

## PhR 2019 Philological Readings

### COMMUNICATIVE FAILURES IN ADVERTISING TEXTS OF ORENBURG TOWN

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#### *Abstract*

This paper deals with the peculiarities of advertising communication, describes and interprets types of communicative failures in advertisement texts of Orenburg town. Advertising communication is characterized as mass communication synthesizing social, philological, economic, philosophical, cultural, ethical, legal and other problems; it uses a wide range of forms of influence on the addressee and means of information spread. A communicative failure is interpreted as poor recognisability, identifiability, and unattractiveness for the target audience and its negative reaction to the text, public disapproval and contradiction to the norms of morality and law. The reasons of failures may be insufficient consideration of the nature of the addressee (usage of unfamiliar to target audience precedent texts, that is due to the difference in the addressees and the addressant background knowledge, with the potential of an addressee interpretative activity), incorrect usage of linguistic and stylistic language means (colloquial and obscene, vulgar words and expressions, violation of literary standards). The realization of the author's creative potential in an advertising text can cause not only violation of language and communication standards but also of ethical ones. The performed analysis reveals the following types of communicative failures (caused by language-related reasons) in advertising: the mismatch of the communicants mental worlds and the communicative text's composition.

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## 1. Introduction

In the modern world, communicative processes in any person's life are significantly influenced by mass media information and advertisement texts as well. Mass consciousness formation, spreading of ideals, attitudes, and knowledge implemented by an addressee are encouraged by advertisement texts.

It should be mentioned, that one of the advertising text creation and translation problems is the emergence of communicative errors, these are the precondition for communicative failures occurrence, which means that an interaction initiator is not able to reach a communicative goal, pragmatic aspirations, as well as the lack of interaction, understanding and agreement between the communication participants.

The emergence of failures while creating an advertising text is due to several factors, including those connected with the presence of linguistic and cultural realities with application of special expressive means of language. An advertising text is a kind of speech act, in the structure of which the addressee and the addressant are singled out, the lack of understanding between them can also cause an unsuccessful flow of the communication process and lead to the failure of the entire advertising campaign.

At different times the study of communicative failures as part of speech acts theory has been conducted by such scientists as Arutyunova (1998), Kobozeva (2000), Kubryakova (2004), Pocheptsov (2009) and others. The peculiarities of advertising text functionality have been studied by Bernadskaya (2008), Golovleva (2004), Goldman and Dobrobabenko (1991), Nazaikin (2008), Pirogova and Parshin (2006). Kibrik (2003), Tyurina (2009), and Polukarov (2004) have studied an advertisement discourse; Chernyshova and Chuvakin (2011) have studied text linguistics characteristics, and Issers (2008) and Yakobson (1985) dealt with the communication theory issues.

New foreign studies are devoted to the effectiveness of humour use in advertising (Eisend, 2018), the use of symbolism in advertising as a way to improve communicative efficiency (Barroso, Garcia, & Jimenez, 2018), study of context effects in advertising (Stip, 2018), new advertising formats (Atal, 2018), strategies and intentions of advertising discourse (Konrath & de Freitas, 2017), mechanisms with the help of which advertising sells life models (Jorda, 2018), new theories of effective influence and persuasion of consumers development in the advertising (Johar, 2016), creation of educational resource training in critical analysis of advertising (Cerigatto & de Siqueira, 2017).

The paper is structured as follows. In Introduction sections 1.1 and 1.2 the authors describe the problem's relevance and degree of development, peculiarities of the advertising text as a form of communication, define communicative failures in advertising texts. In section 2, advertisement texts of Orenburg town are analysed, main types of communicative failures are described and their reasons are identified. In section 3, the authors state the main point of study, based on the assumption of polycode text implementation peculiarities impact on communicative failures typology. In section 4, the goal of study is justified. In section 5, the methods helping to review communicative failures in Orenburg advertisement texts, their types and causes are specified. Section 6 deals with the results of the study devoted to identification of various types of communicative failures reasons, reducing advertising texts effectiveness and section 7 provides the conclusion.

