

## PRAGMATIC ISSUES ON MODERN ADVERTISEMENT SLOGANS

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**Abstract:** In this paper, the pragmatic issues in both print and electronic media were examined. We focused on the non-linguistic elements in targeting message. We also considered how linguistic elements interfere with non-linguistic ones in communicating message. The paper investigated some crucial pragmatic issues in modern advertisement slogan. We discovered the role of both linguistic and non-linguistic elements in conveying messages from the advertisers to their audience. We also found out that context play a vital role in the choice of language use in advertising. We discovered a drastic semantic distortion or obstacle in modern advertisement slogan as a result of some pragmatic loopholes inherent in advertisement such as ambiguities, anomalies and deifications. It was also found out that advertisers do objectify experience at the expense of their customers. We concluded that there are some pragmatic squabbles facing advertisement. Our data was collected through bill boards, graffiti news papers, magazines etc. And the work was framed on Bach and Harnish (1979) theory of mutual contextual belief.

**Keywords:** Pragmatics, modern advertisement, Slogans, message, prints and electronic media.

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### Introduction:

Most often in language use the meaning of utterance is derived from the immediate environment which it is made. Meanwhile, in pragmatic study, the environment in which an utterance is made plays a role in determining the meaning. It can vary from one environment to another. We have known from some renowned authors that pragmatics deals with particular utterance in a particular situation and especially is concerned with the various ways in which the many social context of language can help influence interpretation. It looks at speech performance as primarily a social act ruled by various social conventions. Media and print language have often lose its ordinary meaning and adapted to some social context from its meaning that is the more reason why one of the renowned linguistic, Stephen (1983) opines that “pragmatics is the study of the ability of language users to pair sentence with the context in which they will be appropriate”. (p.24) The media and print advertisers do endeavor to tie the appropriate utterance and fitness of their language to a given environment of speech. As it is accepted that pragmatic deals with certain factors that determine the speaker’s choice of language in a given social context and the affect or influence those choice made, can have on listeners. The importance of headlines can hardly be underestimated. Headlines like other structural units of advert take lead in in creating interests and conviction, which stimulate desire and persuade consumers to buy product. The temporal nature of text enforces the reader to take notice of headlines first. The whole text is not processed the temporal nature of the text guides and reader to gradually do that from the beginning to the end. The major themes conveyed by the headlines are problems/needs creation, solution, satisfaction or other rewards, change and progressive settlement, product, properties and caution.

Headlines do present an actual problem and to the same time offer solution to the problem. These problems may be addressed explicitly or implicitly through pragmatic devices. The headlines provide solution and progressive betterment of the customers’ life with the product.

### Theoretical Frame Work: Mutual contextual beliefs

From the view of Kent Bent and Robert Harnish (1979), every speech exhibits an act known as speech act which is intention – inference based. To them, every speaker performs an illocutionary act for effective communication; the listener has to understand the speaker’s act via mutual contextual beliefs (MCBs). For them every interaction or conversation must involve an inferential process. The inferential process is inevitable in any communication event; hence their term “speech act schemata (SAS)”. The theory – Mutual Contextual Beliefs was formulated by Kent Bach and Robert Harnish (1979). In this theory they posit that mutual contextual beliefs between the speaker and the hearer propels an inferential process because whatever inference made or should be made by a hearer does not necessarily depend on what the speaker says but on the contextual knowledge shared commonly between them, According to Acheoah and Olaley (2017,p.23) Bach and Harnish theory helps to explain the vital components of natural communication: what words mean, what the speaker literally says when using them, and what the speaker means and intend to communicate by using those words, which often goes considerably beyond what is said. What someone says is determined by the conversational meaning of the sentence uttered and contextual processes of disambiguation and inference making. What the speaker implicates can be calculated from the rational principles of maxims governing conversation. What is said is connected to the literal content of the utterance, whereas what is implicated (the implicature) is connected to the non-literal component (what is intentionally communicated without being covertly said by the speaker).

Apart from linguistic knowledge, contextual information plays a role in determining what is said. Despite the potential of language to mean beyond the sentence, messages reflect physical form in which the mastery of linguistic convention is instrumental to pragmatic or extra-linguistic communication. The most useful notion

of saying is that what is said should be closely related to the conventional meaning of the uttered sentence.

Bach and Harnish's attempt to integrate Grice, Searle and others theory gave birth to their unified theory known as mutual contextual beliefs. For them, as documented in Stanford Encyclopedia of philosophy (2006), in determining an illocutionary act amounts to determining:

1. The operative meaning of the sentence uttered
2. The referents for the referring expressions
3. The properties and relations being ascribed
4. The times specified

Having known these, the hearer understands what a speaker has said at the locutionary level and makes references based on the linguistic meaning plus the contextual information concerning the speaker's intention.

