PRAGMATIC EFFECTS OF BOULOMAIC TEXT-WORLDS IN COMMERCIAL ADVERTISING

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ABSTRACT

The article focuses on pragmatic effects of boulomaic text-worlds as a variety of modal worlds created in advertising discourse. Text-worlds are treated as a type of pragmatically-orientated representational structures of advertising discourse establishing and maintaining relationships between agent and client as main discourse participants. The paper presents an element of a broader World-Modelling Concept [7] – one of the contemporary theories of discourse representation based on Text World Theory initially developed by Semino [12], Werth [15], Gavins [2], and then expanded on contemporary theoretical approaches of Russian scholars such as Kubryakova, Dem'yankov [5]. The pragmatic effects of boulomaic text-worlds are analyzed with the machinery of the named theory to unravel discourse 'power' enabling advertising agents to influence the opinions of the target audience. Boulomaic text-worlds are textualized through different lexico-grammatical realizations. In this study it is shown that verbs *want*, *wish* and *hope* are commonly employed by agents of discourse to express boulomaic modality, including descriptions of wishes, desires, and fantasies of both the agent and the client. It is argued that within the range of modal text-worlds created in advertising, boulomaic text-worlds are used to articulate the hidden desires and wishes of the potential customers and stimulate them buy the promoted products. It is noted that the agent of advertising discourse has consumerism ideology behind the linguistic expressions he uses. The pragmatic effects of boulomaic text-worlds represented by lexical verbs are discussed from the point of the construal of mental representations in which the relations between the product, the client, and the producer conform to what the relevant person desires.

Keywords: text-worlds, boulomaic text-worlds, pragmatic effects, commercial advertising, World Modelling theory

INTRODUCTION

In the era of innovations and technological breakthroughs advertising is in fact one of the most indispensable phenomena of life and a very important medium for influencing people's buying decisions. Advertisers seek for new techniques of capturing public attention. It is no wonder that scholars worldwide find it necessary to analyze language in use in this type of discourse to study the persuasive power that makes people buy the advertised products even if they don't have the need. There is relatively ample literature on this, e.g. Cook [1], Kalliat [4], Meeske [10], Myers [11], Tanaka [13]. Few of them give a cursory account of the pragmatic effects of text-worlds as representational structures of advertising discourse (e.g. Hidalgo Downing [3]).

It seems that the chosen perspective brings together both pragmatic and cognitive issues of advertising discourse. Persuasive power is regarded as form of influence on the target

audience which is realized in advertising discourse due to a special choice of language modality. This enables agents to create modal text-worlds, among which the boulomaic text-worlds are primarily aimed at articulating the hidden desires and wishes of discourse participants. Linguistic mechanisms of wish and desire text-worlds as mental representations intentionally constructed by agents of advertising discourse are central to this paper. The research objective is to augment understanding of the role played by text-worlds expressing boulomaic modality in boosting pragmatic effects of advertisements and convincing potential consumers in supremacy of the advertised product over similar brands.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Our research interest is to identify the role of boulomaic text-worlds in advertising discourse within the framework of World-Modelling Concept – one of the approaches of discourse studies which we have been developing for several years [7], [8]. It mainly draws on Text-World Theory [3], [12], [14], [15], Language and Knowledge Theory [6], and brings elements of Gavins' approach [2]. These have given rise to the analysis of representational structures within a broader discourse scope. The samples selected for analysis include contemporary ads taken from one of the biggest retailing companies of Great Britain – 'Tesco'. They all contain text messages and images of products. Categorizing ads by product we mainly analyze those promoting foods: biscuits, breads, cakes, cereals, soups, etc. To explore the pragmatic effects of boulomaic text-worlds we define the **basic concepts** of study as follows:

Advertising as a type of discourse focuses on distributing information about the goods promptly to the public. There is always a conscious intention behind the advertisement: to increase the sales of goods or services or to enhance the image of an organization. **Discourse** is defined as text and context together, "interacting in a way which is perceived as meaningful and unified by the participants" [1]. In fact, context takes place only through the human mind. Following Tincheva, we view context as a form of cognition, and "a cluster of dynamic mental procedures which, through frequent co-occurrence, create static, picture-like impressions" [14]. We assume that language is always in context, including properties and relations of objects and participants, as well as their knowledge, beliefs, feelings, and intentions.

