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## THE ROLE OF MULTIMODAL MEANS IN EXPRESSING PROHIBITION

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The article deals with the study of verbal and non-verbal means' interaction actualising the speech acts of prohibition communicated in the spheres of publishing and advertising, as the ones aimed at engaging readers or consumers by making use of catching slogans and powerful graphic means. To define the specificity of techniques used to influence the recipients, the author singles them out into two main types: verbal (language means that represent the concept of prohibition), and visual (non-textual content of a message which consists of such aspects as graphic images, colour, and font). The study results were based on the analysis of 53 front covers of the British journal "The Economist" as well as the ads that contain the idea of prohibition. By way of using the outlined language means' interaction, it has been found out that actualisation of prohibitive speech acts in advertising and publishing is ensured by the predominance of verbal means that contain the formula do + not + verb serving as a straightforward appeal to the recipient. The verbal message of prohibition is supplemented by colourful images, pictures, multimodal lexical units, or symbols which draw people's attention to the encoded problem. In this case the prominence is given to colour as a dominant constituent part that not only accentuates the message visibility in the advertisement in the first place, but also helps convey its particular deep meaning, like a set of values of a country or a variety of common associations that it traditionally brings up in different cultures. Such a characteristics can be explained by a concise form of an advertisement and consequently the creators' purpose to influence the recipient within a short period of time. Thus, the decoding of such multimodal images requires orientation in the general notions the senders refer to, as well as the time or period when it was released since extra-linguistic factors carry additional semantic loading. In view of this, the author concludes that the application of the detailed description of instrumentality to the study of multimodal means' interaction makes it possible to present a comprehensive description of invariant patterns typical of published multimodal texts belonging to different genres.

## РОЛЬ МУЛЬТИМОДАЛЬНИХ ЗАСОБІВ У ВИРАЖЕННІ ЗАБОРОНИ

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**Ключові слова:** мовленнєві акти заборони, взаємодія мультимодальних засобів, візуальні медіа, мовна репрезентація, рекламна кампанія.

Статтю присвячено встановленню закономірностей взаємодії вербальних і невербальних засобів, що беруть участь у реалізації мовленнєвих актів заборони, вживаних у формі вербально-графічних повідомлень у сферах видавничої справи й реклами, які мають безпосередній вплив на читачів і/або споживачів завдяки своїм влучним рекламним чи соціально орієнтованим текстам, супроводжуваним комплексним набором графічних засобів. З метою визначення специфіки застосування технік впливу таких вербально-графічних повідомлень на реципієнта у праці їх було поділено на дві основні групи засобів: вербальні (мовні засоби, що транслюють власне заборону) та візуальні (графічні зображення, колір, шрифт тощо, які виражають нетекстовий (імпліцитний) зміст повідомлення). Шляхом аналізу кожного із зазначених компонентів встановлено, що заборонні мовленнєві акти, актуалізовані в рекламно-інформаційних повідомленнях, характеризуються превалюванням вербальних засобів, побудованих за формулою *do + not + дієслово*, яка і транслює пряме звернення до реципієнта. Доповненням мовного повідомлення слугують різнокольорові картинки та/або символи, функційне призначення яких полягає в миттєвому приверненні уваги реципієнтів до закодованої в ньому ідеї. За результатами виконаного аналізу встановлено, що домінуючим складником графічного зображення є колір, який не лише робить рекламу більш помітною, але й передає прихований глибокий зміст повідомлення, як-от щодо цінностей країни чи певних асоціацій, які традиційно є спільними для різних культур. Така особливість пояснюється лаконічною формою рекламного повідомлення та метою здійснення миттєвого впливу на реципієнта. У статті також акцентовано увагу на низці позамовних факторів (політична ситуація, культурні й соціальні запити, які панували на той час, період публікації реклами тощо), які несуть додаткове семантичне навантаження та здатні слугувати коректному декодуванню мультимодальних образів вираження заборони. Автор робить висновок, що опис інваріантної моделі реалізації заборони у мультимодальних повідомленнях має базуватися на результатах аналізу взаємодії вербальних і невербальних засобів та низки екстралінгвальних факторів.

**Introduction.** The present-day communication is marked by a high variety of means that take part in conveying utterance meaning. The speech acts defined by Searle [14, p. 355] play a predominant role in transferring the meaning. The illocutionary essence of directives, among which the researcher points out orders, commands, requests, permissions, pleads, prohibitions, questions, prays, presupposes attempts of various degrees to make the hearer do

something. Generally, these are marked by the use of the exclamation mark being a representative marker of the words of this class.

