

TYPES OF SEMANTIC PRESUPPOSITION CONSTRUCTIONS IN RUSSIAN PRINT ADVERTISING

Abstract

In print advertising, presuppositions are an important component of the overall message. This dissertation provides a semantic approach to the investigation of presuppositional constructions in Russian print advertisements. This approach offers a new perspective on the linguistic analysis of advertisements also in terms of logic and textology.

The starting point is that slogans represent a specific type of text, generally consisting of one sentence. They have the distinctive function of manipulation. Presupposition as a means of expressing implicit meaning is an inevitable technique used for linguistic manipulation.

One of the most important topics both in pragmatics and semantics is presupposition. The semantic definition of presupposition given by Ferenc Kiefer (1983) offered an opportunity for the analysis. Linguists have identified a great many presuppositional phenomena. They are usually described in terms of 'presupposition triggers' – constructions or lexical items whose presence generates a presuppositional requirement. Presupposition triggers come from many sources. Although presupposition is a universal phenomenon, it has specific grammatical features in different languages, as it does in the Russian language. The most common 'presupposition triggers' (like inchoative, ingressive, factive verbs etc) in Russian print advertisements are analysed in the dissertation.

The author also tries to reconstruct presuppositions in advertisements containing a concessive clause or an argumentative structure, relying on Imre Békési's interpretational model of double syllogism and cause and effect chains in argumentation. These concepts enable us to give a formalised interpretation of the implicit meaning expressed by presuppositions in advertisements with oppositional structures.

Lexical ellipsis is a means of compression in advertising and reflects the tendency towards manipulation through the least amount of explicit information. In the dissertation there is an attempt to catch the relationship between presupposition and lexical ellipsis. In elliptical sentences semantic presupposition seems to play an important part in filling the gap in information without context or situation, i. e. on the basis of the construction as a whole. This way, lexical ellipsis in slogans is the conveyor of implicit information that induces presupposition.

A corpus of over 1,000 Russian print advertisements (collected from 1979 till present) was used for testing the formal descriptions of semantic presupposition constructions.