Advertising discourse is a process of language communication unfolding over time. The crucial role in this process belongs to texts that contribute to complex mental representations of reality created by the recipients as they read, listen or see (in general, process information). Each text presents 'a picture' of the world, mental models of certain fragments of reality. We argue that favorable 'pictures' are constructed by 'powerful' agents of advertising discourse to model perspectives that structure people's perception of described situations. We term this **intentional world-modelling**. Finding these perspectives as evidence of intentional world-modelling is expected to give insight into the discursive construction of commercial advertising. We employ a metaphoric epithet *powerful* to emphasize that there is a certain asymmetry between discourse participants. Advertising agent is an active participant that has access to discourse and its production, which the client doesn't have, being a passive recipient.

In Text-World Theory **text-world** is defined as a text-driven mental representation evoked in the minds of the recipients as they read or listen [12]. Text-world presents a state of affairs that the recipient creates in his mind as a mental representation. According to Matczak, this process unfolds gradually:

1) Each sentence of a text projects a certain element of mental representation;

2) The mental picture of the state of affairs is integrated by the recipient into the epistemic framework of a possible world;

3) Certain sentences of the text co-refer, they relate to the same state of affairs: each new sentence modifies the created mental representation;

4) All sentences of the text which refer to the same state of affairs create a complete mental representation of that state of affairs (the meaning of the text fragment);

5) The mental representation of all states of affairs described by the given text creates the mental representation of that text's world [9].

Within the framework of this paper we presume that people deal with mental representations of reality rather than reality itself, where the human mind is the mediator between the two. Advertising text-worlds are viewed as **representational structures of discourse**. We define them as text-driven mental constructs of different conceptual complexity projecting worlds that correspond to the processes and the results of reality representation with the purpose of promoting products. Worlds projected in advertising discourse conform with interests of advertisers and mass consumption ideology in general.

Boulomaic modality expresses a desire or wish. Aiming to evoke situations that the clients will identify with, agents of discourse refer to boulomaic (bouletic) modality which causes the target audience to construct want-worlds and wish-worlds in their minds. Gavins [2] and Semino [12] consider them a type of modal worlds, Werth [15] relates them to attitudinal sub-worlds. We further use Gavins's and Semino's terminology, taking into consideration that all linguistic communication operates on at least two levels: the discourse world and the text-world. Whereas the first refers to the conceptual space shared by discourse participants (context and shared personal and cultural background knowledge), the second corresponds to the conceptual spaces generated by texts used in discourse.

In this paper text-worlds are viewed as complex dynamic representational structures that are numerous and extensive is discourse. The coordinate system that forms a ground for constructing text-worlds includes time, space and modality. It means that any change of spatial, temporal, or modal parameters of the initial text-world would create *an emergent* (derived) *text-world*. We prefer this term to the term *sub-world* initially put forward by Werth, because we agree with Gavins that the prefix *'sub'* is rather misleading [2]: it suggests some subordination to the basic text-world, which is not always the case. Following Gavins's idea about world-switches, taking place as discourse develops, we introduce the term an **emergent text-world** to emphasize that text-worlds advance as people conceptualize situations described in a discourse. This

leads to an extension or modification of the initial (basic) text-world and establishing new conceptual spaces where important additional details are provided.

Boulomaic text-worlds are emergent text-worlds textualized through different lexico-grammatical realizations. Crucially, the contents of these text-worlds, the situations they describe, are unrealized at the time of their creation [2]. Verbs of propositional attitude are commonly employed by agents of advertising discourse to describe wishes, desires, and fantasies of the agent and the client.