### **1.1. Advertising text as a form of communication**

An advertising text is a form of communicative act that is a kind of action while analyzing which the same categories that are necessary to characterize and evaluate any action are used: a subject, an aim, a process, a tool, a mean, a result, conditions, success, etc. An advertising text to become effective, first of all, should be an appropriate one, otherwise advertisement creators will face a communicative failure (Kobozeva, 2000).

As it is stated in the article of Alekseeva (2008), advertising communication act, just like any speech act, is characterized by conditions of success, non-compliance of them leads to communicative failures.

Understanding of communication as an activity the main idea of which is to exchange information to achieve interaction, is embodied in the communicative model (Gorodetsky, Kobozeva, & Saburova, 1985), according to it the advertising can be characterized as follows.

1. Mass communication defines the nature of communicants. The advertising is addressed to a group of consumers and often created by composite authors.

2. The circumstances of communication are determined by a number of factors: advertising form, channel, time and place of its distribution.

3. The system of communicative conceptions is complex and diverse. Wishing to sell a product (or a service), an advertiser sells an idea, appeals to rational, emotional and social motives. This is a deliberate manipulation of advertising.

4. Communication processes are characterized by the activity of the addressant and assume practical, beneficial to him/her actions of the addressee. These are subject-object, unequal relations controlled by the subject, in which the communicator's feedback to the audience acts as a mechanism of social management (Sharkov, 2010).

5. A communicative text can be mono-, di- or polycode, ultra-short or quite complete, can be constructed according to certain rules, in a certain style, characterized by a certain set of language means, etc.

Thus, advertising communication can be characterized as mass one, using different forms of influence on the addressee and means of information spread. It is worth noting that it is a part of not only marketing, but also cultural sphere of public life, so, along with commercial value advertising has communicative, aesthetic and ethical ones.

### **1.2. Defining of communicative failures in advertising texts**

According to the researches in the field of speechculture and communication, communicative failures mean that the initiator of communication fails to achieve a communicative goal, as well as the lack of interaction, understanding and agreement among the participants of communication (Vinogradov & Platonova, 1999).

Modern linguistic studies review communicative failures in connection with personal features of communicants, communication circumstances, processes of verbalization and understanding, difficulties in achieving communicative and practical goals, violation of the principle of communicative contact. The addressant may have difficulties with the selection of an adequate language unit and, as a result, the

wrong choice of words, the mismatch of socio-cultural features of participants in communication can also lead to inappropriate phrases that cause a communicative failure.

The first classification of communicative failures was proposed by John Austin in 1986. A more complete classification according to sources and consequences is provided in the works of such authors as Gorodetsky et al. (1985). Classifying communicative failures by sources, the researchers distinguish communicative failures caused by the communicant himself/herself and communicative failures caused by the circumstances of the communicative act.

Besides, the researchers point out that misunderstanding, misconception and failure in communication can be caused by a variety of reasons: external, extralinguistic, and linguistic ones. For example, even differences in worldviews lead to communicative failures. Some scientists note that it is reasonable to identify the types of communicative failures in terms of their causes: communicative failures caused by the structure of the language, communicative failures caused by differences of speakers and communicative failures caused by pragmatic factors.

The study of communicative failures in the field of advertising is an important task.

Communicative advertising efficiency is measured according to four criteria: 1) identifiability, 2) memorability, 3) attention-getting power of advertising and 4) its agitation power (Ukhova, 2013).

It should be mentioned, that in relation to the performative statements J. Austin proposed six conditions for their successful functioning (emphasizing their obviousness): 1) the procedure of pronouncing "certain words by certain persons in certain circumstances"; 2) the possibility ("suitability") for the procedure; 3) the "correctness" of its conduct; 4) the "completeness" of its conduct; 5) the "true" intentions of all communicants; 6) the correspondence of intentions to subsequent behaviour (Austin, 1986).