Adding to this, researchers also indicate that a directive speech act might have a result, which is an action desired by a speaker, and at the same time reveals the speaker's attitude towards this action [9, p. 310]. Along with that, they state the existence of speech acts not only in everyday communication,

but also in literary works. Thus, printed material containing directives are also regarded as one of the forms of speech acts representation.

In linguistics the notion of prohibition is not studied fully, since there is no unified definition of this term. Some linguists, however, tried to investigate some aspects of the notion and consequently give a definition of the concept in question.

N. Kuravska [6, p. 71] emphasises the dependence of the semantics of prohibition on the situation of influence or some generally accepted norms of morality, or the speaker's subjective ideas and principles. The basis of any prohibition is the formula – speaker X tells speaker Y what the last should not do. The execution of this act depends on the following criteria: the communicative situation, the intensity of the expression of will, the authority of the source of motivation, the attitude of the addressee towards the action, the degree of interest of the addressees in (not) performing the action.

Similarly, O. Kraynyk [5, p. 50] outlines the specificity of prohibition, stating that it is always a negation which is regarded as a reaction to a previous statement or action with the use of explicit or implicit language means. And the purpose of this speech act is to terminate the actions of the listener.

In the study focused on the pragmatic aspect of prohibitive speech acts, Nurbayan [10, p. 786] points out the significance of a three-pronged study to analysing the meaning of speech acts in general and prohibitions as parts of this system. It incorporates syntax, semantics, and pragmatics. Syntax studies the sentence structure and various relationships between language elements. Semantics deals with the interrelationship between language elements and their objects, while pragmatics analyses how, for instance, language elements are connected with the users or a situational context.

Taking aforementioned into account, it is understandable that effective communication should be reinforced by a complex interplay of several means aimed at attracting the listener's or reader's attention and creating a powerful long-lasting impression. As a result, the way of communication via the Internet, in particular journalism and advertising, has its specific style so that the content creators resort to the range of graphical techniques that facilitate the expression of a particular topic.

Considering these ideas, we have undertaken a study **aimed** at defining the specificity of interaction of verbal and non-verbal means that serve to express prohibitive speech acts in publishing and advertising spheres. The **object** of the research is prohibitive speech acts actualised in mass media. The **subject matter** of the paper comprises the set of verbal and non-verbal means whose interaction conveys prohibition. To reach the outlined aim, we have completed

the following sequence of methodological **steps**: substantiation of the linguistic status of prohibitive utterances; defining the role of multimodal means and their interplay in expressing prohibitive speech acts; description and generalisation of the main multimodal constituents that influence realisation of prohibition in mass media by way of using the Multimodal Critical Discourse Analysis. For this reason, the research **material** comprises the front covers of the articles in the British journal *The Economist* and the ads that contain the idea of prohibition having been collected from the open internet sources with the help of key words related to the process of forbidding something.

**Methodology.** The great interest in the interaction of different disciplines, like linguistics, semiotics, psychology, cultural studies and visual media, might be explained by the researchers' intention to trace the complex meaning of particular phenomena within the framework of several fields, and thus unify it [1, p. 40].

To begin with, it is necessary to define the term 'multimodality' and outline its key features. In the Oxford Reference [8] we find out that this notion implies 'the use of more than one semiotic mode in meaning-making, communication, and representation generally, as well as in a specific context.' Different forms of communication are usually referred to such modes, e.g. verbal, nonverbal and contextual communication. In the same source it is also pointed out that the awareness and, as a result, the effective use of these modalities is called multimodal literacy.

Reviewing the same notion, L. Makaruk [7, p. 138] proposes her own definition of the term in question and the vision of multimodality. According to the scholar, multimodality is interpreted as a linguistic two- or polymodal perceptual category, characterised by at least one modus. By this term, she also includes the existence of means of different nature which are the constituent parts of at least two systems used in a communicative act. Hence, it is expedient to refer speech tempo, tone, gestures, facial expressions, spatial and temporal characteristics, tactile parameters, etc. to the oral means of communication. Similarly, written communication, along with written resources, includes diverse images, colour scheme, placement of elements on the page, their sizes, text positioning, font variations, etc.

