

CONTRASTIVE INTERCULTURAL AND PRAGMALINGUISTIC ANALYSIS OF MILITARY RECRUITMENT TELEVISION ADVERTISEMENTS

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Abstract: *In harsh times of conflict and war, every global society finds itself in great danger. How can a nation, in desperate need of help, of men to fight for a national cause, convince its citizens to enroll in the military? Besides the obvious physical capabilities of their recruits, common life principles and cultural and/or national values are, as well, highly necessary. These include: feeling of solidarity, cohesion, national pride, honour and the will to maintain security. The domain of publicity generally contains a specialised advertising language, making use of certain linguistical, stylistic and pragmatical instruments. Such instruments are meant to captivate the public attention, maintain their interest throughout the publicity advertisement and prior to the transmission of a certain message, to try to convince people to buy a certain product or, in this case, to engage in military service. The purpose of my research is to analyse certain military advertisements from an intercultural and pragmalinguistic perspective, thus comparing English advertisements of military recruitment with German advertisements from the “Bundeswehr” (engl. the German Armed Forces).*

Keywords: *publicity; television advertisements; intercultural communication; pragmalinguistics*

1. INTRODUCTION

“Interculturality”, as well as “Intercultural Communication” or “Intercultural Competence” are current scientific disciplines that are of increasing importance in the process of globalization. At the same time, they represent a component of the public conversation within the framework of the internationalization of cultural spaces and societies. These disciplines have developed most particularly in the U.S., Canada and Europe (Lüsebrink, 2005:3). Having these key concepts in mind, one might ask himself: *what role does interculturality play in military advertisements, showed on television?* During such difficult periods of conflict or war between nations, every country involved in warfare seeks the help and support of its citizens. Thus, the Armed Forces create television and/or media advertisements, using certain cultural and pragmalinguistic instruments, in order to persuade the population to offer its physical and emotional support to the military.

2. PUBLICITY AND THE STRUCTURE OF TELEVISION ADVERTISEMENTS

The term “television advertisement” or “commercial” refers to a short film, presented on

television, for the purpose of advertising (Duden Online). This type of advertisement is designed in such way, that its three sign systems of language, image, music and noise (germ. “Multikodalität”) are presented on a visual and auditory level (engl. “multimodality”, germ. “Multimodalität”) (Stöckl, 2004:242). This means that not only is the *functional interpretation* (germ. “funktionale Interpretation”) (Janich, 2013:88-89) of the TV advertisement necessary, but also the fact that the advertisement is analyzed from the perspective of a *formal distinction* (germ. “formale Unterscheidung”) (Janich, 2013:86-88) and from the *structural typology of the advertisement* (germ. “Gattungstypologie”) (Janich, 2013:90-91). Furthermore the linguistic elements are crucial in attempting to persuade the general public to buy a certain product or to choose a certain service that is being advertised, together with the effect that the images, music and sounds have before paying close attention to the advertising message and its intercultural aspects which may appear.

2.1 In the structural analysis of a television advertisement the category defined by Berger (2008) is named, *formal distinction*. In this category, TV advertisements are characterized by their multimodality, for example, they work in visual and auditory mode, compared to advertisements which

are presented only visually or radio advertisements that are presented only acoustically. Due to this multimodal type of advertisement, commercials differ in terms of different forms of representation of the linguistic code (Berger 2008: 1) Spoken text: It is further divided into *off-sequences* (no speaker visible) and *on-sequences* (speaker visible).

a) *Off-sequences*: the viewer hears a comment from someone or something spoken in the commercial, which follows the written text of the product name or slogan. One must pay attention, not only to the choice of words or sentence structure, but also to the volume, intonation, use of a dialect or voice.

b) *On-sequences*: the viewer sees the speaker, but it depends on the television commercial whether the speaker is clearly addressing the public, if he is having a conversation with a partner in the advertisement, or whether he is having a monologue.

2) Sung Text: It is similar to the spoken text, in the form of an acoustic mode and an auditory perception. The text differs in the following ways (Behren 1996:67):

a) Jingle: this is in the form of a sung slogan, but it can also appear without lyrics, just as the melody of a TV commercial, which is easily recognizable.

b) Advertising song: usually all or almost all of the advertising text is sung. But it's not the same with the independent songs that are still played or instrumentalized during the TV advertisement. Nevertheless, the advertising song is not used that often anymore.

