# GRAMMATICAL ASPECT OF AN EFFECTIVE ADVERTISING TEXT

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## *Abstract*

The article delineates some issues of an advertising text, in particular its grammatical aspect. It includes the study of type and form of the syntactic constructions that build up a slogan or a catchphrase. The author points out, that the grammatical aspect of an advertising text is not the only constituent that makes it effective. It is only a part of this process, but the primal one to be perceived because each type of a syntactic construction possesses its own potential of forming a certain text, thus forming a certain strategy of decoding it. Syntactic structures mainly forming a slogan or a catchphrase are uni-component and bi-component utterances. They are tackled in the given article as basic utterances to be used in ads, whereas a number of other types of syntactic constructions is also used in advertising texts in the cases when it's convenient to use them for the author of the text. Each of them represents a certain type of grammatical system that was formed in the course of language development according to some researches. Examples of advertising texts show that one and the same text implies a number of grammatical constructions, which helps actualize their pragmatic potential to the full scale.

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**Keywords:** Text, advertising text, slogan, uni-component utterance, bi-component utterance, grammar.

## 1. Introduction

The problem of understanding a message from the advertisement by the receiver with the same effect as the author has expected is seen mostly in the field of psychology, psycholinguistics and cognitive linguistics rather than grammar. However, it is the formal side of the text that is primal for the perception and analysis, for decoding the information on the part of the receiver. In the given article a number of formal aspects of text formation will be dwelt upon. They help actualizing the illocutionary force of an utterance and reach the perlocutionary effect conceived by the author of the text. In this article advertising texts are taken as the source of material.

## 2. Problem Statement

It is worth mentioning that the grammatical aspect of an advertising text is considered not from some abstract point of view, but from the type of a syntactic structure that is used for the explication of the author's intention. It's important to note that an advertising text can be a polycode one, thus containing not only verbal but non-verbal elements as well. These elements are mainly graphical and they don't affect the principles of text-formation. (Klochko, 2017).

Advertising text is a very special type of text because it (unlike fiction for example) is aimed at the definite audience and has a final perlocutionary objective – to cause the receiver of the message to buy the product. This objective of the text is also traced in the cases when the slogan does not have any imperative form. In such cases implicit ways of meaning explication are used through the intertext and subtext (implication). Thus, the text of the advertisement by the mechanism of its functioning doesn't differ from any other type of the text.

In this respect the elements bearing the message should be formally (grammatically) structured so that it would be easy for the receiver to understand it correctly. It implies a number of questions.

## 3. Research Questions

As it is stated by linguists, advertising text as a speech act can be an imperative, a promisive, a quesitive, etc. (Voeikova, 2017). But in its essence it is always a directive speech act and its illocutionary aim was ultimately described by J.R. Searle as "attempts to get people to do things" (Searle, 1969).

G. G. Pochepcov describes advertising as a psychotherapist model of communication because it, as well as psychotherapy, alters somehow the behaviour of a person. Such type of communication is aimed at correcting cognitive mechanisms that handle the behaviour on the one hand, and teaching the person some new models of behaviour on the other. This "teaching" is based upon a number of positive examples provided by the author of the text. (Pochepcov, 2001).

From the point of view of semiotics, the aim of the advertisement is to "include the person into the structure of meanings, motivate him/her to participate in the decoding of linguistic and visual signs, and to get satisfied with this process of decoding. The question of linguistic and stylistic peculiarities of an advertising text is closely connected to the specificity of the printed ads impact and its perception by the receiver." (Dolzhikova, 2009).

Thus, the efficiency of the advertising text is the perlocutionary effect caused in the receiver of the message. But how can an efficient advertising text be formed? Here a number of approaches can be outlined.

As S. S. Shlyakhova states, the strategy of information presentation in an advertising text (either aggressive or harmonizing) determines the difference in the character of ads in one and the same sphere. She examines two "anti-drug" posters whose design (colour, font, graphical images) forms the type of communicative strategy of their perception, which results in the understanding of the encoded message (Shlyakhova, 2017).

Alternatively, A.A. Voeikova dwells upon morphological and syntactic peculiarities of directives in advertising texts without taking into account its possible non-verbal components (Voeikova, 2017).