The approach to studying texts via the detailed investigation of their multimodal constituents is used widely is Multimodal Critical Discourse Analysis. Being regarded as social practice, discourse analysis incorporates the study of the following factors: language, visual images, space, and architecture [1, p. 41]. Within the framework of the aforementioned analysis the meaning and functions of the visual images are also taken into account. As for the language, Multimodal Critical Discourse Analysis

focuses on the basic lexical analysis of texts, as well as the use of metaphorical tropes in discourse. In particular, it is directed at shaping understandings of rhetorical tropes used in texts [1, p. 42]. Therefore, it seems expedient to proceed with our further research following the stipulations of the Multimodal Critical Discourse Analysis.

**Results and discussions.** The study results are based on the analysis of the most pronounced front covers of the journal *The Economist* that convey prohibitive narration, whose total number amounts to 53 images published within the period of 2006–2023.

The first front cover (see Fig. 1) dates back to February 25th, 2012, the year when Argentina suffered a great inflation rate, while the official statistics ran contrary to the actual data. As the international economic community did not believe the fact of the annual increase in consumer prices in the country, it caused the issue to become publicised [15].

The image the journal used offers a complex interplay of means that encode a multimodal metaphor expressing a prohibition. The set of means that take part in realisation of the depicted concept comprises the following:

a) verbal: the notion of prohibition is expressed with the help of a negative imperative *Don't lie to me, Argentina*. The element that reinforces the prohibitive construction is an object pronoun “Me” that entails that such economic problems touch every individual personally rather than the specific group of people. But in general, this sentence does not reveal the whole problem. Thus, it requires further steps for deciphering. The inscription of the article that we see in the next sentence is an indirect question “Why we are removing a figure from our indicators page”,



Figure 1. Front cover ‘Don’t lie to me, Argentina’ of the journal “The Economist”

which, in its turn, implies that the problem is with the data and some information being withdrawn;

b) visual: the front cover itself is a photo of a man wearing a hat and smoking a cigarette, like a mobster from the first sight. He is giving a suspicious look, raising his eyebrow and showing indifference towards everything that’s going on around. And the key element of the image is a long red nose that refers to a famous children’s story about Pinocchio written by Carlo Collodi [12]. The main character’s nose grows as he tells lies and surprisingly it has no limits, giving red flush and in such a way giving the man away. The length of the nose is also a significant marker of the current situation – someone is lying too much and probably the situation is about to be aggravated.

c) colour: the colour that draws the most attention is red that in this picture perfectly complements the red one, creating a mysterious foreground that immediately attracts the readers’ attention.

Overall, the front cover shows the speech act of prohibition encoded into the image of a man who represents the whole country not being trusted and to whom the prohibition is directed.

The second front cover (Fig. 2) dates back to January 21st, 2010, when after the Senate election in Massachusetts, the question of its impact on Barack Obama arose. The electorate that already lost the faith in its leader now opposes the power of big government [17].

The image that reinforces the idea of the leading article reveals a number of symbols emphasising the people’s disagreement with the size and effectiveness



Figure 2. Front cover ‘Stop!’ of the journal “The Economist”

of the government. Among these symbols we might indicate the most prominent ones as follows:

a) in the first place it is the verbal means: verbal expression of prohibition is carried out using the imperative exclamatory sentence "Stop!", meaning "don't do it". This is a kind of message to the authorities that the sort of actions taken do not satisfy the country's population at all. The prohibition is supplemented by a brief explanation of the article title.

b) font: the idea of further existence and functioning of the government in its current state is written in bold black letters, intensified by an exclamation mark, adding meaning to the message. The subtitle, however, is red, giving the text an exceptional prominence and highlighting the significance of the issue.

c) visually the concept of big government is conveyed through the image of a leviathan, i.e. a gigantic powerful monster in Jewish mythology [18] with envious eyes, devouring a man.

To recap, the front cover illustrates the article being focused on the problem of economy, expenses and the government that constantly grows but does not show much effectiveness in solving urgent social and economic issues.

One more powerful example of expressing prohibition via the interaction of lexical and graphical means is the front cover of *The Economist* (Fig. 3) that dates back to December 13th, 2006 [16].

Here we may trace a powerful combination of graphic and lexical images. Verbally, the prohibition

is expressed with the cautionary sentence "Don't mess with Russia", while the main semantic load is carried by the graphic image of Putin with a pistol for refuelling. The point is that the president of the Russian Federation threatens to stop or raise sky-high prices for the supply of gas and petroleum products, pressing social problems.