3) Written Text: The written text in a television commercial is classified the same as the ad text with primary, secondary and tertiary text. The primary text contains the product or service names and slogans at the end of the TV commercial, the secondary text relates to what is written on the packaging, and the tertiary text has to do with the image and editing sequence of the commercial. The text is only presented visually, in this case.

Images also play a major role in television commercials because they simplify the process of perceiving an advertising message on a visual level. It is beneficial, because it sets a dynamic relationship with the help of images. It has been proven in many psychology advertisement-studies that images attract public attention faster and more effectively than simple, publicity texts (Janich 2005:60). Visual information is also able to arouse emotions by visualising the plot and the actors' gestures, as well as their facial expressions.

On the auditory level, noises and music also apply, alongside spoken or sung texts. According to

Stöckl (2007b:183), the music can be analyzed according to its melody, harmony, tempo, dynamics and timbre, while the noises can be analyzed according to their real/fictitious character, pitch, duration/intensity. However, the function of the music in the television commercial can be analysed through its primary, secondary or tertiary elements: the primary music accompanies the promotional song or jingle and is played in the foreground; the secondary music is played by the advertised product itself, such as a CD player, and the tertiary is music played in the background to create a certain atmosphere.

2.2 Functional interpretation. Considering the functional interpretation of a TV commercial, the perception of the advertising message is of great importance. It is much more difficult to create a commercial than a billboard because, for example, a commercial lasts a few seconds or minutes, while a billboard can be read multiple times. Therefore, it is a bigger challenge for the advertiser to attract the attention of the TV viewers. Likewise, commercials are made with the role of being authentic, believable, interesting and visually attractive to ensure that television viewers will definitely want to buy the advertised product.

The choice of music and noises have specific functions, according to Stöckl (2007:195-197), which are not only the same for TV commercials, but also partly for radio commercials:

1. Music: a) Structuring of the advertising content (creating a certain rhythm); b) Illustration of what is shown (in the TV advertisement) or presentation of what is heard (in the radio advertisement); c) Demonstration of the product qualities and properties; d) Creation of an atmosphere to differentiate products through its own brand identity, e) Attention-seeking function

2. Noises: a) Presentation of the plot location/action in the commercial (tertiary noises); b) Illustration/demonstration of product features and their effectiveness to be credible as advertisers (secondary sounds); c) Text structuring: sounds related to the linguistic sub-texts

3. The product presentation is a basic typology, with televised advertisements differing from one another in shape and length (Janich, 2013: 90):

a) The classic commercial (15-40 seconds) that appears between or within a programme.

b) TV sponsorship (germ. "die Sponsor-Nennung"), where the sponsors are mentioned at the beginning of a programme and/or after commercial breaks.

c) Overlays (germ. “die Laufbandwerbung”) are short advertisements, for several seconds, which appear during a show, below or above the screen to present certain advertising products or shows which will start afterwards.

d) Infomercials that last longer than a normal commercial, usually for about 30 minutes, with the purpose of persuading viewers to call the company that promotes the product or service.

From the perspective of a product presentation, there is a certain ranking of commercials, according to Janich (2013:90-91): The following product presentations are:

a) Product commercials (germ. “Produktwerbe spots”): the presentation of the product is the most important one. The plot is in the background, is not generally important and the text appears as an *off-sequence*.

b) Presenter commercials (germ. “Presentator spots”): the product is connected to a visible speaker who is either the “product provider/user”. It can be voiceover and demonstration of product use in *on-sequence* but speechless or even appears as an interview with the customers of that product.

c) Everyday-commercials (germ. “Alltagswerbe spots”): the product is presented as a fictional plot that tries to illustrate the everyday-life. The communication sequence of the *on speaker* is important so that the television viewer can imagine himself in such a real situation. Hence, the commercial will be believable in the public eye.

d) Lifestyle commercials (germ. “Lebensstil spots”): the advertisers focus on the staged but seemingly real plot situation or the realistic lifestyle, in which the product supports this lifestyle.

e) Artistic film commercials (germ. “Kunstfilmsspots”): These commercials do not usually contain publicity texts, but are more associated with the company's slogan or product name. This means that the TV viewer mostly remembers the story of that advertisement and seldom knows anything about the product or which brand it belongs to.

