



## ABSTRACT

*This study examines adverts associated with business premises, vehicles and institutions in languages like English, Kiswahili and Ekegusii that are found in the two towns of Kisii and Keroka. These adverts are studied in terms of context, content and*

# L ANGUAGE STYLE IN ADVERTISEMENT

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## Introduction

The modern world is bombarded with all sorts of advertising from the most sophisticated signage associated with technological advancement, employed by the rich corporations to the poor businesses" uneven graffiti or placards announcing sale of charcoal or kerosene in the backstreet. Since language forms the core of all advertising Schmidt and Kass (1986), Tanaka (1999), Borcers (2005), Lee (2008) assert that advertisers use rhetorical devices, techniques and strategies to achieve their goals of moving their audience and changing their attitudes.

## Theoretical Framework

To study consumer advertising signs their linguistic means were analyzed through the use of Relevance Theory (RT) and the Pragmatic theory of presupposition. According to El-daly (2011) presupposition and relevance theory are



important because they allow us to see the primary means by which advertisements can communicate much more information than what is explicitly presented in them.

### **Presupposition Theory and Advertising**

Yule (2007) defines presupposition (presupposition = „an assumption that comes before“) as an assumption by a speaker or writer about what is true or already known by the listener or reader. It is something the speaker assumes to be the case prior to making an utterance.

Presupposition is a kind of pragmatic inference “based more closely on the actual linguistic structure of sentences” Levinson (1989: 167). Strawson (1952) defines it as a type of pragmatic inference. For example, a sentence such as “The cold war has ended” presupposes the existence of the entities it refers to, in this case the „cold war“. According to Lam (2009) presupposition makes an advertisement persuasive and comparative, short and memorable without breaking regulations. Sells and Gonzales (2002); calls it a carrier of cultural values and a form of cultural and social communication. Pollay (1986) believes this makes it possible for information to be shared between the

invitation or persuasion potential using the semiotics linguistic landscape (L L) for easier categorization. The study employs the Sperber and Wilson theory of Relevance (RT) focusing on the narrowing and broadening of words' meanings, disambiguation, and adding of social meaning; and presuppositions in the language, that formulate information and strategy of advertising.

**Keywords:**  
Advertisement,  
Presupposition,  
Lexical, Syntactic,  
Semantics.



reader and advertiser without explanation or need for convincing. According to Yule (1996, 2007:25-31) presupposition is treated as relationship between two propositions. He gives the following examples:

- a) Mary's dog is cute (containing the proposition P)
- b) Mary has a dog (contains the proposition Q)

Then using the symbol  $\gg$  to mean "presupposes", we can represent the relationship as in

(2c)

- c)  $P \gg Q$

The following types of presupposition are in existence.

- a) Existential presuppositions is assumed to be present as in possessive constructions like in Your car  $\gg$  you have a car, and also in definite noun phrases like: the cat, the girl next door  $\gg$  the speaker is assumed to be committed to the existence of the entities named.
- b) Factive presuppositions in verbs like "know", which is treated as a fact, "realize" "regret", as well as phrases involving "be", with "aware", "odd" and "glad", all have factive presuppositions. I'm glad it's over ( $\gg$  It's over). The particular expression is taken to presuppose the truth of the information that is stated after it.
- c) Lexical presuppositions, as for example, each time you say someone managed, to do something, the asserted meaning is that someone succeeded in some way. Similarly, when you say someone "didn't manage" the asserted meaning is that the person did not succeed. However, in both cases there is a presupposition (non-asserted) that the person "tried" to do that something. Lexical items like stop, start and again- carry a



similar meaning as in He stopped smoking (>> He used to smoke) or They started complaining (>> They weren't complaining before)

In a lexical presupposition, the speaker's use of a particular expression is taken to presuppose another (unstated) concept.

d) Structural presuppositions are associated with use of certain words or phrases giving rise to structure assumed to be true and hence accepted by listeners as true. A good example is the wh-questions constructions in English using when and where.

a) When did he leave? (>>He left)

b) Where did you buy the bike? (>>You bought the bike)

e) Non-factive presuppositions are associated with verbs such as "dream", "imagine", "pretend" etc.

d) I dreamed that I was rich (>>I was not rich)

e) We imagined we were in Hawaii (>>We were not in Hawaii)

f) Lastly, we have counterfactual presuppositions that involve a conditional structure that presupposes that the information in the if-clause is not true at the time of utterance.

a) If you were my friend, you would have helped me. (>>You are not my friend)

## SUMMARY

TYPE	EXAMPLE	PRESUPPOSITION
Existential	the X	>>X exist
Factive	I regret leaving	>> I left
Non-factive	He pretended to be happy	>> He wasn't happy. Lexical
	He managed to escape.	>> He tried to escape
Structural	Where did she die?	>> She died.
Counterfactual	If I weren't ill	>>I am ill.