The idea of the front cover conveys a clear threat and a kind of energy abuse that Russia poses in the word. Using its energy sources as a lever of political influence, the country constantly undermines its status of a reliable partner [16] that is expressed through the following aspects:

a) verbal: in this example prohibition is also expressed by a typical lexical construction: a negative imperative 'don't' plus verb (infinitive). The sentence is not finished with an exclamation mark, but at the same time the implication can be traced via a font that is bold, emphasising each word and thus giving the phrase an exceptional significance.

b) visual: while the main semantic load is carried by the graphic image of Putin with a pistol for refuelling, the idea is that he threatens the world with gas and petroleum products supply issues. The background is the Russian flag, which is a symbol of the country's values. However, by threatening the neighbouring countries to cut off the supplies Russia loses trust.

c) colour: interestingly, the refuelling pistol in the hands of the Russian President is depicted on the part of the flag that is red. This colour like no other draws the attention and carries a kind of warning, signalling about a certain danger or caution [11]. On the contrary, the main message is written on the blue background, symbolising loyalty, and trust. But, in fact, it carries quite an opposite effect. The country with its strong belief of dominance in the world loses the influence and trust among the allies.

Thus, the front cover reveals a deep insight into the set of multimodal means, the combination of which exposes the hidden meaning conveyed through words as well as colours. In this case, it presents the leader who: prohibits some undesired actions in relation to his country; threatens the partners with the oil and gas supply in case of some conflicts with Russia; being depicted at the background the Russian flag, it shows strong ethics of a culture he represents.

As we may see, the key role in expressing prohibitions is carried out mainly by verbal means. The sphere of advertising, however, displays prohibitions in different ways, sometimes manipulating people's preferences and making them unintentionally buy some goods or services. Differing from usual information messages, advertising material is mainly aimed at persuading people to purchase products. In particular, the advertisement should have a definite slogan easy to memorise, and offer a product so



**Figure 3. Front cover 'Don't mess with Russia' of the journal "The Economist"**

attractively that it encourages the consumer to perform or not to perform certain actions [19, p. 223].

Analysing this, it is clear that the person that is a target audience might encounter, willingly or unwillingly, various types of advertisements, the ones that force taking actions and those that prevent from something. With regard to both types mentioned, it becomes compelling how speech acts of prohibition take part in displaying the encoded advertising messages.

The evident example of a forbidding advertisement (Fig. 4) gives an instance of a social ad that on the one hand forces people to quit smoking, on the other hand prevents from such a bad habit, saying that smoking causes diseases and enumerating a few of those that might be faced with.

The advertisement conveys a clear message about a danger that smoking poses. For this purpose, the author uses a clear visual image that warns of possible outcomes, exposed via a set of the following means aimed at notifying the society about detrimental effects on the health:

a) colour: the first thing that makes this advertisement peculiar is the background that is red. It creates the feeling of some kind of a menace and like no other colour draws our attention, causes us to take action and radiates powerful energy. Taking this into account, the choice of font colours used in the message immaculately develops the general idea, intelligently divided into three semantic groups to which a particular colour corresponds. Thus, the relation between a single stick and the diseases



Figure 4. An example of a social advertisement

it is likely to cause is written in yellow, while the forbidding messages are white and black.

b) visual: this aspect plays a key role in this example, showing a man trying to reach the cigarette pack with a stick already pulled out from the pack and gently offered by someone. However, on its way to fulfil the planned, man's hand is hampered by a verbal impediment, in particular by the word *smoking* that literally becomes a barrier, showing there is still some time to ponder over continuing or quitting this bad habit.

c) verbal: the main text of the advertising message is to appeal to smokers by preventing them from this habit, prohibiting this action with an imperative construction *stop smoking* that is written in white. Though this phrase seems to be powerful enough, the author uses an additional one: *don't smoke that causes disease* written below in black, in such a way intensifying the piece of information. And as the logical summary of the advertisement, we see the text in yellow in the middle and at the bottom of the page. It says *stick* in the central part of the poster and a list of possible diseases and when they might appear when a person continues smoking. Comparing the font used in all three groups, there are bold thick letters for the main prohibition and the word *stick* that, in its turn, carries an exceptional semantic load, being the main reason for health problems, and smaller letters for the rest of the text. Interestingly, the text may be divided into three parts in another way, depending on the way the recipient prefers: above the man's hand, below the man's hand and the conclusion at the bottom. In this case we have two prohibitive sentences that differ from the ones we define taking into account the text colour. Thus, the first prohibition says *stop*, while the second – *don't smoke that stick*.