S.V. Shustova and E.A. Osheva notice that intentionality is one of the most prominent characteristics of an advertising text which "expresses the connection of linguistic meanings with the intention of the speaker" (Shustova & Osheva, 2017). The authors point out and analyse pragmatic text intensifiers found in bank advertisements. They also analyse the actualizing of causative meaning and a number of other parameters in them (Shustova & Osheva, 2017).

## 4. Purpose of the Study

It is possible to treat the analysis of the advertising text from a number of different positions. In this article, speaking about advertising texts, we are going to put forward the type of the syntactic structure that forms the slogan or the catchphrase and have a brief overview of how these types 'work' in the text. Such an approach allows to have a look at the text at macro-level, not taking into account either the type of a speech act, or morphological features of the words in the utterance. It's worth mentioning that different approaches do not deny, but enrich each other. They help to tackle the problem from a different angle.

For instance, the examples provided by S.V. Shustova and E.A. Osheva may be considered from a different point of view – the types of syntactic constructions and their pragmatic functional. Meanwhile the abovementioned authors treat the slogan *Little interest rate – for good clients. From 14,99%. Personal loans. (Хорошим клиентам – низкие проценты. От 14,99%. Персональные кредиты.)* as a comissive speech act which actualizes causative potential of the whole text through a number of pragmatic intensifiers. But the given text can also be analysed from a different position which will enable us to see how each utterance shapes the message of the text on the whole and adds to its meaning due to its features.

## 5. Research Methods

Types of syntactic constructions are not merely a multitude of structures grouped with each other according to some feature or a number of features. The classification is based on the following idea. The general grammatical system of a modern speaker is compiled of constituents – grammatical sub-systems (grammars) that synergistically form syntactic competence of the speaker.

This idea was described in the works of prof. Ju. A. Levitskij whose most prominent one on the topic is entitled "Alternative grammars" (Levitskij, 2010). In this work, briefly, a number of grammars that were formed in the course of language development (protogrammar, communicative grammar, actant-and-role grammar) are juxtaposed to the nominative grammar – the one formed by the two-member utterance with the subject in the nominative case and the predicate as a finite verb form. While analysing the functioning of the mentioned grammars in the speech of a modern speaker it was pointed out that each type of a syntactic construction has its own potential of text-formation and each grammar is represented in the speech by a definite type of utterance.

Thus, uni-component utterance is a unit of protogrammar, i.e. a unit, undivided both formally and semantically. It can be a one-word unit (*Cold. Yes. No.*) as well as consist of a number of words making up a semantic unity (*What splendid effort! Two hours.*). Utterances of this type are widely used both in monologues and dialogues (Klochko, 2015b).

Bi-component utterance is a more extended structure because both "topic" and "comment" are verbalized in it, whereas a uni-component utterance explicates only the comment. The topic is implied in the context or the situation. Typically bi-component utterances are marked by a dash and more common for the Russian language rather than English, due to the differences in their structure. That's why the translation of the slogan *Little interest rate – for good clients* might seem rather clumsy in English. Nevertheless, a perfect example of such type of a construction can be found, for example, in J. Galsworthy's "The Man Of Property" (Ch. "Drive with Swithin"): *He — ah!; Falling, — oh!* Here the first component is the topic and the other is the comment. Such utterances are to be distinguished from those formed according to the model $N_1$ be $N_2$, which is especially acute for the Russian language that tends to omit the verb 'to be' in present tense in simple sentences as in the following: *My brother – a teacher (Мой брат - учитель)* equals to *My brother is a teacher (Мой брат есть учитель),* which is almost never used in everyday speech.

Bi-component utterance is a very special construction that has neither subject nor predicate but their prototypes – "topic" and "comment" that outline the reference field and attribute a predicative feature to it respectively. Such utterances were first described by Ch. Bally who called them "di-rhemes" (Bally, 2001). In Bally's example from children's speech the phrase *Coucou – frrrt!* means that the bird is flying. It's obvious that such utterance is different from so-called two-member utterances of nominative structure containing a subject and a predicate.

Prof. V.A. Kurdymov states that the notions of "topic" and "comment" are more prominent ones than just prototypes of subject and predicate. They "go beyond the borders of syntax" because they are typical for any text and, "as a criterion, for the typology of languages" and thus "essential for principal modeling of psycholinguistic processes" (Kurdymov, 2014).

