

Implicature and the language of advertising

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ABSTRACT: In this research, the researcher investigated the language of advertising and emphasized the use of implicature in communicating meaning. In doing this, it was discovered that most of the slogans adhere and also breach the Gricean maxims. And breaching or flouting of these maxims leads to implicature which further leads to disambiguities. Based on the literary interpretations of some of these slogan meanings were impaired, distorted and ambiguous. It was discovered that the copywriters try to engage the customers' inferential mechanism through their use of implicature. We adopted the qualitative research method and used the descriptive survey method since the population of study was infinite; this method enabled the researcher infer and generalized the findings of the study. The population of study was heterogeneous and the proportionate random sampling was used in selecting the sample size. The population consisted of billboards, handbills, Newspapers, Magazines and electronic adverts. Our data were collected through interview. The responses enabled the researcher conduct a constructive and valid interpretation and analyses of the data generated from the study. We adopted the Sperber and Wilson (1980) **Relevance theory**

Keywords: Pragmatics, Implicature, advertisement and slogan

I. INTRODUCTION

Language exhibits many functions which have been manipulated in diverse ways by different users. The communicative function of the language remains the thrust of this work. Oftentimes, we hear many naïve customers complain of being deceived into buying some products by some slogans. The manner with which copy writers manipulate language as to sell their product has being a matter of concern to the consumers. Hence you hear among the Igbo people use this slang "hapuiheederen' motobanyen' moto" which is interpreted as leave what is written in a vehicle and enter the vehicle. This implies that the language of

advertising is full of deceit and falsehood. It is on this premise that the researcher chose to investigate the pragmatic implicatures as used by the copywriters. 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 implicatures relate to semantics in meaning but because implicatures are also dependent on conversational principle, context mediates the sign – user relationship. Moreover, in this paper we will investigate how advertisers use language or words to suggest something other than what has 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. 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".

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 items in natural language. Let us return to the co-operative principle. At this point, we will relate our implicatures as seen in adverts to that of conventional implicatures. As observes Ndimele

(1999.p.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 in a 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.

Relevance Theory

This is a cognitive pragmatic theory of human communication developed in mid-1980s by Dan-Sperber and Deirdre Wilson. The proponents of relevance theory insist that human mind has an ability to maximize the relevance of the stimuli that it produces. Naturally, it is impossible for human mind to pay attention to the loss of information that gets to it, hence, its ability to filter irrelevant information and focus on the relevant ones. Dan Sperber and Deirdre Wilson (2002) explain: as a result constant selection pressure towards increasing efficiency, the human cognitive system has developed in such a way that our perceptive mechanisms tend automatically to activate potentially relevant assumption, and our inferential mechanism tend spontaneously to process them in most productive way (p.254). Walles (2001) considered the relevance theory as:

Pragmatic and cognitive theory of communication particularly associated with the work of Sperber and Wilson (1995, 1986) and their associates and based on the concept of relevance from Grice’s maxim of relation. Like Grice, they are interested in the type of INFERENCE and assumption that interlocutors draw on in communication. This is said to be successful when the hearer infers the speaker’s (intended) meaning from the utterance. The smaller processing effort involved in interpretation (‘cost’), the greater the relevance (‘benefit’), for relevance theory and the act of interpreting is most definitely premised on the addressee assumption that utterance will be optionally relevant (p.390)

Sperber and Wilson (1990) argue that the code model of communication is not adequate because linguistic forms can only provide clues to the speaker’s meaning but cannot give a full interpretation of all of them. For Grice, indirectness does not favour his maxims (conversational principles) rather flouts the conversational principles but the relevance theory holds that indirectness strategy is a device through which a hearer is lead to the ‘extracontextual’ effect which supports the extra processing effort involved in drawing the interesting conclusion.

Implicatures in advertisement slogans

When speakers and hearers cooperatively contribute to the conversation meaning are usually implicated. Certain aspects of meaning cannot be interpreted or understood by truth conditional semantics. In this pragmatic analysis, we intend to reject the truth conditional semantics as not adequate but replace it with the theory of language use. To help the matter, we have made some pragmatic explanations of certain phenomena and combine them with semantic analysis. Having find out that people can mean more than, or something different from what they have said. In advertisement, implicature is frequently used as a linguistic strategy. Let us analyze our argument with some samples of advertisement slogan. For instance, the Glo advert which reads:

- 1) “Glo with us”
- 2) “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(3) “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 say 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 summon 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. From the Grice’s maxims discussed so far, no semantic theory will consider these expressions as relevant and informative and no semantic theory also will give credence that the copywriters have communicated their knowledge. Meanwhile, we can say that these slogans have sentence based meaning explained by semantics, with additional meaning which is obtainable by pragmatic implicature.

