonymous, the audience knows that it is an ordinary human rather than an authority figure like a scientist, who can tell about technical virtues of the TV. The words, that the speaker says: "The first time I lost a clear, sharp picture on my Sony Trinitron was when it was stolen" is a evidence that he or she regrets the loss of device. Therefore, he or she will presumably buy another one from the same company if the original TV is not returned. The themes of the advertisement are therefore regret for the loss and desire to possess. Thus we are given access to presence and absence simultaneously. The absent item in the picture is defined by the narrative so clearly that it virtually becomes present, and the only regret the audience is allowed to experience is that of not possessing the TV yet.

In contemporary society almost everyone has a TV, because television inundates us with humor, information, emotion, knowledge and entertainment and it is a form of spending

free time. On the other hand, a TV is not a device that is completely necessary in every home like a fridge for example. To encourage the audience to buy an item that is not necessary, such as a TV, advertisers employ various tricks. It happens also in this case. Most of the audience probably have a TV already. Advertisers in order to reach a recipient use words such as: clean and sharp picture, because perhaps this is what the audience's old TV lacks. Thus the reason to buy TV changes: the recipient does not buy it because he or she needs a TV but because it has a clear and sharp picture. Nevertheless, some of the audience's reason to buy this TV will still be necessity. The text of the advertisement conveys conviction that losing a clear, sharp picture is impossible on this particular TV, unless it would be stolen. The whole sentence attached to the ad is some kind of metaphor, because losing the picture in this context is losing the TV.

From the pragmatic point of view the meaning of the text attached to the image simply means that the Sony Trinitron TV is unbreakable. And this is an interesting example of game with the audience that introduces a note of humor that influence recipient's attitude to advertisement and arouses sympathy. At first sight, the audience is confused by the picture and in contrast amused by the text that directs the audience to the right track of interpretation. Additionally, the text is what influences the audience's emotions. Since the language arouses emotions, we are dealing with the directive language function for this advertisement. The idea that the speaker discovering the disappearance of the TV, takes a picture of the empty rack and shows it in the newspaper is humorous. This advertisement also employs empathy, that is the viewer compassion for the person, who lost the TV. Emotions are aroused through the explicit mode, gaining the viewer's interest and drawing him into action, what distract from the intention to persuade.

As always in magazine advertisements, it employs one way and public communication, and encodes the information about the signifier - *the Sony Trinitron TV* and the signified- *unbreakable*. The word *unbreakable* becomes connotation of *the Sony Trinitron TV* and it is not revealed until we read the attached text. This conotational meaning also becomes a symbol of the Sony Trinitron TV. The whole image is a paralanguage and it is used to obtain viewer's credibility. We see that there is no TV, so it must have been stolen.

The advertisement could exist without the picture, obtaining the same effect, whereas an image on its own is not enough. From the image we might guess that it advertises a TV, but the information concerning its type and virtues, are included in the text. Only by language, can we interpret the context of a message included in the advertisement, what proves that the

main point of this thesis is true, mainly that advertisements are dependent on language because they take advantage of specific semiotic properties that are crucial in advertising to obtain particular effects.

To show the importance of the linguistic information in this advertisement, a survey was conducted. The advertisement for the Sony Trinitron TV without text (Image 3) was presented to fifty English-speaking students at the University of Iceland and they were asked a question: Is it an advertisement or a painting? If the answer was advertisement, students were asked another question: What does it advertise? Afterwards, students were shown the other advertisement with the text (Image 4) and asked the same questions in the same order. Below are the results for the advertisement without text: 23 students said it was a painting and 27 said it was an advertisement. Out of 27 students, only 15 guessed that it was a TV advertisement (figure 1). 6 out of them said it was a security company advertisement, 3 bet on a transport company and 2 on a cleaning company advertisement. Only one student said it was flower advertisement. The results are demonstrated on figure 2.



Figure 1

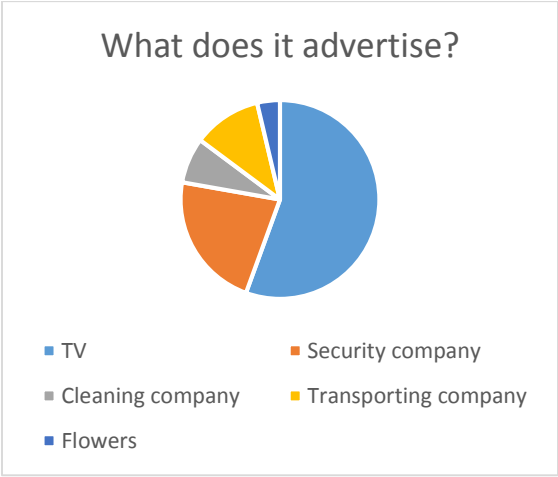


Figure 2

The second part of the survey proceeded quite differently. It was clear to everyone that the image with the text was an advertisement. And to the question: "What is it advertising?", everyone responded: "Sony Trinitron TV". Figure 3 and 4 demonstrates those results.