In advertising texts, especially slogans and catchphrases, bi-component utterances are used very often. It concerns both social, commercial and political advertising. One should keep in mind that every time we meet such utterances we deal not with a mere utterance but a unit of a particular grammar. Uni-component utterances are the units of protogrammar and bi-component utterances are the units of communicative grammar. Actant-and-role grammar is represented in some languages through the utterances with the subject in indirect cases (accusative, dative, etc.). As stated above, each type of a syntactic construction belonging to a particular grammar actualizes its potential of text-formation. It means that some constructions are suitable for forming up a dialogue with brisk utterances (protogrammar), others (nominative grammar) – for vague descriptions and narration, etc.

Speaking about advertising, units of protogrammar and communicative grammar are mainly used in this sphere. Uni-component utterances, for example, can be used separately (*Das Auto*) or form whole rows for describing features and characteristics of the product. This situation is represented practically in any language and culture. One can easily recall classic slogan *Quadratisch. Praktisch. Gut. (Square. Practical. Good.)* of German chocolate bars or occasionally meet a little-known slogan *Zdravo. Ukusno. Naše. (Healthy. Tasty. Ours.)* advertising local meat products in Montenegro. Uni-component utterances may start or end a piece of narrative, slogan or a speech.

Bi-component utterances are more often used separately, because such an utterance is more 'self-sufficient' due to the peculiarities of its structure. It's used as a slogan, a call to action, a declarative (Klochko, 2015a). It's typical to use then in political discourse according to situationally established models. In the Russian language a common example of the kind is the following: *Достойной зарплате – быть! (A worthy salary – should be!)* Such models possess existential meaning because of the infinitive *быть!* (Literally it's translated *to be!)* functioning as a comment to the topic denoted by the first component. Such bi-component utterances are mainly used in Russian politicians' slogans as promisives and declaratives. For other languages the phenomenon of such utterances should be researched, but still in many languages, utterances with a double subject, which is also a typical topic-comment structure (Levitskij, 2010), can be used as political slogans. For instance in Portuguese and English (taken from Wikipedia): *"Brasil, ame-o ou deixe-o!" ("Brazil, love it or leave it!").* Consider the example given by Ju. A. Levitskij. The utterance *Wine – table!* is easily 'extended' using a double-subject construction: *Wine, it should be placed on the table* (Levitskij, 2010).

## 6.   Findings

In the majority of cases advertising texts include units of protogrammar and communicative grammar, because such utterances help communicate the information quickly and briefly also due to the implied emotional constituent, thus propelling the receiver to the act of buying the product. Protogrammar, using the only word in the utterance, points or hints at the number of facts, associations and feelings that are known to the receiver because they exist in mass culture and collective consciousness (Klochko, 2015b). It's worth mentioning that possible intertextual references may make the meaning of advertising texts even broader. For example, a well-known Whassup-campaign by a beer-producing company in 1999-2002 gave way to numerous parodies and any linguistic form (as WhatsApp Messenger, for instance) reminding of the commercial and the catchphrase will affect the perception of the product image on the whole.

In the cases when it's necessary to affect the rational sphere and reason the motives for purchasing the product logically, nominative grammar is used (Klochko, 2014). As L. Alba-Juez and T. Larina  note, "…emotion affects language and at the same time is affected by language: the way we feel may influence the way we talk and express those feelings, and at the same time, the way we name or talk about emotions can affect the way we feel such emotions." (Alba-Juez & Larina, 2018). The type of a syntactic construction can be a linguistic means of the expression of such interrelation between the language and the emotion.

It's natural on the other hand to use a blend of grammars in one and the same text. Thus, in the abovementioned example *Little interest rate – for good clients. From 14,99%. Personal loans.* (*Хорошим клиентам – низкие проценты. От 14,99%. Персональные кредиты.*) there are two uni-component utterances and one bi-component utterance. Each utterance type has its own characteristics that allow to form a definite text with the help of it. Uni-component utterances for instance can easily attribute a predicative feature to the reference field (Klochko, 2015b), while uni-component utterances are more likely to be used for the description of the 'plot' or 'background' (terms provided by A. Mustajoki) (Mustajoki, 2006) opening or closing a piece of narrative. A special feature of uni-component utterances usage is the so-called parcelling, i.e. segmenting a full sentence into separate fragments.