Jaszczolt (2002) acknowledges that:

It is necessary to ensure that the concept of meaning used in pragmatics is compatible with the truth conditional concept of meaning. Paul Grice in his seminal paper “meaning” (1956) distinguishes between **sentence meaning and speaker’s meaning**. Words mean and refer but what is more important is, people mean and refer by using the words in conversation. Grice calls this meaning non-natural (meaning NN) to differentiate it from the instance of natural meaning where ‘A meant that P’ entails P (p.208).

According to Grice (1975 p.214) quoted in Jaszczolt (2002 p.208) “for speakers to mean something by x, the speaker must intend to induce by x a belief in the hearer. Moreover, the speaker must intend his or her utterance to be recognized as so intended.” Implicatures are inferences that are drawn, from utterances and that are perceived by the hearer as being intended by the speaker. Implicature can arise out of adherence or non-adherence to or flouting of maxims. Examples can be drawn from

- 3) “life tastes good”-----life beer
- 4) “Tasty? Pick one”-----Limca

These slogans flout the maxim of quality. They do not provide adequate information for the hearers and as such cause them to infer something else other than the copywriter’s intention. Implicature has other properties which include detachability, calculability and non-conventionality (see Jaszczolt 2002:p. 213,

Levinson 1983, p.114-117, Horn 1988, p.123). Most implicatures are context dependent or particularized while some are context independence or generalized conventional implicature. In context dependent or particularized implicature, implicatures are drawn from a particular context. In the context independent or generalized conversational implicature, implicature arises independently of the context of utterance. Example, (A) is a generalized implicature of (B)

- A) 5) “Taste? pick one”
- B) The copywriter believes that limca drink quenches taste.

Jaszczolt alluding to Grice (1975) asserts that: “If the maxims are breached or ostentatiously flouted, the hearer infers that the speaker must have meant something else. That is that the speaker must have had some special reason for not observing the maxims”(p.32). For them, flouting the maxims also leads to implicature. The following names are typical examples:

- 6) “Da Bombs”-----GLO Network
- 7) “People, power, possibilities”-----Global comm.,
- 8) “For that close up appeal”-----Close up
- 9) “Life is....”-----MTN

These slogans are uninformative by virtue of their semantic contents. In uttering them, the name-givers flout the first maxim of quantity and also the maxim of manner which state that: a contribution should provide enough information and also avoid obscurity. In the listed above, the messages are not sufficiently informative; and the meanings are obscure. Assuming that the maxims are preserved, the hearer infers correctively instead of otherwise. For instance, in “Da Bombs” the meaning is quite obscure considering only the semantic content. The slogans means the strong impart of the GLO network on the people.

Metaphors and ironies are standard examples of the flouting of the maxim of quality. For instance, in the slogan “life is everything”, we see that it flouts the maxim of quality in the sense that it shares an element of falsehood from the logical point of view. (see Jaszczolt 2002). Conversational inferences are only possible if there is an assumption that the participants share common background knowledge that makes it possible for the speaker to produce utterances and the hearer to infer what was assumed by the speaker. Moreover, the speaker has to present the utterance in such a manner as to ensure that the implied sense is recoverable. At times, the reason for miscommunication is derived from the

misunderstanding of the speaker's intention. This has left the pragmatists in the dilemma of whether meaning should be analyzed from the speaker's or hearer's perspective (see Davis 1998, Jaszczolt 2002, and Grice 1975).

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 say 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:

10) "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 for what the speaker can imply, suggest or mean distinct from what he says that is what he overtly express".

11) "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:

12) "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

13) "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,

14) "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.

15) "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. The lipton advert that reads (22) "Nothing compares with you...except lipton yellow yellow" flouts the maxim of quality by exaggerating that nothing except sunshine is as essential or indispensable as lipton. There is a lie and lack of evidence in the advert. Some modern advertisement slogans agrees with Grice's maxims, by being brief, concise and clear, at the same time rendering sufficient information. Examples,

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

17) "Life tastes good"

18) "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.

19) "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.

Actually, new meanings are springing up in the advertisement world today as the advertisers try dereify the literal representation of ideas. The modern advertisers try to attribute their experience to the object when they literalize the word as being the content they refer to. They presume that meaning is inherent in the object not in their audience experience of the object. In this case, audiences make inference in the modern advertisement as to ascertain the speaker’s intentions. Since there is no direct relationship existing between entities and words the listener ought to infer correctly which entity the speaker intends to identify by using a particular referring expressions. Nelson (1994,p.147) and Rover and Arens(1994,p.383) gave the following guidelines in an attempt to improving the language of advertising.