By using the components of the communicative model, these conditions relate to the triad "communicative text – communicants-circumstances", the quality of its components, the quality of communicative processes, the system of communicative ideas and their implementation.

There are communicative failures, the cause of which is the communicant and the circumstances of the communicative act (Gorodetsky et al., 1985). However, with equal responsibility of communication participants, it is more correct to talk about both communicants and highlight the communicative failures caused by: 1) the structure of the language; 2) the differences of speakers; 3) pragmatic factors (Ermakova & Zemskaya, 1993). In other words, failures can be related to the language code, communicants and communication circumstances.

In such a way, a communicative failure can be defined as failure to achieve communicative and/or practical goals, due to mismatch of «mental worlds of communicants» (Mustajoki, 2015), circumstances of communication or communicative text causing communicative processes failure.

However, a clear differentiation of communicative failure causes is not always possible, since in some cases there are several reasons.

## **2. Problem Statement**

Communicative failures in advertising caused by the mismatch of mental worlds of advertising communication participants are associated with insufficient consideration of the addressee factor. This

may reveal itself in the existing contradiction of the cultural tradition in the advertising text. In most cases, the authors of unsuccessful advertising texts do not take into consideration the background knowledge of various communicants. That is, incorrect use of precedent phenomena leads to communicative failures.

Thus, on the eve of the national patriotic holiday several Orenburg store supermarkets of «Magnet» chain exhibited on their displays alcoholic beverages in glass bottles "decorated" with St. George ribbon. The traditional bicolour of the St. George ribbon is used to decorate the pads of the order of Glory, established in 1943, and is a kind of national symbol of the state, which makes its use for advertising purposes not only violating the norms of morality, but also violating the norms of the law.

Communicative failures can be associated with the non-recognition of a precedent phenomenon, which, in turn, indicates a violation of the addressee factor.

For instance, one of the Orenburg auto dealers, presenting a new series of a Chinese auto group cars, uses the slogan "This city needs new heroes." This text is a famous phrase from the "Batman" trilogy, which is recognizable in a certain age category (mostly teenage). At the same time, advertising has been designed for adult consumers with a high level of income. Therefore, this slogan uses a precedent phenomenon that is not recognized by most of the target audience. Failure to reach the target audience is the cause of communicative failure of this advertising text. This problem is solved by identifying the possible reaction of the target audience and checking the research data on the focus group.

It should be noted that more often advertisers, counting on the mass addressee, use the most recognizable precedent phenomena, minimizing the risk of communicative failure.

Communicative failures in advertising caused by the nature of the communicative text are due to the fact that the polycode nature of the advertising texts increases a number of communicative risks, many of which are due to the structure of the language.

The desire to originality of the advertising text often brings authors to creation of unsuccessful combination of images. For example, let us take the slogan of the Japanese food delivery service: «Delicious delivery» and a slogan of the furniture store «Two-storied choice». Both texts violate logic and lexical compatibility, and, unfortunately, the originality of these advertising texts borders on their illiteracy, which comes to the fore. The slogan "We embody the future" in the advertising of the major auto group products by the local dealership is not successful either - the authors of the text also did not take into account lexical irreconcilability of its constituent words. The authors of the advertising a furniture company slogan "Our prices are lower than any stocks" forgot that you can only compare equivalent concepts, and prices and stocks are not the ones.

The reason for the communicative failure may be a speech error, obvious to the target audience. For instance, Orenburg firm delivering products from the supermarket used the slogan: "Products not going out". In Russian, adverbial participle denotes an additional action in the main one - in the quoted text there is no lexical unit denoting the main action.

Modern advertising has a focus on ambiguity, through which the strategy of paradox is implemented. Many researchers pay attention to the use the best of homonyms and polysemantic words in advertising texts. The semantic diffusivity resulting from the conflict of verbal and visual meanings

contributes to the creation of the effect of deceived expectation ("double bottom"), which is very popular among the authors of advertising texts.