Figure 3

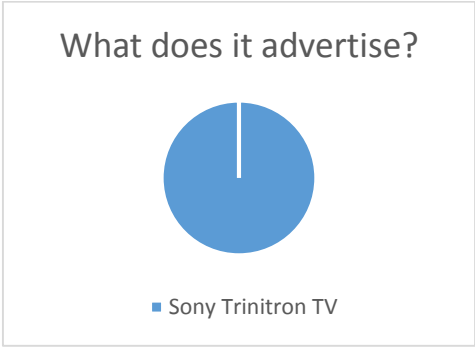


Figure 4

The results of the survey clearly demonstrate the importance of language in advertising, even where an image is the most prominent visual component. An image without language is perceived as something completely different, for example a painting. Lack of language can cause that an image would be interpreted rather as an art. Thus, the language is the factor that gives the meaning to the advertisement and that is why advertisement cannot exist without a language.

3.2 ANALYSIS OF JOHNSON'S BABY SHAMPOO ADVERTISEMENT



Image 5

The image 5 (Vestergaard & Schrøder, 1985, p. 171) shows Johnson's Baby shampoo advertisement. On the foreground, we can see Johnson's Baby shampoo with the label: *no more tears* and its name. If not the text on the bottle, one could think it is a perfume or oil. Therefore the text on the bottle directs the audience to the right truck of interpretation. In the background, there are several different shampoos with labels such as: *strawberry for normal hair* or *peach shampoo for dry hair*. Obviously, the bottle of Johnson's Baby Shampoo is more visible from the other bottles of shampoos which are eclipsed, which

means that we can assume the theme of the advertisement. However, the attached text, which in this case is quite long and extensive bestows the advertisement with the meaning and sense. The large sentence: "Yes, we have no bananas" acts as the hook that get the addressee interested in the ad. Wondering what bananas have to do with baby shampoo, we seek the answer in the rest of the text. And the answer is astonishing, because we learn that the word *bananas* is used metaphorically and we should interpret it by its new conotational meaning of *strange additives*, rather than *a fruit*. However, the function of the word *bananas* is even more complex. In the sentence *we have no bananas*, the word *bananas* is a metaphor for *strange*

additives, and on the other hand, in the sentence: "*The one that won't drive your hair bananas*", the word *bananas* means *crazy*. Therefore, we should interpret the sentence in the following way: "*The one that won't drive your hair crazy*". Also *bananas* meaning *crazy* is an informal use that usually is absent in written discourse. The usage of this informal meaning in the ad creates a sense of informality and playfulness, which is humorous. The word *bananas* can also be analyzed from the Saussure's point of view of ways of creating meaning. It suggests something else, in the first instance *strange additives* and in the second case *dry, shapeless hair*. Therefore, we can distinguish paradigmatic way of creating meaning. Moreover, the word *bananas* is a symbol created by the advertisers to draw the audience's attention and interest. It symbolizes *strange additives*, that are added to make shampoos smell nice and sound exotic. The viewer sees immediately that Johnson's Baby shampoo does not contain *bananas* or any other fruits that symbolize *strange additives*, whereas other shampoos have them. Another symbol, used in the advertisement is *pureness* and *gentleness*, which become symbols of the Johnson's Baby shampoo. To the usual denotational meaning of the hair wash product, we can now add its connotational meaning of the *pureness* and *gentleness*. Therefore, the advertisement undeniably present the importance of the interaction of the text and context.