- Limit to between three to eight words.
- Emphasize nouns and adjectives and personal names
- Place brand names first
- Don’t use command or demand
- Use higher imagery (concrete words).
- Don’t use ambiguous words or pun
- Pick your words carefully.
- Weighing each word carefully for all its implications.
- Tailor the copy to the audience writing in appropriate language for appropriate medium.
- Writer for the individual writing in an informal conversational manner
- Write vividly; the copy writer should be concise use words that are memorably for forming mental pictures that is captivating.
- Make copy specific.
- Make copy persuasive use language that is sparkles.
- Make comparisons.

For effective communication in advertising these guidelines ought to be seriously adhered to. But to a greater disappointing extent many of these guidelines have not been followed in advertisement. Some copywriters have been seen to have ignored them. For instance, the use of Pun, elaborate sentences inability to write for the appropriate audience, the use of ambiguous

dangling questions and others are prominent in modern advertisement slogans. The none adherence of these norms have given rise to some lapses such as semantic distortions or obstacles but seemed to have achieved a striking pragmatic and semantic effect for advertisers and render the language of advertising somewhat distinct. Since pragmatic is a field of study that puts the participant into consideration; the intention of studying the language of advertising through this pragmatic feature-implicature is that we can think of the advertisers’ intended meaning, assumptions, their purpose or goals and kind of actions-request that they perform whenever they advertise or speak. Ike (1998) talks about semantic obstacles in advertisement. According to him, this kind of obstacle “occurs as a result of the word meaning different thing to different people due to difference in age, sex, life experience or simply because certain words are analogous in themselves or even because psychological overtone of person to another”(27). Obviously, due to obstacles, it is not as easy as it first seemed to send A to B a message that accurately represents intended meaning. Hapkiss (1995) acknowledges that “we accept the uncertainty of truth and come to some belief about probabilities of what will or should occur or would have occurred based on our experience with similar situation”(26). He further insists that a statement that is false in a given context may be true in another and even if read or heard in wrong context, may still know its meaning and its possible truth under other circumstances. He argued vehemently that conceptualization and logic are key processes in human reasoning and use of language. Their use of language is directed at communicating the meaning of experience, and in the process there is always a question of factuality and truth. In this same vein, Russel(1974) quoted in Hapkiss (1995) claimed that “falsehood is significant, that is ,it signs a concept that is therefore not meaningless. We understand that the words that are said have potential reality in some possible world”(26) .Hapkiss(1995) also said that “a sentence that is ‘significant’ is really neither true or false because it could be used under different circumstances that could make it true or false statement”(26).Hapkiss. Has a lot to say about contextual situation as a powerful influence on the experience of truth. Thus, he asserts that:

Lying is socially useful, calming emotions and saving egos. Lies can also be ironic and the irony perceived by the speaker or fearer or by part of the audience, or only the speaker or writer may know it. In any case, it performs the function of understanding what is assuredly not said or those

who understand the implication, like the social lie, irony is truth undisguised, but its truth will be apparent to those who understand the model is not usually intended to mislead, rather is emphasized an aspect of the subject by showing that in some respect appearance belies reality.

Furthermore, Hapkiss (1995) in alluding to Wittgenstein (1958) in his philosophical investigation emphasized that:

A lie is not a lie if uttered in a context where the words are matched to their referents. For example, to say that John is living in Massachusetts when no one knows that John dies in a plane crash last week is a lie but if John did not die and is in a hospital in Massachusetts, then the would-be liar is speaking the truth. Moreover the same sentences can be used by John's doctor as a sentence of fact. In this case the meaning of the sentence would be liar to mislead his audience into thinking that John was alive. In the case of the doctor there is no intent to mislead at all, merely information or it may be reassurance, however it was intended. There are no lies and half lies too. The half lies are those sentences that use euphemism to express the truth about an object, event or situation.(34)

On further investigation into the language of advertisement, Hapkiss observed that:

What ambiguities show is that in making a statement to others, we don't automatically choose words or syntax that will state only the meaning intended. This sort of discrimination depends on the initiator of the communication perceiving that he or she may be understood in ways not intended, and that requires a kind of double thinking on that person's part, as he or she orders the words in the expression. What probably occurs without that double thinking is that we access words singly and in phrases that express the concept we have (Fodor, Berer, and Gerreth 1979) and we order them in the order of conventional kinds of expression(41)

We conclude that implicatures are pragmatic inferences that are based squarely on certain contextual assumptions concerning the cooperativeness of participants in a conversation that is not built up into the linguistic structure of the sentences that give rise to them. The ability of the customers to utilize their inferential ability to arrive at implicature helps them disambiguate meanings in the slogans. The customers should always put the advertisers' intentions and the context into consideration at every point in time for a mutual understanding.

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