Such advertising works can be evaluated in different ways by different social groups, the researchers also talk about the increasing probability of communicative failure, especially when the slogans, sometimes regardless of the author's ideas, include erotic and sexual overtones.

For example, the following slogan was placed on the advertising banner of the local dairy producer: "Yesterday it laid, today it stands". The illustration accompanying this text made it clear that it is about rebranding of the package, replacing the old soft package with a new hard one. However, the appearance of a large number of negative comments and memes in the connection to the installation of this banner in social networks suggested that the target audience saw sexual overtones in this text and reacted negatively to this, which indicates a communicative failure of this slogan.

Many authors of advertising texts, using ambiguity (as a technique), deliberately exploit the erotic and sexual overtones contained in the accompanying text illustration. Sometimes this does not meet the author's expectations, but also causes the opposite effect and even leads to court actions - being recognized as unethical and insulting the feelings and dignity of a particular part of the audience, advertising becomes the subject of close attention from the jurisdiction. This happened with the advertising slogans of the construction company offering to buy apartments at affordable prices in new residential complexes.

The text on the banner offering to buy apartments with apartment decoration for a certain monthly fee was accompanied by a slogan: "Cheaper than to hire!" and the image of a girl taking off her clothes. Undoubtedly, on the one hand, the advertising said that the mortgage program supporting the project allows you to pay for the purchased apartment monthly less than for rental housing, but on the other hand, it (advertising) also hinted (according to the target audience opinion, which it expressed in social networks) at a similar view of the relationship with a woman, which caused the anger of the target audience. A similar situation is with the second advertising slogan of this company: "We have small prices and many complexes" (the words "small" and "many" were in the text in a different font). The banner showed the prices of apartments in new residential complexes, a model with a small chest, measuring her volume and showing disappointment and frustration on her face. It should be noted, that the female part of the audience very quickly gave a negative assessment of this advertising text, which saw a reference to women's complexes about small volumes. In these examples, incorrectly constructed language game was the cause of communicative failure. According to Amiri and Ilyasova (2009), the addressee may not get expected as a result of addressing the language game effect, as the addressee may not understand the language game or consider the intrigue inherent in it to be complex, violating ethical norms, etc.

Communicative failure can also be due to incorrect use of language tools, first of all, the vocabulary of limited use, or a reference to it. Epatage (for example, the use of obscene words) can be an effective language strategy, but also can lead to a fiasco of an advertising text. Special attention should be paid to the texts, the authors of which in the chase for originality and brightness create new lexical units that cause ambiguous associations among the target audience and subsequently a negative reaction, which has an unpleasant effect on the reputation of companies and their financial state (if it comes to court

actions). One of Orenburg's sushi bars spread the following advertisement: "The delivery of pleasure ... Now you can Japanuck! "Philadelphia light" just for 136R! 20% discount on all rolls." The attention of the audience was attracted not by the ambiguous phrase at the beginning of the text, but the verb "to Japanuck", which does not exist in the Russian language. According to the version of the authors of the text, for effect they had combined into one word noun "Japan" and the verb "to duck" (to dip). The result did not meet the expectations of the authors, as part of a the new word is very close to an obscene verb, forbidden for public use, including the texts of advertising. Thus, the text was found not to meet the requirements of the Federal law, for which the advertiser was fined.

The phrase of the outdoor advertising of a local restaurant may serve as another example of excessive creativity in advertising text leading to a communicative failure: "No swearidze! Only funidze!». It is not difficult to guess that the authors of the text urge customers of the restaurant not to swear, but only to have fun, and, for the greater effect, do it with the help of the specially created for the purposes of this advertising lexical neoplasms. The question is why the authors used a suffix, with the help of which many Georgian surnames are formed, as a word-formative morpheme. It is hard to say, if it was a hint of the representatives of a particular nationality temperament or the result of the lack of foresight of the creators of the advertising text, but soon the advertiser rejected the slogan and replaced the text. To some extent, this indicates the inefficiency of the advertising text.

