

PRAGMATIC FUNCTIONS OF FOREGROUNDING IN ADVERTISING DISCOURSE

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Abstract. *This article explores the pragmatic functions of foregrounding in advertising discourse. Drawing from stylistic and pragmatic theories, it examines how linguistic deviation and parallelism are employed in advertisements to attract consumer attention, enhance memorability, establish brand identity, and influence decision-making. Through the analysis of selected commercial texts and slogans, the study reveals that foregrounding not only serves aesthetic purposes but also plays a strategic role in persuasive communication. The findings contribute to a deeper understanding of how language is manipulated to achieve specific communicative goals in the commercial domain.*

Keywords: *foregrounding, advertising discourse, pragmatics, deviation, parallelism, persuasion, consumer behavior, stylistics.*

In the dynamic world of commercial communication, advertising stands out as a domain where language is deliberately crafted to persuade, inform, and influence the behavior of target audiences. Among the various stylistic techniques utilized in advertising discourse, foregrounding plays a significant role in shaping message reception and interpretation. Originally rooted in literary stylistics, the concept of foregrounding has found increasing relevance in non-literary texts, including advertisements, due to its powerful capacity to disrupt linguistic expectations and capture attention.

Foregrounding refers to the technique of making certain elements of a text more salient than others through linguistic deviation or the use of unexpected structures. It may manifest as violations of grammatical norms, inventive vocabulary, or unusual sound patterns, and is often intended to engage the reader or viewer in a deeper cognitive or emotional processing of the message.

Foregrounding, as a concept, was first introduced by members of the Prague Linguistic Circle, particularly Jan Mukarovsky, who defined it as the deviation from the norms of ordinary language to achieve aesthetic effects. In literary texts, foregrounding serves to defamiliarize the familiar, drawing the reader's attention to the language itself rather than

simply the content. This concept has since been extended to non-literary domains such as advertising, where attention and memorability are key.

Later stylisticians, such as Geoffrey Leech, further classified foregrounding into two main types:

Deviation: This occurs when linguistic elements deviate from the norms of everyday language. It includes:

Lexical deviation (e.g., neologisms)

Grammatical deviation (e.g., unorthodox syntax)

Phonological deviation (e.g., unusual rhyme schemes)

Graphological deviation (e.g., creative typography or punctuation)

Parallelism: This refers to the repetition of similar structures, which creates a rhythm or emphasis, enhancing the processing and retention of information.

Foregrounding in advertising, therefore, functions to highlight certain linguistic forms, thereby increasing their cognitive prominence and potential impact on the audience.

Foregrounding in advertising manifests through various forms of linguistic and visual deviation or repetition that depart from standard language norms. These deviations are not arbitrary; they are carefully designed to enhance communicative impact by attracting attention, emphasizing key messages, and facilitating memory. In this section, we outline the major types of foregrounding commonly observed in advertising discourse.

Lexical deviation involves the intentional creation or modification of words to generate novelty and memorability. This may include coinages, neologisms, brand-specific language, or unconventional word choices.

Examples:

“Redbull gives you wiiings” – The misspelling of “wings” is an example of lexical deviation, which also functions as a form of trademarking.

“Snackalicious” – A blend of “snack” and “delicious,” this coined word appeals both semantically and phonetically.

Lexical deviation encourages brand differentiation and consumer engagement by offering a fresh linguistic experience.

Grammatical Deviation. Grammatical deviation involves the intentional violation of syntactic norms. Advertisements may feature sentence fragments, non-standard word orders, or deliberate grammatical errors to create emphasis or a conversational tone.

Examples:

“Think different” (Apple) – This slogan breaks standard English rules (it should be “Think differently”), but the deviation makes it more impactful and memorable.

“Because you're worth it” (L'Oréal) – The fragment structure suggests intimacy and emotional resonance, foregrounding the brand's value proposition.

Grammatical deviation often evokes an informal, personal tone, enhancing the perceived relevance of the message.

Phonological Foregrounding. Phonological foregrounding uses sound patterns such as rhyme, alliteration, assonance, and rhythm to make slogans catchy and memorable.

Examples:

“Snap! Crackle! Pop!” (Rice Krispies) – Alliteration and onomatopoeia make the slogan sound dynamic and child-friendly.

“Maybe she's born with it. Maybe it's Maybelline.” – The repetition and rhythm create balance and harmony, aiding recall.

These auditory features enhance aesthetic appeal and support brand retention.

Graphological Foregrounding. Graphological foregrounding refers to the visual presentation of language, including font choices, color schemes, punctuation, and layout that deviate from conventional written language.

Examples:

Unusual use of capitalization or punctuation: “got milk?” – The lowercase lettering contributes to a casual, friendly tone.

Bold or color-highlighted keywords in posters or digital ads serve to direct attention and create hierarchy.

Graphological techniques often reinforce brand identity and draw visual focus to persuasive cues.

Foregrounding in advertising is not merely ornamental – it fulfills distinct pragmatic functions that enhance communication effectiveness. Through strategic use of deviation and parallelism, advertisers manage to attract attention, convey implicit meanings, create emotional resonance, and influence consumer behavior.

Conclusion. Foregrounding serves as a powerful linguistic and stylistic tool in advertising discourse, fulfilling a range of pragmatic functions essential for effective communication. By deviating from linguistic norms or emphasizing certain patterns through repetition, advertisers draw attention, enhance memorability, and evoke emotional and cognitive engagement. These strategies not only improve the aesthetic and persuasive power of advertisements but also shape consumer perception and brand identity.

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