### References and modern advertisement slogans

Interpretation as we are meant to understand is context based. As states Emezue (1988,p.67)

References are the meaning relationship part of a text. The meaning potential of a reference may be endophoric or exophoric. If endophoric, the reference item which maybe anaphoric or cataphoric is retrievable within the text. For cataphoric reference, the context of situation plays a major role in the interpretation of reference items. Here one may need to go outside the text to the world of shared knowledge to retrieve the referential meaning or information marked for retrieval.

In pragmatics, words do not refer but are used to refer. It is the addressee that must interpret noteworthy that reference item as used by the speaker/writer in the context of use. In the course of study, we are going to investigate the two types of reference – Endophoric and Exophoric.

In the choice of reference in advertisement, whether exophoric or endophoric, the advertisers or copy writers make use of linguistic form (referencing item) to catch, drill or drag the interest of the audience as to identify something. It is basically tied to the user's goal in the use of language. Hence, referencing helps the advertisers hold the interest of the audience, helping them identify that which is referred to (the product). Cataphoric reference in adverts makes interpretations difficult. The audience at such point battles with the interpretation until the antecedent is mentioned. Just as advertisers make use of zero anaphors or ellipses as a means or source of creating expectation that the advertisers intend to identify. In this case, more is usually communicated than being said.

### Endophoric Reference

This kind of reference is retrievable within the text. It can be anaphoric whereby the information to be retrieved is found in the preceding part of the text or cataphoric in which the presupposed element in a text may follow instead of preceding the presupposing element. For instance, the advert from breeze toilet soap reads:

1)“It is bigger, it is better”. In this advert, it anaphorically refers back to breeze soap. In this other advert from Royal dry Gin which reads.

2)“Play it smart”, it cataphorically refers to Royal dry Gin.

### Exophoric Reference

In this kind of reference, the thing referred needs to be identified. The interpretation of exophoric reference item is situational or context based. This kind of reference also cohere text by its ability to link language in use with context of situation. In exophoric reference, visual record makes the retrieval of referential meaning easier. In our context, we are looking at reference as the relationship between elements of the else by relationship to which, it is interpreted in a particular instance.

3)“My life is beautiful when am spending it with you, its unending rainbow, a non-fading rose that's why I am spending it with you” – MTN

In this slogan, the producer uses these terms un-ending rainbow, fading rose to refer to phenomenon, other than the physical object. Non-fading Roses means a rose flower that cannot fade and unending rainbow means a rainbow that its end is not easily traced or accessed. But in this context, they have been used to refer to life to donate a kind of blossom and eternity (perpetual) which MTN line offers. Another of such reference is seen in Sun Newspaper adverts which reads:

4)“What can I ever do without the sun, what can I ever do, The sun the sun the sun”.

The sun with its qualities that is inevitable to human existence is used to refer to the Sun Newspaper. The advertiser emphasizes or exaggerates that he cannot at all do anything in life without the sun, in other words nobody can ever do without the sun Newspaper, which is likened to the sun. Let us consider Amstel advert as well:

5)“Be attractive, Be renewed with more nourishing, more refreshment, more renewing vitamins and minerals”

Here also, Attractiveness and renewal is used to refer to Amstel malt

6)“Capquine help you stop malaria, fever without bitterness”-Capquine

In this slogan also, bitterness has been used to refer to another phenomenon other than its literal meaning (unpleasant taste) but what the copywriter has in mind is the irritation, unpleasant feeling, itching side effect caused by malaria drug (the quinine group) which he used bitterness to refer to in this above advert. The recent A.C.T NET advert that reads:

7)“No let mosquito thief your pikin” is another example, thief here also refers to death other than the ordinary dispossessing someone of his/her belonging. The mosquito which is the carrier of malaria is referred to as the thief that is to say that the mosquito if allowed to transmit malaria to a child can cause the child's death. Another advert that exhibits such reference is that of Eternity gas.

8) “Quiet footprint, loud impression”. In this slogan also “quite footprints” and “loud impression” are human action and reactions. Quiet footprints rendered by the company and the loud impressions are the quality or

good recommendation received from people. Quiet footprint is not used in the literal sense to denote a footmark on the ground or bold impression caused by the footprint as a stamp on the ground.

### **Inference**

In life, a process of drawing experience or encounter arrives at certain meaning of expression or utterances. In pragmatics, the notion of inference is based on context, non-linguistic consideration other than conventional linguistic interpretations. In the recent adverts, inference plays a vital role in actualization of meaning. Let us consider some slogans.

9) "From generation to generation, Peak has been there, giving you full nourishment, satisfaction peak will always be there that's peak milk at its peak so full and so rich for you that's peak milk at its peak. Always there for you that's peak that's peak".