2.3 The pragmalinguistic role of television advertisements is greatly influenced by the use of a certain language, of an invented or staged, linguistic form, that functions with a specific purpose, according to Baumgart (1992:34). This specific type of language is strongly connected to the everyday language, in which new words or phrases are created due to a marketing purpose, wanting to catch the interest of the general public through creativity, authenticity and credibility. The advertisement language is extremely persuasive,

because every advertisement company is driven by a strong desire and intention to promote its message, products or services and therefore, the overall presentation of the commercial plays a decisive role in its marketing strategy. The use of certain linguistic instruments, such as “rhyme, alliteration, adjectives, adverbs, absolute comparatives or superlatives, foreign word-formations” (Jagetsberger, 1998:24), enable viewers to focus their entire attention to the commercial and perceive the advertised product or service in a desirable way.

3. CONCEPT OF INTERCULTURAL COMMUNICATION

Intercultural communication refers to the interpersonal, on-site, face-to-face interaction between people of different nationalities, ethnic groups or with distinct cultural backgrounds. According to Hinnenkamp (1994:5), intercultural communication consists of verbal, nonverbal, and paraverbal forms of interaction. In addition, the interaction is structured as a conversation, which means that at least two people participate in the conversation. Litters (1995:20) would like to point out the following: “When there is interpersonal communication between members of different cultural groups, this interaction can be referred to as intercultural communication.”

An extremely important aspect is the fact that it is not the contact between certain nationalities or ethnic groups that are the subject of research analysis for intercultural communication, but instead the “contact between people”. In my contrastive analysis of military recruitment television commercials, the intercultural aspect is taken into account, as it is important to discover other cultural systems, other ways of thinking and taking action in warfare situations and by what kind of values each nation is guided by in times of military hardships or security problems.

The types of encounters between people from different cultural spheres, which refers to the term “intercultural communication”, include verbal communication, non-verbal and paraverbal communication, which also play important roles. Although the analysis of military advertisements which I have undergone does not contain an actual form of interaction between actors that represent people of cultural backgrounds, there is an intercultural contrast between the two nations, Germany and the U.S., which make use of certain communicative elements, for example, some verbal communication, but mostly nonverbal, paraverbal and persuasive techniques, in order to

gain the support and involvement of its citizens in the U.S. Army, respectively in the German *Bundeswehr*, but also present opposing, cultural aspects which refer to the *mental culture* (germ. “die mentale Kultur”) (Emrich, 2009:44): the general values, moral principles, mentalities that define a certain culture and influence the behaviour of that certain population. These internalized core characteristics of a society are typical, national characteristics of a culture that each citizen has learned from a young age until adulthood, in order to be integrated into society.

4. RESULTS

4.1 The results of the intercultural and pragmalinguistic analysis of military recruitment commercials. The chosen TV advertisements that are part of the domain of military warfare and military recruitment, include two distinct, foreign commercials for civilian recruitment in the U.S. Army and in the German Armed Forces (“Bundeswehr”). The American advertisement from 2009, which can also be found on the Youtube platform (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=N0f_ZUgqvxE&t=2s), features one of the known, military infantry units of the U.S. Specialized Operation Forces. The advertisement is a typical, classic commercial that lasts 30 seconds, includes a spoken text which is characterised by a *On-sequence*, because the speaker is not visible, but it is clearly addressing the audience. The images depict scenes of war, thus may arouse feelings of tension or fear, combined with sounds of gunshots and severe bombings, which create an overall effect of insecurity and encourage the public audience to engage somehow in the national battle against foreign danger.

Based on the functional interpretation of this advertisement, the mysterious music and violent sounds of ammunition being fired, together with the help of imagery, illustrate the horrific battle scenes in which soldiers must fight courageously. The images show the fact that the soldiers are brave and have the courage to strike back and protect their territory. This imagery seeks the attention of the audience, which is combined with a short message, addressing the viewers about the fact that “Warriors [are] wanted” (0:23) and the advertisers try to persuade the audience, using a rhetorical question, “Do you have what it takes?” (0:25), if yes, men are encouraged to visit their military website and enroll in the army.

From the perspective of structural typology of the commercial, it is rather an example of an

artistic film commercial, because only two phrases are included in the entire advertisement and it concentrates on the plot of the commercial, as well as on the intention of promoting their military enrolment in the Specialized Armed Unit. The advertisement message is transmitted by the speaker verbally, but as mentioned before, there is some written text in the commercial. The soldiers, present in the commercial interact at one point verbally, but mostly through hand gestures to indicate the direction in which they should advance in the enemy territory and with the help of paraverbal elements that accompany the very few words spoken, by speaking loudly, clearly and with a higher tone of voice.