Overall, this advertisement presents a persuasive message, the idea of which implies saving people's health by prohibiting such a habit as smoking. The colourful complement completes the message, urging about real danger.

The next examples of advertisements (Fig. 5 and Fig. 6) that contain prohibitive speech acts represent a strategy of a persuasive tactic, implying, according to the modern system of marketing, the creation of needs and the corresponding wants that are beyond the basic necessities of life [13, p. 28].

This ad appeared on the pages of The New York Time on Black Friday on November 25, 2011 [3]. The idea of a thought-provoking message was to make people think twice before they buy new clothing, and to force them to take into consideration all the ecological issues related. It should be noted that the style of the message is exceptionally laconic and clear. From the very beginning the slogan forbids buying the jacket, raising the readers' awareness of the company's ongoing campaign.

PATAGONIA: "The Greenest Product Is The One That Already Exists"

**DON'T BUY  
THIS JACKET**



**COMMON THREADS INITIATIVE**

**REDUCE**

WE make useful gear that lasts a long time  
YOU don't buy what you don't need

**REPAIR**

WE help you repair your Patagonia gear  
YOU pledge to fix what's broken

**REUSE**

WE help find a home for Patagonia gear  
you no longer need  
YOU sell or pass it on\*

**RECYCLE**

WE will take back your Patagonia gear  
that is worn out  
YOU pledge to keep your stuff out of  
the landfill and incinerator



**REIMAGINE**

TOGETHER we reimagine a world where we take  
only what nature can replace

Figure 5. Advertisement in The New York Times offered by Patagonia

For the means that take part in presenting this initiative, they complement each other. Prohibitive title in bold capital letters, consisting of an auxiliary verb *do* plus *not* plus verb *buy*, smoothly transitions

into the very image of a jacket that is not worth buying. Then the focus of attention shifts to the right where the strategies are enlisted. Here special prominence is given to every step of the campaign, being written in bold and capitals, and subjective pronouns *you*, *we* and the adverb *together* which are also made much more visible in the text as written in bold capital letters.

The advertisement we see above is aimed at popularising school among the youth [4]. The new ad campaign created by Doe Anderson seems to be too straightforward and negative, although its aim is loyal – girls and women have to learn to live independently [2]. The verbal representation of the encoded appeal consists of a slogan *Don't wait for a prince* and a brief explanation of it below the image of a faceless prince. The metaphor implied inclines girls to be critical and perceive the world as it is, and that princes live only in fairy tales. In other words, girls should be prepared for real life.

The prohibition in the title expressed according to the formula 'do + not + verb' is written in italics, as well as the next sentence below. These beautiful letters evoke the feelings of reading a real fairy tale, but the key sentence, the third one, dispels the magic, being written in a regular font as if it brings back to reality. The picture of a prince without facial features only intensifies the appeal that princes are only in a fairy world and our imagination.

All in all, the advertisement presents the message as the one which is capable of influencing the audience: prohibits girls and women from living in a non-existent world, induces them to find ways to become independent and pursue their career goals without anyone's help.



Figure 6. Advertisement released by Mercy Academy

### Conclusions and prospects for further studies.

The carried out research suggests that the creation of the notion of prohibition is primarily laid in the choice of verbal means aimed at preventing the target audience from doing something. Every front cover and advertisement analysed demonstrates their compositional integrity via the interplay of colours carrying individual semantic load, font and peculiarities of images containing a number of symbols encoded.

The application of the Multimodal Critical Discourse Analysis has shown the specificity of verbal and non-verbal means in different contexts. In advertising, for instance, the position of the text on the page and its font might carry additional load to the general message encoded. It should be noted that the exceptional prominence in the advertisements and front covers of journals is given to the images and colour, since they imply metaphorical symbols that transfer prohibitions equal to those expressed by words, expanding and supplementing them.

We believe that results presented in the paper can reveal to linguists the prospects for further research of the expression of prohibitive speech acts in oral communication. Being uttered with a specific set of verbal means and reinforced by a range of non-verbal means, prohibition can acquire different emotional-and-pragmatic potential that influencing the recipient and determining the course of communication.

A comprehensive study of various types of prohibitive utterances used in various communicative situation can also serve as the basis for the formation of training programmes for teaching students the communicative behaviour in non-cooperative speech acts.

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