Any coherent text blends different types of grammars that affect each other. In the mentioned example of

bank advertisement the first bi-component utterance clearly distinguishes between the topic (good clients) and comment (little interest rate). In the translation we had to change the positions of components because in Russian the first component has the form of dative, instrumental or any other case, which is abnormal in English. This very utterance is enough for making up a comissive slogan which denotes "this will happen if you buy this product" (Danilevskaya, 2013) actualized through the features of the type of the syntactic construction. The following parcellate accentuates facts given in the previous utterance. The upcoming uni-component utterance finishes the narrative. It sums up everything said before.

In fact any advertising text whose meaning is explicated and lined up by different means among which syntax is primal can be analysed in such a way. When we say syntax, we mean types of syntactic constructions. In practice it means that the authors of tips for writing 'effective ads' use uni- and bi-component utterances as well as other types of utterances in accordance with their potential of text-formation without any reference to theoretical grounds of these tips. It's quite natural because the logic of syntactic construction usage is pre-set in their structure and implicitly obvious to any speaker whose "communicative strategy reflects unconscious but free choice" (Yanko, 2001).

Let's consider some more examples. *МТС. Люди говорят.; Билайн. Живи на яркой стороне; МегаФон. Будущее зависит от тебя; Sprite. Не дай себе засохнуть!* ('*MTS'. People're speaking; 'Beeline'. Live at the bright side; 'MegaFon'. The future depends on you; 'Sprite'. Don't dry up!* ). In these slogans uni-component utterances are placed into the first position, where they open the narrative (even such a short one) thus 'setting the tone' of the whole text perception associating it with the name of the brand introduced by it. The following utterance defines and broadens the uni-component one and can belong to any type of syntactic construction. For instance, a bi-component one (*Snickers. Съел — и порядок! – 'Snickers'. Ate – and alright!*) or another uni-component (*Русское море. Рыбное избранное. – 'Russkoe More'. Fish Selections.*) that can also end the slogan or a catchphrase (*Заботься о себе. Garnier.; Будь в форме. Reebok. – Take care. Garnier; Keep fit. Reebok.*).

The type of the utterance used in the text or a piece of narrative is determined by the intention of the author/speaker, i.e. the way he wants to position the product or service. One and the same meaning may be modified by different linguistic forms affecting the perception of the product/brand positioned. In slogans of Russian insurance companies *Ингосстрах платит. Всегда. ('Ingosstrah's paying. Always.)* and *Росно попало! ('Rosno's got into hot water!)* the first example consists of a nominative two-member construction and a one-word parcellate that actualizes the comissive meaning of the slogan, while the other doesn't need any additional grammatical intensification  due to its style.

In the cases when an advertising text is not limited by a slogan or a catchphrase all the utterances that form it up are usually extended ones to reason the argument and make it more grounded. Consequently the receiver of the message interprets the information according to the logic of the grammar (the type of the syntactic construction) used. If the text consists of a number of uni-componenet utterances in a row, it's obvious that some features of a positioned product are enumerated or described. By such a means it's done briefly and quickly basing on the previous or common knowledge of the receiver. Bi-component utterances are used for making up short undisputable statements, because their structure simply doesn't allow to interpret them in any other sence. Nominative two-member constructions are used for less emotional and more informative sentences.

## 7. Conclusion

The efficiency of an advertising text is determined by a range of factors. It can be noticeably determined by the grammatical form of the constituents of the whole text. It may be seen from different angles: the type of a speech act, the morphology of the lexemes, and the type of a syntactic construction. We also shouldn't leave behind the intertextual component of an advertising text as well as stylistic colouring and definite connotations of separate lexemes and idioms. All in all there is no unique "key" to the creating of a really effective advertising text because formal, semantic and other aspects of the text as a linguistic notion are like the interacting layers when some layer once superposes others and in other communicative situations stays unnoticed. Yet the grammar aspect of the text, especially such global as the syntactic type of an utterance, remains prevailing for the primary perception of the text, but still – not the only one. Proper and skillful use of this aspect will allow to raise the efficiency of an advertising text.

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