The choice of the name of the organization should be paid a special attention: a bad name also leads to a communicative failure. The importance of this aspect is also evidenced by the development of naming – a separate industry engaged in the development of a brand name for a company, service or product.

From our point of view, names of some Orenburg companies require a professional interference, for instance, «Kopchenayakurochka» (a smoked chick) (the name of the artificial tan studio), «Origami» (name of the company cooking and delivering Japanese dishes), «Mebeljers» (name of the company manufacturing custom-made furniture). The completely incorrect name of the artificial tan studio contains two unsuccessful associations: the comparison of the colour of the tan with the colour of smoked meat products and the association of the word "chick" with the word from the youth jargon "chick", expressing contempt for the female sex and having the meaning of "a woman with underdeveloped logical thinking". Without additional explanatory information, it is almost impossible to link the name of arts and crafts from Japan (origami) with the process of cooking sushi and rolls. The most complex linguistic task is the origin of the word "Mebeljers", the selected company name. The word does not exist in the system of the Russian language, but the knowledge of history, laws and rules of the language allows suggesting the idea of the text's author. The final letter "s" resembles (including the intended function) a similar particle used in the Russian language in the 19th century, which was an abbreviation of the words "sir", "sovereign" and was a sign of politeness. Morpheme "-er-" is used to refer to a representative of a certain profession (by analogy with the words fashion designer, gondolier). The combination of these word-formation elements, in our opinion, is intended to point to the representative of a particular profession, who deserves an emphatically polite, respectful attitude, which indicates a high degree of his professionalism. The only thing is that the target audience for the most part sees in this new word nothing but the familiar root – "mebel-".

### **3. Research Questions**

Based on the features of the advertising text as a specific form of communication and the identification of communicative failures, we assume that advertising has its own typology of communicative failures associated with verbal and nonverbal implementation of polycode text, and in certain areas as well. Therefore, the main research question is what the types of communication failures and their causes in the advertising texts in Orenburg are.

### **4. Purpose of the Study**

This work is aimed at studying communicative failures in Orenburg advertisement texts, their description, classification of types and identification of such texts' inefficiency.

### **5. Research Methods**

Communicative failures in the advertising texts of the city of Orenburg, their varieties and causes of occurrence are examined using methods of linguistic description and interpretation, direct linguistic observation, a systematic description of language material, discourse and mediallyinguistic analysis.

### **6. Findings**

Communicative failures making an advertising text inefficient depend on several factors: context, addressee and hypertext.

The polycode nature of an advertising text requires analysis of its various components (visual and verbal parts), as a communicative failure may be associated with any of them, as well as with their correlation.

### **7. Conclusion**

Thus, a communicative failure is a poor recognition and identifiability of an advertisement product, its unattractiveness for the target audience, public disapproval, advertisement product consumers' negative reaction to the text, violation of moral standards and laws. The reasons for failure may be insufficient consideration of the addressee nature (the use of unfamiliar to the target audience precedent texts, that is due to the difference in background knowledge of the addressees and the addressant, the potential of the interpretative activity of the addressee), incorrect use of language and visual means (the use of non-literary and obscene, vulgar words and expressions, violation of the norms of the literary language). The realization of the author's creative potential in an advertising text can cause not only violation of language and communication standards but also of ethical ones.

The analysis of Orenburg advertisement texts allows defining the following types of communicative failures (which have linguistic causes) in advertising:

1. The mismatch of the mental worlds of communicants (insufficient consideration of the addressee factor), manifested in the incorrect use of precedent phenomena, in the non-recognition by the target audience of precedent phenomena.



2. The nature of the communicative text, including creation of unsuccessful image combinations, ambiguity, abnormality and incorrect use of language means.

It is possible to reduce the number and avoid communicative failures in advertising texts if they are created considering the effectiveness of the advertising text peculiarities: the context factor, the addressee factor and the hypertext factor.

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