Considering the cultural aspects that appear in this short commercial, the speaker addresses the audience directly, by saying “WE fight for country, WE fight for honor...” (0:14-0:18) and includes the public in the general description of their nation’s identity, defined by the following core values that represent their *mental culture* and are also listed in their online, enrolment description in the military unit: “loyalty, duty, respect, honor, etc.” (<https://www.goarmy.com/explore-the-army/about.html>). These values and principles actually determine the American sense of national pride and honor that is observable everywhere in the U.S.

On the other hand, the German TV advertisement, also from 2009, is an example of a classical commercial, even though it lasts with 10 seconds more than the previous one and portrays different terrestrial, marine, aviatic missions of the German Armed Forces (“Bundeswehr”) (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sA0kDMZNTM&t=1s>). The nonverbal, written text includes only a primary text with one of the slogans from the *Bundeswehr*, shown at the end of the advertisement, “Alles wir. Alles hier” (0:45-0:50) and the tertiary text that is connected to the sequence of the plot, combined with the images which are illustrated. The imagery role is to arouse a sense of team spirit of solidarity, thus persuading the audience to support their national cause and join the Armed Forces. The song which accompanies the visual information, written and composed by Vance Westlake, Chris Jefferson Ng. and Charlie Tenku (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=q4B46TrAnBA&list=OLAK5uy_n-vDyEP4Gh3JxfhELuPXYGfAGDXxzG5nI&index=2), contains warrior beats that best suit the theme of this commercial: the battlefield and military operations.

Evaluating the functional interpretation of this advertisement, the music supports and illustrates the message and the visual information being

shown. Its role is to demonstrate the bravery and heroism of the German soldiers and catches the attention, as well as interest of the audience. From the perspective of product presentation, it similarly deals with an artistic type of film commercial, because there are no publicity texts, rather words to describe the military operation which is being conducted: a loud (“laut”) (0:04) vs. silent (“leise”) (0:06) operation, an indoor (“drinnen”) (0:10) vs. outdoor (“draußen”) (0:12), etc. Furthermore, the subject name (*Bundeswehr*) appears only at the end of the advertisement, as well as the slogan, “Alles wir. Alles hier” (germ, “Us all. Hier all”) (0:45-0:50), while the audience is focused on the presentation of the advertisement.

Based on the analysis of the cultural aspects, present in this TV commercial, the military core values are bound to the German life principles of honor, respect and bravery, which can also be observed in the aforementioned commercial. Even though the German Armed Forces exist for more than 60 years, the *Bundeswehr* clearly states that the military unit is currently characterised by a strong sense of tradition and cohesion, but this was not the case in the past, during the reign of the Hitler regime in the Third Reich:

Das Dritte Reich kann keine Tradition in der Bundeswehr begründen. Auch die Wehrmacht, als Instrument dieses Terrorregimes, war in Verbrechen während des Zweiten Weltkriegs verstrickt. Dies gilt für alle Truppenverbände, Teilstreitkräfte, die Militärverwaltung und den Rüstungsbereich. (engl. „The Third Reich cannot establish any tradition in the Bundeswehr. The Wehrmacht, as an instrument of this terror regime, was also involved in crimes during the Second World War. This applies to all troop formations, branches of the armed forces, the military administration and the armaments sector.”) (<https://www.bundeswehr.de/de/ueber-die-bundeswehr/selbstverstaendnis-bundeswehr/tradition-bundeswehr>).

4. CONCLUSIONS

The specific value system characterizes a certain culture, and this usually creates cultural nuances that can be distinguished from other cultures. In the case of such intercultural and pragmalinguistic analysis of TV military advertisements, based on the theme of security culture, the overall mentality of warfare and military recruitment, all commercials share

common principles and traits that they wish to transmit to the public audience: loyalty, solidarity and honor. Such values, most of the times, define certain cultures and they act as guiding instruments to the respective society. As methods of persuasion and encouragement for its citizens to undergo military service, it is observable that advertisers have combined pragmalinguistic and social-cultural elements with visual and auditory information, in order to generate awareness for the need of military support and encourage men to fight for a national cause in the Armed Forces. The authors take full responsibility for the contents and scientific correctness of the paper. The selection of the texts to include depend on the result of the peer review process announced.

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