Under **pragmatic effects** we mean impressions based on practical considerations that the agent of advertising discourse creates deliberately attempting to capture people's attention. They arise from the aim of discourse to make people more favorably disposed to the advertised product.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Commercial advertising agents employ a vast range of devices to get their messages across. On the textual level boulomaic text-worlds are regularly generated in advertising discourse to encourage consumers to implicate themselves in the situations that describe natural human desires. The primary or secondary benefit of this practice is emotion arousal as appeal that affects consumers' behavior no less than rational motivation. In most cases the linguistic mechanisms are typical, i.e. boulomaic text-worlds are textualized through lexical verbs. The world-building elements for desire text-worlds are predicates *want, wish, hope* and *dream*. Complex want-worlds contain conditions on the actions to be carried out to fulfill the desire in the real world.

Analyzing the pragmatic effects of boulomaic text-worlds we have revealed several perspectives of meaning construction in advertising discourse. Under a *perspective,* we mean a particular way of mental navigation, established by advertising agent due to linguistic choices. Discovering the mechanisms of it is not easy because mental representations are created and locked in the heads of the recipients. However, linguistic means are on the surface and systematizing them can be useful to better understand the interaction between principal advertising discourse participants.

Product – addressee perspective. This perspective enables the agents of advertising discourse to construct text-worlds in which **customers' potential desires are articulated**, and the product might be used for their realization. In many cases the messages are not attributed to anyone. The addresser is implicit. It cannot be easily identified, being **cooperative**. *Cooperative* means there is a group of people (a producer, a copywriter, a creative team, etc.) behind the ad. In these text-worlds a disembodied voice-over addresses both the characters and the clients of discourse: *With a Cup of Soup to hand it'll only take a moment to stir up a snack that's tasty, warm and satisfying but you'll probably **want** to give yourself a bit longer to relax and enjoy it…* (soup). The text-world builders are overtly set out: they fix time (future: *it'll take, you'll probably want*), objects (the advertised product: *a Cup of Soup*), and characters (the addressee: introduced by the second person pronoun *you*, and a reflexive pronoun *yourself*). The meaning of potentiality is generated due to the verbs in the future forms that relate the described situation to the moment following the moment of speech. The

remoted potential modal text-world fleshes out a customer's desire to relax and enjoy a snack on, actually, one of the most commonplace products.

In a range of advertising messages **the addresser is the 'speaking' product** – the character in the text-world that addresses the recipient: *I'm a quick and tasty roasted vegetable couscous made with sweet roasted peppers, courgettes, pearl barley, tomato and garlic. Eat me as I am or serve me with grilled chicken or kebabs. I **hope** you enjoy me, if you fancy finding out about other tasty recipes in this range visit www.merchant gourmet.com for many more tips* (couscous). The world-building elements fix time (present) and two characters – the product (expressed by personal pronoun *I*), and the client (*you*). The perspective enhances the pragmatic effect of personal involvement of the addressee based on playfulness and amusement created by a fictitious fairy-tale-like conceptual content of the text-world. The speaking product comes to the fore. It is an active, lively anthropomorphic creature expressing human feelings and emotions. The technique is seemingly used to shape positive attitude to the advertised product through arousing clients' emotions and sense of humor. From the point of view of meaning making, it gives the agent a light veil under which furthering the marketing function is less straightforward.

Product – producer – addressee perspective. This perspective combines three elements, making text-worlds conceptually even more complex. Two types of situations are regular in advertising discourse. Firstly, **the voice-over articulates the desires of the producer** that are oriented towards a consumer. It produces the effect of a natural and easy-going small talk initiated by one of the company workers: *Genius Bloomer Bread. Genius is the brainchild of Lucinda, **our** founder. It took two years and two ovens but she cracked the secret to the perfect gluten free loaf: soft, with a great crumb and a proper crust. Yes, every new recipe is a fresh challenge, but **we want** everyone to enjoy the simple pleasure of baking at its best, so **we** take our time to bring you deliciously ingenious creations that everyone can enjoy*. The sender is marked by personal pronoun *we* (*our*). There are several text-worlds embedded into the discourse world where the product is named and the founder of the company is introduced (*Genius Bloomer Bread, Lucinda*). Then comes a world-switch to the emergent text-world: the time-zone changes (*took two years, she cracked*) to give an excursion to the past for a more detailed representation of perfecting the quality of the product that is gluten free and, thus, better for human health. The following world-switches lead to establishing new deictic coordinates (since it includes a present tense verb 'is') of subsequent emergent text-worlds and introducing a want-world that contributes to a favorable mental picture that integrates the advertised product (*deliciously ingenious creations*), the producer (*we*) and their desire to be at customers' service: bringing them enjoyment (*everyone can enjoy*). In Werth's terminology, these text-worlds are participant-accessible, i.e. when a participant establishes a text-world, or creates emergent text-worlds, the second participant of interaction will accept the contents of the text-worlds as reliable and true, because a corresponding degree of responsibility to them is assigned [2]. These text-worlds differ from the ones, erected by characters (character-accessible). They are "at remove" from participants, they are defined by characters and depart from the basic parameters of the containing text-world [15].