The advertisement employs all of the communication functions. Since the advertisement praise the product by using words such as: *pure* and *gentle*, the directive and expressive communication functions. The sentence: "It cleans your hair gently without harshly stripping off all the essential oils" indicates to informational function of communication, because product is described. Furthermore, we can distinguish contextual and poetic function, because the meaning of *bananas* is ambiguous and the advertisement involves poetic devices such as metaphor. The speaker is absent and uses the word: *we*, what means that he or she speaks in the name of all people involved in the production and distribution of the Johnson's Baby Shampoo. It aims to elicit credibility and it would be difficult to set all of these people on the image. The themes of the advertisements are engagement and care for the good, health and satisfaction of the consumer, as evidenced by the sentence: "It cleans your hair gently without harshly stripping off all the essential oils or leaving any strange one behind". The sentence: "The one that won't drive your hair bananas" indicates the care for the consumers. Nevertheless, the advertisement demonstrates an interesting example of play with the viewer, which occurs in the sentence: "Yes, we have no bananas". The clash between words: *yes* and *no* evokes humor and interest of the addressee. Additionally, the viewer has a sense that the addresser directs his declaration directly and exclusively to him. Similar feelings can be traced back in the sentence: "But for those who agree that additives are best left out, there is

JOHNSON'S Baby Shampoo", with the proviso that this sentence creates an illusion of sense of choice. You feel like you can choose a shampoo with or without additives, but you know that rational choice is a shampoo without additives, which means that de facto you do not have a choice.

Similarly as the previous advertisement, the advertisement make claims and arguments about the product and therefore belongs to the explicit mode of arousing emotions. Emotions in this case are only advantageous for the advertisers, because they make the advertisement interesting and draw viewers into the action, distracting from the advertiser's intention to persuade. The advertisement makes the viewer sympathetic with it, because of the emotion of humor. Emotions are more interesting than logic and therefore raise the curiosity of the audience. Unlike the Sony Trinitron advertisement, the Johnson's Baby shampoo ad use much more language than paralanguage. And the humor and sympathy emotions are obtained only through its semiotic properties, such as metaphor or paradigm. Moreover, all of the aspects that attract the viewer's attention are included in the language, because the humor couldn't be aroused without the language and the word: *bananas* is crucial and essential. The Johnson's Baby shampoo advertisement could simply employ language only, with the same results. Notwithstanding, if the text would have been deleted, the advertisement would be not effective anymore. This case demonstrates superiority of language over paralanguage in advertising and language dependency.

3.3 ANALYSIS OF WEEK END CHOCOLATES ADVERTISEMENT



Image 6

Image 6 (Williamson, 1978, p. 93) presents the Week End chocolates advertisement. There are alternate ways of expressing similar meaning, for example: *choose, deliberate, select, pick* and so on, which disclose Saussurean paradigm. The use of several paradigmatic words foregrounds the sense of choosing carefully what one wants to do. At weekends one chooses what one wants to do, whereas at work for instance one does what one must. In the box of advertised chocolates, there are variety of flavors to choose from. If all the flavors are tasty, then the choice takes time - and it is the

weekend, so there is time to choose. The choosing is therefore a pleasure. The sentence: "You've got all weekend to make up your mind" is an example of play with the audience. It cannot be hidden, that the sentence alters the context of interpretation, because it introduces a box of chocolates as a symbol of leisure and pleasure. Therefore, the words make salient the experience that the advertising is selling, what is not obvious from the image.

Moreover, words that are used paradigmatically represent a syntagm, because they occur next to each other. In the advertisement, letters are used iconically, because chocolates resemble the shape of the letters. Those chocolates that imitate letters are examples of paralanguage. The language used in the advertisement functions directly because words such as *choose*, *pick* or *select* testify to the fact that the viewer is advised. Additionally, language functions contextually and poetically, because the meaning of the word *weekend* is ambiguous. Its denotational meaning is end of the week, and connotational meaning is taste, pleasure and relax. The words *Week End* work also as a symbol, and they symbolize relax. If you want to relax, you need to wait for the Week End, that is chocolates. The themes of the ad are therefore pleasure and relax. The speaker of the advertisement is absent which indicates that he or she is relaxing and delighting with the taste of chocolates.

The advertisement deals with the emotions of humor and sympathy, which are aroused both by written words - language and picture - paralanguage. The usage of chocolates instead of letters and the metaphorical usage of word *Week End* is humorous and causes sympathy to the product. The advertisement takes advantage of arousing humor because it makes it interesting. An advertiser explicitly makes the claim by using words such as: *deliberate*, *choose* or *pick*. Therefore, explicit mode of arousing emotions is used. The particular effect of eliciting humor was obtained both by using paralanguage and semiotic properties of a language. In this case those elements are dependent on each other. However, it is important to notice that language wins with the paralanguage because there is much more evidence for language than paralanguage. Although the chocolates are used to imitate the letters, the meaning of the words such as: *choose*, *deliberate*, *pick* and so on are most significant. What is more, the letters and words are much larger than the actual chocolates box, which indicates their importance. Nonetheless, the chocolates that are used iconically are also important, but since they are used to resemble the shape of the letters, it should be admitted that the ad is dependent on language.