In the above advert, we can infer that peak milk has withstood or passed the test of time and it still possess the strength or qualities that to face the demand of time because of its richness in vitamins and minerals that nourish, revitalize and satisfy the body.

10) "Hank's Diet Root Bear has one of the highest caloric soda, Rich, full bodies and flavorful. You won't believe it's a diet soda".

Also from the above advert, we can draw a conclusion that Root Bear is highly rich in vitamins and flavor, contains action calories which is not usually so with other diet sodas. This is also applicable to the seagram's Extra Dry Gin advert which reads "play it smart". The conclusion we can draw of her is that the drink smartens people and it is drink made from those who wish to be smart and articulated both in action and thought. The panadol advert provides another example.

11) "Panadol..... Tough on pain yet gentle on you"

In this slogan, we infer also that though panadol is very active and quick in relieving pain yet it does no harm to the patient. It can be harsh on the ailment but cannot do any harm to the patient who takes the drug. The lipton advert provides another inference.

12) "Nothing compares with you except sunshine lipton yellow, yellow, yellow".

From this advert, we can conclude that nothing can ever be equated with anything other than "sunshine" which is indispensable in life. Meanwhile, we cannot do in life without lipton yellow label because of its indispensable qualities.

13) What can I ever do without the Sun

What can I ever do without the Sun

The advert shows that the sun Newspaper is likened to the sun because of its unavoidability in life

The Sun Newspaper supplies News and information that the customers cannot do without just as life cannot exist without the elemental sun that gives warmth and vitality. There is also an inferential meaning in the old Mac Deluxe advert.

14) "You have arrived at the prime of life you have seen the world tasted of its pleasures now taste this"

Here the old Mac Deluxe is seen as a drink for the socially mature people or elders who have had enough experiences of life.

### **IMPLICATURE**

According to Palmer (1991,p.173) "we should attempt to restrict Presupposition to proposition or information that is assumed by the speaker (and assumed by him, to be known to the hearer). But the speaker may use similar devices to simplify further information that the hearer does not know. He may imply what he does not actually say". We have also observed with other scholars that all speech, written or unwritten is a dead language until it finds a willing and a prepared hearer. In this paper, we consider implicature as an inference about speaker's intention which is drawn from the hearer's use of both semantic (logical) meaning and a conversational principle. Since implicatives relates to semantics in meaning but because implicative is also dependent on conversational principle, context medicates the sign – user relationship. Moreover, in this paper we will investigate how advertisers use language or words to suggest something other than what have been said or written. Therefore, we say that advertisers routinely use words or utterances to mean considerably more than what is semantically conveyed. However, viewing from Grice's framework a speaker's meaning is relatively free from conversational meaning. Surely, a deep consideration of this is what the advertiser tends to communicate not to be code-related. Either, it could be inferred from other processes different from encoding or style decoding assumed by the code model of communication.

The co-operative can go a long way to help define the way information from one utterance contributes to the meaning of other utterances, as such contributing to our knowledge of the relationship between utterances. Certain syntactic rules appear to be integral to implicature and that implicature puts interesting constraints on what can be possible lexical item in natural language. Let us return to co-operative principle. At this point, we will relate our implicature as seen in adverts to that of conventional implicature. As observes Ndimele (1999:116) "Every conversation is guided by certain unwritten rules which influence the form the flow of conversational exchange such as conversational maxims. Conversational maxims are those rules, which people follow or obey during talk exchange. The use of conversational exchange to respect the demand of conversation maxims is known as co-operative principle."

Grice, (1975) quoted in palmer (1991,p.175) noted down about four major types of conversational maxims, which include "maxim of quality, quantity, relevance and manner". In the maxim of quality the speaker is expected to make the contributions truthful and specific. He/she is not expected to say what he believes to be false or what he lacks adequate evidence of. In the maxim of quantity, it is expected also that the speaker be as informative as

possible and never to make his contribution more informative than necessary. Also, in the maxim of relevance, the participants must make their contributions to share direct connection or relevance to the topic of discourse. In this maxim of manner too, participants are expected to be orderly in their exchange. They should endeavor to avoid obscurity and ambiguity making sure the meaning is not impaired or vague.

These maxims as mentioned above state what participants ought to do in order to communicate in a maximally, efficient, rational and co-operative way. In other words advertisers should speak relevantly, sincerely even clearly and at the same time provide sufficient information. However, these maxims can be flouted in communication. Sometimes, advertisers attempt to adhere to rule of some maxims and at the same time flout the others, for instance, the Glo advert which reads:

15) "Glo with us"  
"Glo with pride"

Though brief, but flouted the maxim of manner. The sentences are ambiguous; each sentence has more than one meaning. The first can mean, Glo network service is now used among the customers or enjoy Glo line with the Glo promoters. The second may also mean that the Global Communication has acquired pride. It can also mean that those who patronize Glo line should do so with pride.

