

## PRAGMATIC FUNCTION OF INTERROGATIVE SENTENCES IN ADVERTISEMENTS

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*Acest articol are ca scop analiza funcțiilor pragmatice ale propozițiilor interogative în publicitate în baza cercetării efectuate și a corpusului de exemple colectate din spoturile publicitare pentru produse cosmetice. Considerăm această temă actuală, deoarece, până în prezent, nu s-au efectuat studii privind abordarea pragmatică a limbajului publicitar. Astfel, există necesitatea de cercetări pentru a investiga utilizarea tehnicilor textuale și lingvistice în spoturile publicitare pentru produse cosmetice.*

The pragmatic function of interrogative sentences from our corpus of advertisements was analyzed according to the classification suggested by Amy Tsui, who considers the question neither a semantic category, nor an illocutionary act, nor a request. In accordance with her theory, the utterances which elicit solely a response are called 'elicitations'. Thus, we consider the following forms of interrogative questions which can appear in TV commercials: elicit information, elicit confirmation, elicit agreement, elicit commitment, elicit repetition and elicit clarification [5,p.102].

The majority of interrogative sentences from the selected TV commercials, twenty nine out of forty four, have a pragmatic function of eliciting confirmation from the audience, twenty eight of them are yes-no questions and one is a declarative question. For example, in "Weak and thin hair shows in your ponytail?", "First greys?", "Have you always wanted thicker hair?" the advertiser empathizes on the 'problem' of the potential customer. We use the word problem in inverted commas, because many advertisers shape this attitude by encouraging women to feel dissatisfied with their appearance. As it was planned by the advertiser, after the potential consumer confirmed

the existence of the ‘problem’ stated in the interrogative question from the commercial, she is likely to resolve it. So some of them, depending on the influence of the advertisement, brand image and motivation, will develop a favorable disposition towards the product and make the purchase.

Further we will analyze an example that includes an interrogative sentence which elicits agreement. Generally, there are three interrogative sentences of this type in our study, and they are made of yes-no questions. This category of interrogative sentence includes those questions which invite the addressee to agree with the speaker’s assumption that the expressed proposition is self-evidently true. To state that the interrogative sentence from the Maybelline Master Strobing Stick advertisement elicits agreement, we should examine it together with the context of the question: *“Happening now? The strobe effect! New Master Strobing Stick from Maybelline New York”*. As we know, makeup is filled with innovation. We would like to open a parenthesis on one of the biggest makeup trends in the beauty world right now – contouring – the tricky technique of using light and dark makeup to change the way the face looks. It has many synonyms as strobe effect or highlighting. Contouring has been a red carpet celebrity makeup trick for ages, but it only gained mainstream beauty popularity in the last few years. Thus, the advertisement starts with the question “Happening now?”, inviting the target audience to agree with them, hence establishing the existing common ground between them and the addressee. Altogether, it makes the potential customer be in trend, desire the product, purchase it.

Out of forty four interrogative questions in our study, eight have the function of eliciting information, and all of them are wh-questions. This kind of elicitation invites the addressee to supply a piece of information. Let us consider the following examples as in *“How do I stay looking young? By stimulating my body, my mind, my curiosity, and when it comes to my skin, I get it covered with Revitalift”*. A famous actress asks a question on behalf of the audience, like this is what comes to the mind of a woman, when she looks at the actress, and finds out her age. This interrogative question elicits information, but instead of letting people think about it and answer it, they, the creators of advertisement, provide the response themselves. The actress enumerates the actions that keep her looking young and mentions

about the beauty product. This technique is used to make the potential consumer interested by learning about brand benefits, developing a favorable disposition towards the brand and forming a purchase intention.

The last type of interrogative sentences from our study is rhetorical question. As the structure and speech function of rhetorical questions are not matched, they perform indirect speech acts. The speaker has no intention of eliciting answer from the hearer in posing rhetorical questions. Instead, he or she is making statements by asking rhetorical questions. As the main goal of this work is to determine the pragmatic functions, then we should find the function of rhetorical question, considering it an indirect speech act. This kind of questions is an exception from the classification of questions by Amy Tsui, because it does not correspond to the concept of elicitation. According to Quirk, in this example: "*Who needs false lashes?*", the implicature should be understood as: "Nobody needs false lashes"[4,p.826]. But taking into consideration that this rhetorical question is taken from an advertisement, the implicature can be as follows: "Nobody needs false lashes, when there is the Falsies Push Up Angel by Maybelline New York". Looking upon both of the implicature suggestions, we can affirm that the advertiser makes an emotionally colored statement. From the pragmatic point of view and in accordance with the classification of speech acts [3,p.119], these implicatures are representatives, in other words they assert what the addresser believes to be the case.

Next rhetorical questions were asked at the very beginning of the TV commercials: "*Why commit to just one color?*", having the implicature: "Don't commit to just one color", but the implicature from the advertiser would sound as follows: "Don't commit to just one color, use Casting Crème Gloss by L'Oreal Paris".

In these cases, if the implicatures were deduced from the perspective of advertising language, then they would be directives. In other words, they are attempts by the speaker to get the addressee do something, buy and use the advertised products, in order to fulfil the implicature.

The statistical data regarding the pragmatic function of interrogative sentences analyzed in this study. Regarding the position of the interrogative sentences in the TV commercial, we noticed that thirty

eight interrogative sentences, that is the majority, are placed at the beginning of the advertisement. According to the AIDA technique from marketing, where A stands for attention, the first hurdle for any piece of writing is to capture the reader's attention. Accordingly, advertisers place interrogative sentences at the beginning of TV commercials, in order to attract attention and arouse curiosity from its first second, before people switch the channel.

Speaking about the form of the questions from analyzed TV commercials, we observe that thirty three interrogative sentences or seventy five percent have a short form, and only eleven questions or twenty five percent have a full form. Advertisers just eliminate non-essentials, as auxiliary verbs, verbs *to be* or *to have*, the subject. Sometimes they leave only the object, as in the example "*Dark circles?*", whose full form would be "Do you have dark circles?". All advertisements should be as brief as possible and still complete the sales story. The text of an advertisement is short, but it should communicate a lot.

Taking into consideration all these conclusions, we would like to make some recommendations for future advertisement makers:

- Do not be afraid to use interrogative sentences in the text of the commercial.
- Mix the imperative forms with interrogative ones, people pay a lot of attention to them, especially if the question elicits confirmation, the target audience confirms the existence of the 'problem' and his or her interest in the advertised product increases.
- Be as short as possible. People like when the things are called by their name, and it is advantageously, because the prospect's time is precious.

**References:**

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