The principle of accessibility allows us to reveal another perspective: **a producer verbalizes customers' potential desires**: *Medium sliced white bread.* "*Everything you ever* **wanted** *for delicious, fresh sandwiches is wrapped up in this loaf. It's one of the family favourites.*" *Jonathan Warburton* (bread). This message communicates attitude, which is subjective by nature. Direct speech is used to take the recipient immediately into the discourse world of the character. This text-world is in fact embedded into the discourse world to add more persuasive information. The words are attributed to the leading figure in the British baking industry and it certainly brings more prominence and reliability to the whole ad. This technique makes explicit what is personal and emotional because the name *Jonathan Warburton* is obviously a **precedent name** for the British recipient. In Russian linguistics, *a precedent name* is a name of a person that is well-known for their achievements to most people of a culture (national precedent name), or to most people of the world (universal precedent name), e.g. *William Shakespeare, Theresa May* in Great Britain and worldwide; *Vladimir Putin* in Russia and worldwide. The pragmatic potential of precedent names in advertising is realized through numerous positive associations. Thus, when processing the advertising message mentioned above, the British recipient will make use of their existing personal and cultural knowledge of the national precedent name associated with the largest family-owned business, managed by the fifth generation of Warburtons.

Similarly, the effect of personal involvement into the process of product production forms a powerful emotional appeal in another ad of the same producer: *Raisin loaf with cinnamon. "I knew it the moment we got this loaf right. Fruity. Sweet. Mellow. Spicy. It had everything I was looking for. I* **hope** *you love it too." Jonathan Warburton.* The direct speech is embedded in the discourse world: two modalised emergent text-worlds are created to characterize the product and establish the perspective of perception. The first one is marked by the predicate *knew* (an epistemic modal-world) and the second is boulomaic text-world introduced by the predicate *hope*. While the former is generated to articulate knowledge and experience of the producer along with his subjective qualification of the product (expressed by descriptive epithets *fruity, sweet, mellow, spicy*), the latter plays out a desirable situation which is potential and possible if the consumer treats himself to the advertised product (*you love it too*). Though the boulomaic text-world does not function to state what it would take to satisfy the desire of the client, it is clear from what is represented by language means.

CONCLUSION

Intentional world-modelling is a powerful resource of meaning making at the advertising agent's disposal that is realized in a variety of ways subordinated to marketing ideology. Boulomaic text-worlds reflect essential agent's endeavor to persuade clients that their desires can be easily fulfilled through consumption. These are emergent text-worlds, constructed by agents due to a specific choice of language modality. They include wishes of the producer and the anthropomorphic product, oriented towards the target audience, and potential desires of the target audience that can become real in case of buying or making use of the advertised product. The main pragmatic effects of boulomaic text-worlds gather around eliciting trust and loyalty of

the target audience (by arousing positive emotions) and aestheticizing the advertised products transforming them into desired things for consumers who want psychological relaxation and enjoyment. The perspectives of meaning construction reveal modelling desires as unquestionable necessities of the client. Their fulfilment relies on integration of the product, the addressee and the producer in conceptual spaces of the constructed boulomaic text-worlds. The perspectives of meaning construction vary depending on the distinction between participant-accessible and character-accessible boulomaic text-worlds that directly or indirectly appeal to the clients' attention. Both types are regularly used in commercial advertising to guide customers' mental navigation towards carrying out actions in reality that would make wishes, dreams and hopes come true.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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