El-daly (2011) sees presupposition as a crucial part of advertising as they can cause the reader to consider the existence of objects, propositions, and culturally defined behavioral properties: for example, “Have you had your daily vitamins?” presupposes that you take or need “daily vitamins”, thereby creating and perpetuating the idea that the behavior of taking vitamins daily is part of our culture. Similarly, “What’s great about Chuck Wagon dog food?” Geis (1982, 45) presupposes that there is something great about the dog food though exactly what is left open. The study of presuppositions on what is „taken for granted“ in an utterance or a text offers an instrument which is well-suited for examining the links between language and ideology Elison et al., (2009). Content can also be examined through presuppositions that look at advertisement, information, language and market strategies, economy of language, use of exaggerated words, phrases, expressions or questions

### **Methodology**

The fact that there were numerous signs in these towns that could attract study, sampling was done. In fact it was not possible to test the whole population during research Kathuri and Pals (1993). In total there were 175 ads collected but using Krejcie and Morgan’s (1970) sampling technique 120 adverts were selected. The study used purposive sampling technique to arrive at the sample that was used in data analysis. The underlying principle of this method involved identifying in advance the type of areas to be studied Milroy, (1987). The researcher used purposive sampling based on those signs that he deemed possessed the most informative and communicative aspects for this study.



A preliminary classification helped to sort out just what was being investigated; what types of advertisements, for what products, in what media and so on (Dyer 1982).

Milroy (1987) argues that large samples will only amount to large amounts of data and consume more time to analyze, yet the result will not be dissimilar.

### ***Key Summary Based on the Finding***

Dijk (1977) observes that Context involves properties of the utterance, para-linguistic properties, actual observation, knowledge/beliefs in memory, type of interaction going on, both local and global level, knowledge about inter(action rules) and word knowledge. On the other hand, social context is characterized by following categories namely, private, public, institutional or formal and informal. These social contexts are equally determined by the following properties: Positions (e.g. rules, status etc.); Properties (e.g. sex, age); Relations (e.g. dominance, authority) Functions (e.g., father, judge, and waitress. Through the use of linguistic landscape the study realized the following categories depicting the physical world in which these ads exist as pointed out above.

### **Vehicles**

**Public Passenger Vehicles e.g.** Best one, Game Short; My Heart's Desire; Madonna of the Road; Adhiambo Sianda etc. **Personal Private Vehicle's e.g.** Seriously Kenyan; The Animal etc. **Service Vehicles e.g.** Royal Maternity; No Hurry in Africa etc.

### **Goods and Services**

**Supermarkets e.g.** Tuskys Chigware, *Pay less Get More*; Menora two thousand and eight



Supermarket: *Buy more for less* etc. **Shops e.g.** Bike Bokie Traders; Double „M Variety Shop; Bajaj: *Distinctly Ahead* etc. **Food Joints e.g.** Jirani Take Away Chips; *Tea Room Old Skool* “A one stop turbo filling station” etc. **Goods e.g.** G-TIDE *Touch me Touch the World*;  
Tuff Foam *Lala Salama* etc. **Services e.g.** Bon Artist *20 Minutes Service*; Chap Chap Kinyozi etc. **Information Technology e.g.** Computer Factor (K) Ltd.; Top Focus Communication etc. **Institutions**  
**Public Schools e.g.** St. Charles Lwanga Girls” High School. Summum Bonum, Motto: *Accompanied with Aspire to Excel*; Kisii (GAS) High School: *Strive for Excellence*  
**Private Schools e.g.** Vision Junior Academy; Pre-school & Class 1-4: *Gateway to Success*; A.I.C Grace Academy .Motto: *By God’s Grace We Excel* **Churches e.g.**  
African Inland Church Kisii Town ...Location behind Kisii Primary; Redeemed Gospel Church: *Place of Impartation & Commissioning*, Along Hema Hospital Road etc.  
**Medical e.g.** Framo Medical Clinic AMUA! Family Planning Clinic; *Jipangie Maisha* . Ministry of Medical Services Masaba District Hospital. *Huduma Bora ni Haki Yako* etc.  
**Banks e.g.** Family Bank: *Your Partner for Life*; KWFT: Microfinance: *Banking on Women* etc.

