

Identifying The Ways of Camouflaging the Truth in the Modern Discourse

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Abstract: The article aims considering linguistic means used to influence the addressee's perception of information, to form a certain picture of the world and to make the decisions important for the addresser. The linguistic tools applied in special (marketing, advertising) discourse are examined. The main results of the project group with the participation of MA students at St. Petersburg State University of Economics are presented. The task was to analyze the most popular Russian commercials for the use of linguistic and stylistic devices, which, on the one hand, hide basic information about a product or service, camouflaging the truth about possible consequences of their exploitation, their drawbacks as compared to similar products, and, on the other hand, affect the potential consumer. The article also considers the examples of camouflaging the truth in everyday discourse depicted in the literature, through the prism of Grice's maxims.

Key words: stylistic devices of camouflaging the truth, marketing discourse, Grice's maxims in everyday discourse.

1. Introduction

The problem of avoiding the truth in communication remains one of the most topical for a modern linguist. We come across it both in every-day speech and when learning the language of professional communication. Thus, a business partner may miss a very important meeting and excuse: "It happened because of my temperature", (though he or she was quite well). Though it is not true referentially, formally it is not a lie: every healthy living creature has temperature (normal).

A lot of linguistic means to avoid, hide or "camouflage" the truth can be found not only in everyday language, but in professional communication as well, in marketing, particularly. Sellers and buyers are direct participants of the advertising discourse, since any advertising aims selling a product or paid service. Smart advertising is based on explicit or implicit lie about the product or service: it always has some additional subtext. PR-specialists can use a wide range of strategies and methods that affect biological, mental and sensory switchers of a person. Advertising causes some planned impact on the audience, thus, it should prove maximum efficiency and contribute to the sales growth and marketing distribution. All the hidden "small lies" that we can see in commercials, advertising magazine spreads, and advertising posters are simply manipulation of human consciousness.

Usually we speak about six methods of manipulation in marketing discourse:

- 1) Emotions and feelings of a target group;

- 2) Symbolic manipulation (using meaningful for a certain groups of recipients symbols);
- 3) Intellectual manipulation (imposing a manufacturer's point of view on the good or service);
- 4) Consumers' needs and demands manipulation;
- 5) Comparative manipulation;
- 6) "Spiritual" manipulation (by forming another axiology).

In these texts the most information about goods is hidden from the recipient. Not all the truth is revealed. And, of course, nothing is said about drawbacks, possible consequences or other negative sides of the product.

2. Research Methods

My post-graduate students were asked to watch Russian TV commercials (immediate observation, quantitative analysis), analyze them and identify some linguistic means of manipulating potential consumers. After receiving the brightest samples which appeared on TV more frequent than the others, stylistic analysis was made.

3. Results

The research has showed that the most productive device in manipulating "truth-hiding" discourse is comparison. In the case of *narrow comparison* goods of one producing company are put together, e.g., "Erius", a medicine for allergic people: "It seemed to me that there was no better remedy for allergy symptoms, than Erius. But there is! New Erius! Remedy of the new generation differs by a triple-action formula: antihistamine, antiallergy and antiphlogistic!"

- 1) Another example is *broader comparison*, where similar goods produced by different companies, are compared. Thus, in the nappies commercials of "Libero Up& Go", there are two babies — Masha and Dasha: "Masha is wearing new nappies 'Libero Up& Go' for active kids, Dasha is wearing the ordinary ones. Masha can do whatever she wants, because her panties have a soft elastic waistband and a super absorbent layer DRYTECH. Besides, they are made of breathable materials". Such comparison is implicitly reached through the adjective "ordinary", the nappies "Libero" are compared with the ones of other brands that cannot give one's baby such freedom of movement;
- 2) *Interrogative/negative sentences* containing implicit comparison. An example of negative proposal can be seen in the advertising of a make-up foundation: "Such a shining healthy skin is made possible only by L'Oreal 'Alliance Perfect'. Other foundations cannot do this". A striking example of questioning advertising which implies comparison is a shampoo advertising of the same brand: "What could be better than healthy and shiny hair without split ends? This is the effect you will get by using 'Elseve Full Recovery' of L'Oreal Paris". The question in this ad requires the only answer — nothing — so it follows that "Elseve" is the best shampoo of all possible;
- 3) *Vague comparison*, when one cannot clearly understand, what is compared to the advertised product. This type of comparison can be best of all demonstrated by Megafon mobile operator advertising: "What can be more affordable than low prices for calls, SMS and Internet of Megafon?";
- 4) In *derived comparison* PR-specialists involves some numerical, e.g., "first", adjectives "only", "best", "revolutionary": "Vichy Dercos — dandruff remedy #1 in Europe", "The only toothpaste that really does not damage the gums! 'Colgate' — the choice of dentists #1!".