4. DISCUSSION

From the previous discussion, we have seen how important language is in the interpretation of advertisements. In the Sony Trinitron TV advert, it would not even be clear what the picture was showing without the language. Similarly, in the Johnson's Baby Shampoo ad, the visually striking banana is a hook to get the viewer to read the text. The Week End Chocolates advertisement demonstrates how paralanguage can be used for humorous effect.

In advertisements like Week End Chocolates, Johnson's Baby Shampoo or Sony Trinitron TV, language occurs with the image and is visible. The results of this analysis confirm that advertisements are dependent on language and the usage of linguistic semiotic properties by advertisers is intentional to obtain particular effects. The results also demonstrate that language and paralanguage are dependent on each other. The survey reveals that advertisers must use a language in order to transmit particular information and to obtain intended effect.

Secondly, those advertisements demonstrate various aspects of language use. The Week End Chocolate advertisement enhances language and paralanguage partnership and dependence, whereas Johnson's Baby Shampoo advertisement reveals language superiority over paralanguage. Sony Trinitron TV advertisement demonstrates that the most important information for both addressers and addressees are exposed by language. Obviously, if the Johnson's Baby Shampoo advertisement was used to conduct the survey, the results would indicate something completely different. Every participant would be able to realize that it was Johnson's Baby advertisement, by looking at the image only. But still advertisers need to include at least three words: Johnson's Baby Shampoo on the image, so the potential customers know what to buy. Nevertheless, there is nothing in the image that convince the audience to buy the shampoo, whereas the text attached to it gives many reasons to buy the product. Therefore it is true that images have great power in advertisements, but it is the language that is most powerful, because it gives meaning to the advertisement and completes information included in the advertisement.

5. CONCLUSION

From the ongoing discussion, we can draw conclusions that the results support the hypothesis that advertisements are dependent on language because they take advantage from using specific semiotic properties that are crucial in advertising to obtain particular effects. After all, an advertisement can exist with a language only, without any images, as it occurs in radio advertisements, whereas there are no advertisements with images only that do not contain any language. Every TV or magazine advertisements contains language. Therefore, we can

conclude that the language is the most powerful tool in advertising, because of its superiority over images and paralanguage. The role of images is to complement the information or as Percy and Elliot (2001) state, advertisers most often use images to include some information in order to escape explicit interpretation and therefore evade legal or moral restrictions (p. 28). It is very important to understand the role of language in advertisements because advertisers use it to explicit particular emotions, transmit particular information by using its semiotic properties. Additionally, they cover it with the image or paralanguage, so that the audience is not aware of it, focusing on the images. Since, language accompany advertisements, whether in the ad or during the creation of the advert, it is appropriate to say that advertisements are dependent on language and they take advantage of its semiotic properties to obtain particular effects.

References

- Cook, G., (1992) . The Discourse of Advertising. London: Routledge.
- Dębski, D., (2006) . *Ekonomika I organizacja przedsiębiorstw: część 2*. Warszawa: Wydawnictwa Szkolne i Pedagogiczne Spółka Akcyjna.
- Dyer, G. (1982) . Advertising as Communication. Retrived from <http://books.google.co.uk/books?hl=pl&lr=&id=bLaJAgAAQBAJ&oi=fnd&pg=PP1&dq=advertising+communication&ots=NJBWg7kbtz&sig=mQ9a1RvGvCXnE4eyOZ4MtB-xnNc#v=onepage&q=advertising%20communication&f=false>
- Goddard, A. (1998) . The Language of Advertising. (2nd ed.). London: Routledge.
- Herbst, T., (2010) . English Linguistics: A Coursebook for Students of English. Berlin: Walter de Gruyter.
- Jones, J. P., (1999) . The Advertising Business: Operations, Creativity, Media Planning, Integrated Communications. California: SAGE Publications Inc.
- Percy L., & Elliott R., (2001) . Strategic Advertising management (2nd ed.) . Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Tellis, G., J. (2004) . Effective Advertising. Understanding When, How and Why Advertising Works. California: Sage Publications.
- Twardowska, A., Olczyk, E., (n. d.). Kobieta w mediach: Świat Reklamy. Retrived from http://www.academia.edu/3680993/Kobieta_w_mediach
- Williamson, J., (1978) . Decoding Advertisements: Ideology and Meaning in Advertising. London: Marion Boyars Publishers Inc. (Williamson, 1978)
- Vestergaard, T., & Schrøder, K., (1985) . The Language of Advertising. Oxford: Blackwell Publishers Ltd.