The above categories are representative of what the researcher collected in the Keroka and Kisii towns. The represent of the existing social and cultural contexts Belch and Belch (1995) Klima (2008). According to Cook (2001) shared information (schema) between the audience and advertiser, plays such an essential role through ellipsis and assumptions of shared



knowledge, to the extent ads create an atmosphere of intimacy and informality.

### **Content**

The section involved assessing the lexical, semantic and syntactic properties of the sampled ads. The first step was picking on the parts of speech of the English Grammar. The recurring parts were nouns, verbs, adjectives, adverbs, pronouns, prepositions and conjunctions. Articles, numbers and abbreviations also featured in most of the ads. At a glance nouns made the bulk of these items followed by adjectives, adverbs, verbs in that order.

**Nouns e.g.** Blessings, Revolution; **Noun Phrases e.g.** The Animal, Prestige Shuttle; **Active**

**Verbs e.g.** Double „M Variety Shop, Tuma Pesa Season Logistics;

**Verbal Phrases e.g.** Bend Over; **Adjectival Phrases e.g.** Latest News, Fine Couch Salon

**Adverbial Phrases e.g.** Long Lasting Battery Chloride Exide, Hard Way the Only Way

**Pronouns e.g.** My Heart"s Desire etc.; **Semantics e.g.** Madonna of the Road , West Punch Electricals, Ebenezer Trade Centre, Practical Garage; **Syntactic Structures e.g.**

**Parallelism:** Tusker –Makes equal has no equal, Menora...Buy more for less

**Repetition:** G-TIDE: Touch me Touch the World etc.; **Abbreviations:** Double „M Variety Shop, Mobile World Com.Ltd; **Participles:** Winning Ways, Spiced Sound etc.

### **Invitation**

Most of the collected ads either were made attractive by the context in which they appeared or the content (certain linguistic properties)



like gradable adjectives, active verbs, nouns, semantical implications or syntactical structures, unusual word combinations, parallelism, personal pronouns, time, contacts and puns.

Data was collected through an interview schedule bearing 30 sampled Ads representing various businesses related to vehicles, shops, food joints, services, goods and so forth. Forty respondents who were aged between 14 and 60 years drawn from students, business people, mechanics, housewives, teachers etc and from at least three different communities and were able to read at least two languages namely English and Kiswahili and a possible third language were interviewed. Their academic qualifications ranged from the primary school's last year examination to masters degree. The schedules were given out at random and each correspondence given fifteen to twenty minutes to answer the questions by ticking the item that they took fancy at.

The main objective of these interview was to determine the invitational potential consumer ads have on the reader or consumer since these respondents at one time or another happen to interact with these or similar ads in their day to day activities.

The interview schedule was divided into four columns. The first column provided the serial number of ads. The second column consisted a corresponding ad. The third column sought to find out which of the following aspects viz. name, spelling, meaning, arrangement and creativity, did the respondents find attractive. The respondents were required to pick at least a single item, the one in their opinion they found most attractive from the listed items. The last column requested the respondents to pick the comment they thought fitted the advert.

The respondents attracted the following percentages on what they found attractive.



<b>AD'S ITEMS</b>	<b>NUMBER</b>	<b>PERCENTAGE</b>
Name	414	34.5%
Spelling	141	11.75%
Meaning	263	21.91%
Arrangement	192	15.91%
Creativity	190	15.83%

The column on which comment they could associate with the ad attracted the following data. The Others category was introduced by those respondents who chose to use own words such like too long, interesting, catchy, tempting etc. from the ones provided.