It should be mentioned that most cases one may sense that it is not a physical product per se, but something intangible: emotions, health, happiness, beauty, and success: “How is it possible to keep lightness and good mood? It is, since there is ‘Thermostatic Activia’ — a charge of prebiotics for your active life style!”. The same is shown in the Nissan car advertisement: “In the center of life. In the loop. In the spotlight. New Nissan Sentra.”

Another way of concealing the truth and manipulating the audience is by using tropes, expressive means and figures of speech. They not only make the text more memorable, more sophisticated, but also help to correctly rebalance the utterance and influence the consumer (Arutyunova, 1991, p. 103).

Some examples of the most frequently used means in advertising discourse are:

- 1) Metaphor/metonymy. Metaphor is a substitution of words based on their similarity in characteristics (shape, color, number, sound, etc.), whereas metonymy — the one based on contiguity between the words. For example, the use of metaphor in advertising can be found in: “Dive into the cool of Lipton Ice Tea!”, “Vichy is the source of health for your skin”. In contrary, the example metonymy is Land Rover advertisement, the slogan of which is “Enjoy the journey”. There is nothing said about the character of the car, but it is clear that the owner will forget about all the problems and obstacles during their journey;
- 2) Allusion/citation. Allusion is a reference to particular facts, book or movie titles, etc. Citation suggests mentioning of some catchphrases or words from a book, film, TV series, etc. A good example of this may be the slogan of an Italian furniture store in St. Petersburg: “Unbelievable offer of Italians in Russia”. This is a clear reference to the soviet comedy “Unbelievable Adventures of Italians in Russia”;
- 3) Repetition gives the text rhythm and dynamics, making the advertising message easily caught by the consumer. There are several types of repetitions. *Anaphora* is a repetition of words or phrases in the beginning of sentences or paragraphs, e.g., in Gloss beauty salon: “Your personality. Your beauty. Your health”. Quite opposite *epiphora* means repeated words or phrases in the end of sentences or paragraphs, e.g., as in the advertisement of turkey meat “PAVA-PAVA”: “What will help to build muscle mass? — “PAVA-PAVA”; What is hypoallergenic? — “PAVA-PAVA”; What is healthy for children? — “PAVA-PAVA”;
- 4) Word plays are usually used when the name of the product should be used to the best effect, and sometimes — its characteristics and properties. Such type of advertising is often created by a well-known Swedish company IKEA: “The family has someone to rely on” (pillows advertising), “Deals/unfolds with the arrival of the mother-in-law” (bed advertising);
- 5) Hyperbole, i.e., exaggeration of the properties, can be found in cosmetic products advertising: “Admire by the lush waver of eyelashes with Maybelline Mascara”.
- 6) Litotes is a figure of speech where understatement of the properties is the main point. In advertising it can be seen through the example of Eldorado’s slogan — “You can afford more with us. We give a loan for a penny”.
- 7) Being regarded as opposition of concepts or phenomena, *antithesis* can also contribute to advertising, like in the example of Indesit equipment: “We work, you have a rest.”
- 8) Parceling, or splitting the text into several parts, makes the advertising message more dynamic: “Bright color. Rich texture. Brand-new Clarins — matte lipstick Joli Rouge”;
- 9) Segmented structure, or two-part structure, where in the first part the advertised object is indicated in the nominative case, in the second part — in the form of a synonym or pronoun can be exemplified through

Ariel washing powder advertising: “Ariel washing powder. Will it be able to wash away stubborn stains?” (Strelnikova, 2019).

Thus, advertising is not merely bright commercials which fill the gaps between our favorite programs, colorful magazine spreads or memorable melodies on the radio. It is nothing but manipulation of a person’s consciousness, an impact on his psychology. It is necessary to understand that behind any catchy phrase there is a lie and be able to resist PR-specialists’ skills.

Hiding the truth in direct communication is a process that requires maximum concentration from a person: the communicant feels tension and has to restrain emotions. The specifics of speech production in a state of emotional instability were detailed by E. L. Nosenko (Nosenko, 1975):

- 1) changes in phonetic sounding (increase or decrease in the volume of voice or speech rate, etc.);
- 2) changes in grammatical structure of phrases (increasing number of verbs and nouns, which makes the speech more dynamic);
- 3) multiplication of pauses and hesitations, followed by non-phonological vocal formations (*hum, hmm*). Importantly, the number of non-phonological vocal formations in the communicants under pressure is 50% more than in a normal state;
- 4) incompleteness of speech (full or partial word omission);
- 5) lexical simplification (use of high-frequency words, junk words, etc.);
- 6) paraphrases (words which are inappropriate in the context).