Also in this slogan(16) "YOUR WIFE IS HAVING AFFAIRS WITH IGNIS". This sentence is not only anomalous but also breaches the maxim of quality which emphasizes that a speaker should make his/her contribution one that is true or says what is believed to be false. This copy writer is only trying to perform a pragmatic act whereby he/she projects a force—an illocutionary force of summation or commitment. It carries an attention—catching effect or impact which compels one to take action. This advert is targeted at a husband; and having beaten his imagination and provoked his curiosity he will only calm down at realizing the need and commitment to provide the wife with what she needs—the IGNIS cooking gas.

In modern advertisement slogan, the pragmatic (logical) implicature is also pre-eminent. This is so because the artistic demands of the slogan make them intend and suggest that which they do not explicitly assert. In considering the role context and situation play in the interpretation of slogans, we can as well conclude that advertisement is a pragmatic phenomenon. Interpretation of slogan at times goes beyond the linguistic to situational, taking into consideration, the socio-cultural, political and economic variables of the environment, which shares with the audience. In Grice scheme, speakers meaning is divided into two –saying and implicature. What a speaker says is what he/she meant mostly through the conversation context of the sentence uttered. Most implicature seems conversational and as such form part of a sentence meaning.

In the Limca advert that reads 16) "tasty? Pick a choice". The script writer implies so many things by asking this question. He implies that Limca is No.1 in taste, whosoever that doubts or wants to know should buy just one bottle out of the three brands to prove. Ndimele subtly opines that "the essence of implicature is to account to what the speaker can imply, suggest or mean distinct from what he says that is what he overtly express". In advertisement, implicature is frequently used as a linguistic strategy. Let us analyze our argument with some samples of advertisement slogan.

17) "you have at the prime of life. You have seen the world and tasted of life pleasure. Now taste this" – Old Mac Deluxe

Here the advertiser does not mean just seeing the physical world but has used the world to suggest or imply that the expected customer is mature mentally, physically and otherwise; and had enough experience in life to enable him drink old Mac Deluxe. The advertiser at the same time infers that the drink is meant for adults with enough life experience. Again when Kiwi advert reads this way:

18) "Kiwi keeps your shoes"

It does not mean literally that of keeping (custodian) but it implies that the constant use of Kiwi polish, the life span of the customer's shoe are sustained or elongated. Kiwi polish protects shoes from damaging and offers it a long lasting touch. Moreover, the double crown lager Bear invites

19) "Come up to double crown"

The intended meaning is something other than drawing or coming closer to the bottle of double crown. The advertiser implies that the audience should go for the double crown for its quality and standard. Furthermore, the sharp advert says,

20) "Get it right....Get sharp"

The use of the word "right" suggests a different meaning other than its literal meaning.

He had used this word to imply that the customers who do not want to encounter any difficulty in photocopies, he should not dear to buy other copiers other than the sharp copying machine. The advertisers hereby emphasize the need for the customer to encounter the sharp photocopier for its perfect and incomparable quality.

We also noted earlier that some adverts flout some of the maxims. Let us further illustrate this with the Peugeot 406 advert.

21) "I love good things of life – like cars, elegant cars, powerful cars, cars with super engines. Our car has got all this qualities New Peugeot 406 has a reinforced suspension system, designed with the rhythm of our terrain in mind, the new Peugeot 406 – there is nothing quite like it. The air conditioning system makes my life easy. For my appointment I am always right there in style with the new Peugeot 406.....incomparable class".

In this advert, the content seems to be more informative than necessary. The repetition of some words like the new Peugeot 406 and ideas make the advert clumsy thereby flouting the maxim of manner.

Some modern advertisement slogans agrees with Grice's maxims, by being brief, concise and clear, at the same time rendering a sufficient information. Examples,  
22) "Panadol....Tough on pain...yet gentle on you"  
23) "Life tastes good"  
24) "More up to Hi malt" etc

Conversely, some modern advertisement slogan that are too elaborate but not necessarily repetitive can be said to have adhered to Grice's maxim of quality. The infotech advert cannot be suspected of being superfluous. Though it is lengthy, enough information is provided concerning the product without being more informative than necessary.

25) "Everything you want to know about information technology in digestible bytes when you rush your infotech intake you can get digital heartburn infotech today, can help you avoid that by keeping you effectively informed on happenings in the infotech world everything comes in digestible portion enough to fill 48 pages with current and delicious information on computers, the interest astronomy, the environment tele-communication, new discoveries, the stock market etc. Grab your copy now."

The advert is as informative as required by the maxim of quality though elaborate.

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