<b>COMMENT ON AD</b>	<b>NUMBER</b>	<b>PERCENTAGE</b>
Appropriate	332	27.66%
Positive	354	29.5%
Negative	162	13.5%
Disgusting	99	8.25%
Confusing	97	8.08%
Meaningless	107	8.91%
Others	49	4.08%

Following the data collected it was found out that Ads are context determined, that is they are dictated by setting, situation and text of advertisement. These ads are positioned where they could be read, such as on walls, sign boards, road signs, roofs etc.

The setting of an ad determines whether it can be read or not. This is why they are displayed in the open or where they can be viewed by consumers. The knowledge of the world outside an ad's language proved to be a very useful component in the appropriate interpretation of the message. The ads were viewed as local or



regional because of their outreach potential which was determined by the language of advertising or their message, i.e. if an ad used only Ekegusii or English then its consumers were predetermined.

The use of different languages pointed at the community's multilingualism Laundry and

Bourhis (1997) e.g. English, Kiswahili and Ekegusii. English language though not the community's native language was used in most ads may be to symbolize foreign taste, modernity, status or globalization Torkington (2009). (Menora...; Royal...; Future Trends; La-mina Sports...; Mobile World.com etc.

Most ads also reflected the people's cultural and social values such as beauty, youth, femininity and pleasure Sells and Gonzales (2010) etc.

Plant with Mavuno...; Gesima Dairy

Milk Bar; Rhino Cement... " Kisii Youth Friendly...; Solace Arcade...; Betty...) etc

Other ads were monolingual such as Revolution and Adhiambo Sianda; bilingual, as in Mapambano shop and Bike Bokie Traders; and some multilingual to reflect diversity, for example, Kwana Nainche Daima Top Life Hotel.

## **Content**

The content of each advert is depended on the kind of product being advertised. Each ad reflected that interpretation was required to be done at two levels 1) the surface level( images, words, colours) and the implied level- the deep meaning signified by the linguistic properties, El-daly (2011).

The common linguistic features were: (Also see, appendix, table 1.), The Unusual spellings.

(Tea Room Old Skool "A one stop turbo filling station") etc.

Abbreviations (Bike Bokie traders; Nakumatt...) etc. Acronyms



(KWFT... Banking on Women; ASK Show...) etc. Repetition (Kisii VCT Centre...; African Inland Church...) etc. Use of action verbs (imperatives) (Arise and Shine...;... Lala salama.) etc. Use of personal pronouns (... Yes, We want...; We are „Kuku“...) etc. Use of gradable adjectives (superlatives and hyperbole) e.g. ... pay less; get more...; ...Strong, durable, bright) etc. Use of simple sentence or phrase structure (Alcatel: onetuoch; Building Africa) Parallelism (Tusker – Makes Equal Has No Equal). Unusual punctuations i.e. use of full stops (UAP Insurance.Better.Simple.Life.) and Use of names that point at origins, great events, popular personalities etc. (St. Charles Lwanga Ichuni Girls...; Pajuu Communications...; Magic Obama Pop... etc) Leech (1966) Lapanska (2006).

## **Conclusion**

It was discovered that context determines largely how the reader will interpret the information on the basis of presuppositions that arise, by filling in the ellipses, second guessing the advertiser's intention, through schema and background knowledge. The ads clearly showed that in every utterance there can be existential, factive, non-factive, structural and counterfactual presuppositions Yule (1996). There also exists presupposition triggers created by certain lexical items or linguistic constructions.

In ads presupposition helps to draw comparisons between advertised goods without raising serious legal crises as well as persuades potential buyers Lam (2009). Through presupposition we are able to establish an existence of objects, cultural behaviors, even when the ad is short and which makes it memorable without explanation.

It was found out that every ad exists within a social and culturally structured framework and communication is enhanced on the basis of a reader's knowledge and experiences. Every ad assumes a public



context every time it's put on display even if the message could be informal or private.

The relevance of an ad is always established according to a reader's set of beliefs and assumptions. The linguistic style adopted helps in communication of the intended message. Every ad raises both favourable and unfavourable contextual effects and implications in spite of the length of the text Byrne (1992). Several information can also be realized in an ad ranging from manifest information (description of product), environment (the background or origin of product), factive (factual attributes of the product), reminder (the use of repetition to emphasize the message) or incidental (some information that cannot be relevant to the consumer). RT assessment also proved that not all ads had clear referents; in some cases they were simply implied. Other RT aspects such as anticipatory hypothesis, phonetic effects and length of text were manifested in some of the ads.

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