A person learns to hide his or her real feelings and emotions throughout all the life, but some of them, such as fright, anger or disgust, are simply impossible to be covered from others (Nazaikin, 2007).

The information above may be useful in case of everyday communication. But the most universal means of revealing the linguistic tools that hide the truth are Grice’s maxims: the maxim of quantity, the maxim of manner, the maxim of quality and the maxim of relation (Grice, 1985).

Thus, violation of the maxim of quantity can be manifested in speech redundancy. Let us exemplify this case through the course work presentation, when the student was asked to defend the results of the research: “I have received the results similar to the results of my own research conducted the last year — they are the same as the ones of the last year” (Strelnikova, 2019). In this case, slurred speech and tautology demonstrate that the student is not ready to present the findings. We asked students to choose similar examples from the works of Russian and world literature.

The maxim of quantity regulates the amount of information in the communication process. The statement should contain enough information to translate the idea to the addressee, but not more than the situation requires. We can encounter the omission of important information for successful communication in one of the episodes of the “1980s” series. The main character, Ivan, proposes marriage to his close friend — Kate, and she agrees. The young couple hurriedly tells this news to their parents, but after that they realize that their relationship is not yet strong enough and decide to postpone the marriage for an indefinite period. Ivan is afraid to be misunderstood by Kate’s father, so he keeps the cancellation silent. This example perfectly illustrates betrayal of the recipient’s trust by the sender.

The maxim of relation controls the logic of the conversation. Let us take an example from Bulgakov’s novel “The Master and Margarita” (Bulgakov, 2016, p. 256): “Excuse me, who you are? Are you an official? ... Who are you? What’s your surname? — My surname is, well, let’s say, Koroviev. Would you like a snack, Nikanor Ivanovich? Without any ceremonies! Huh?”. Koroviev shifts the subject of conversation, not willing to dig down

his biography, thus, violating the maxim of relation.

The maxim of manner implies the following postulates: lexical clarity, its unambiguity, laconism, good organization. For example, the speech of one of characters of the “The White Guard” by M. A. Bulgakov (Bulgakov, 2016, p. 253): “Just think ... is it possible that Germans let this scoundrel close to the city? Huh? Personally I simply can’t imagine how they can live with him at least for one minute. Nonsense! The Germans and Petliura. They call him any otherwise than a thug. It is ridiculous!” This quote is incredibly difficult, the words of the character get confused with each other.

The maxim of quality adjusts the verity of utterance. The speech message must be truthful and must be supported by facts. The first principle may be violated through the use of irony, hyperbole or litotes (Grice, 1985). Let’s take a simple example: the main character in the stories by the Soviet writer V.Yu. Dragunsky, Denis, says to one of his friends: “What a good friend you are, Mishka! I would have definitely helped you!” (Dragunskiy, 2019, p. 76). This sentence clearly demonstrates a pushback to Mishka. The other principle can be damaged as in the dialogue from the novel by F. Kafka “The Process” (Kafka, 2017, p. 133): “Is Fraulein Bürstner at home? — No,unfortunately, I don’t know when she’s back. She usually comes back from theatre quite late - the young lady often comes late...it can go too far — Oh yes, of course!” Frau Grubach said: “You are absolutely right, Mr. K. Maybe in this case you are also right. I don’t want to gossip about Fraulein Bürstner, but she needs more pride, more restraint. And this month I have already seen her twice in the back alleys, and each time with a different gentleman...”. Frau Grubach’s proposition is that fräulein Bürstner is a girl of easy virtue. Such false statement is justified by the opinion of the interlocutor, not supported by the facts.

Thus, it can be concluded that a “little lie” is one of many variations of hoe the addressee influences the recipient. The information presented above can be successfully applied both in linguistic and psychological studies, and in everyday life: for maximum defense of one’s mind from implicit outside influence.

Advertising discourse is based on lies and manipulation over potential consumers. A favorite technique of PR-specialists is camouflaging the truth through different types of comparison. Advertising discourse as a whole is characterized by an abundance of trails, means of expression and speech figures (anaphora, hyperbole, parceling, etc.). They make advertising messages lively and expressive as they can be.

Avoiding the truth in everyday discourse is closely related to people’s emotional background, which remains the main difficulty for the researchers. However, a number of linguistic tools of concealing the truth are subjected to be controlled. The hidden truth may be identified by breaking Grice’s maxims of communication, as well as using various strategies and techniques.

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