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INTONATION AS A PHONOLOGICAL ESSENCE IN PRODUCT ADVERTISEMENT

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Abstract

This work looked at intonation of speakers of English language as a phonological essence in product advertisement. The work identified a key phonological feature (intonation) which pertains to the art of advertisement and the various processes involved in consumers' attitude towards the product advertised. The work looked closely into the effect of intonation and related supra-segmental or prosodic features on speech sounds as elaborated in some scholarly descriptions provided. The work took a subtle analysis in order to ascertain the level of influence which intonation has as a phonological feature, on three hundred respondents, using an already broadcast product advertisement of cooking oil called 'Panso'. On the other hand, the product (Panso Oil) consumers play important roles in the analysis by stating what persuades them to patronize the product. The random sampling method is used for the analysis which allows for distribution of questionnaires to a random

population. An analysis of the data aided in understanding the level of importance of intonation in the process of advertising, and also the level of effect which intonation has on the target consumers as a means of profit maximization. The researchers recommended that product advertisers should learn phonology and employ relevant phonological features appropriately (especially as it relates to intonation) in order to achieve success in advertisement. Second, product advertisers should make immense use of supra-segmental or prosodic features of sound in their processes of advertising.

Keywords: intonation, phonological essence, products, advertisements

INTRODUCTION

Intonation is one of the supra-segmental or prosodic features of phonology that looks closely at the rising and falling of speech sounds in a given situation. The general perspective of intonation may not necessarily look at speech sounds only, but sounds in general. The prosodic feature (Intonation) which is a natural phenomenon in persuasive speaking has become an art in recent media broadcast which is mastered by advertisers of different products worldwide. There are other prosodic features such as stress, accent, and a few more that are used in the process of product advertisement that perform similar functions and which have similar qualities as intonation. Product advertisers also use paralinguistic features such as music and mood to achieve the desired patronage of consumers.

Product advertisement is unarguably an integral part of the contemporary world. This is because many new ideas are nurtured by either individuals or groups, to improve the quality of life of the populace. The entire process of advertisement, either on television, radio or newspaper is interestingly systematic and penetrating because of the way sounds of language are manipulated to covet consumer interest on the

product and what it has to offer, and to evoke positive response or patronage of the consumers.

The systematic process of product advertisement relates most pertinently to phonology, which constitutes the first level of linguistics that pertains to language, which is a sine qua non for all advertisements. The art of advertisement largely involves language because it is actually a means of communication, which is primarily meant to inform, persuade convincingly, and initiate patronage of consumers. It is a very important business strategy which employs the use of a particular kind of language with the motive of making profit.

Many consumers of products are unaware of the extent of influence that intonation has on them as a result of its proper use by the advertisers. In the same manner, some product advertisers are unaware of the fact that the appropriate use of intonation in the process of advertising will bring about maximum patronage while some product advertisers have come to terms with the knowledge that the appropriate use of phonological features such as the eminent 'intonation' is a worthwhile venture in their world of business.

The major issue is the fact that many product advertisers ignore the creative use of intonation and other important phonological features such as accent and rhyme, therefore creating a lacuna in terms of understanding and the feelings of consumers. In Nigeria, according to Star Gist Television broadcast programme hosted by Africa Magic, 90% of product advertisers employed the use of celebrity features and music to gain patronage neglecting or giving less priority to the power of influence embedded in the inherent features of language. Product consumers have subsequently fallen in love with the peripheral aspect of advertisements, making the intended effort of advertisers which is to inform or persuade less essential. Product advertisements are done with the intention of promotion, and principally, profit maximization.

The study of phonology has been theoretically backed up by scholars in their definitions. Phonology has been broadly defined as the branch of linguistics concerned with the study of speech sounds with reference to their distribution and patterning (Lodge, 2009). Phonology, then, is the study of linguistic systems,

specifically the way in which sound represents differences in meaning in a language. Odden (2013) opines that: One way to understand the subject matter of phonology is to contrast it with other fields within linguistics. A very brief explanation is that phonology is the study of sound structures in language, which is different from the study of sentence structure (syntax), word structure (morphology), or how languages changes over time (historical linguistics). But this is insufficient. An important feature of the structure of a sentence is how it is pronounced; its sound structure. The pronunciation of a given word is also a fundamental part of the structure of a word. And certainly the principles of pronunciation in a language are subject to change over time. So phonology has a relation to numerous domains of linguistics.

Intonation is variation of spoken sounds that are not used to distinguish words; instead they are used for a range of functions such as indicating the attitudes and emotions of the speaker, signaling the difference between statements and questions, and between different types of questions, focusing attention on important elements of the spoken message and also helping to regulate conversational interaction. Product advertisers use intonation to persuade consumer patronage in most cases. The use of intonation therefore is an important aspect in product advertisement as it lures the emotions of the consumers usually to a positive response. All vocal languages use pitch pragmatically in intonation for instance, to convey surprise, irony, or to pose a question for the purpose of emphasis. Tonal languages such as Chinese and Hausa use intonation in addition to using pitch for distinguishing words.

REVIEW OF RELEVANT LITERATURE

In linguistics, prosody could be referred to as the rhythm, stress, and intonation of speech. Prosody may reflect various features of the speaker or the utterance: the emotional state of the speaker, the form of the utterance (statement, question, or command), the presence of irony or sarcasm, emphasis, contrast, and focus; or other elements of language that may not be encoded by grammar or by choice of vocabulary. Prosodic features include significant features as stress, pitch, or juncture that occur simultaneously with vowels and consonants in an utterance.

According to Bittner (2016), prosodic features are somewhat suprasegmental, they are not confined to any one segment, but occur in some higher level of an utterance. Prosody is useful for listeners as they perform sentence parsing. In phonology, prosody and supra-segmentals are seen to coincide at definitive levels. Supra-segmental or prosodic features are pertaining to or noting features of speech as stress, pitch, and length, that accompany individual consonants and vowels may extend over more than one such segmental element. In speech, supra-segmental features are a phonological property of more than one sound segment.

The effective use of language persuades consumers to patronize goods and services that are advertised. These effects are seen through the supra-segmental or prosodic features of the particular language in use. In product advertisement, paralinguistic features are also employed to help indicate the advertiser's attitude, although in the aspect of speech, this may overlap with emotions. The designed message helps to determine whether people will pay attention to it, whether they will remember it or whether it will affect what they do.

Linguistic and paralinguistic features play fundamental roles in product advertisement ranging from the figurative use of language, the use of suprasegmental features of sound, to the use of musical elements and many others. Product advertisers often use stress, rhythm, intonation and rhyme to successfully pass information across and touch the consumers. The objective of product advertisers is to maximize profit, but how they do it is also considered important. Consumers are often unaware of many things that include even ideas, so that they need to be enlightened through very effective means. These desires of product advertisers can only be achieved by the appropriate manipulation of sounds of the language in use. This can be done either consciously or unconsciously to draw the attention of consumers.

Crombie in Mannell (2007) states that identifying, locating and dividing the flow of speech, direction and the syllables on which major movements of sound occur could be referred to as prosody. Prosody is an aspect of phonology which deals with the quality, function and more than just the natural features of a particular

language. So, if product advertisements employ phonological features in their advertisement, the probability of a desired patronage will be very high because it will give the product in question the quality it requires from the perspective of the consumer because the sounds will pierce through the hearts of consumers, therefore persuading them to patronize.

METHOD

A descriptive research methodology is used for this paper. A survey and an already advertised product (Panso oil) were administered to a selected sample from a specific population identified by the Taraba State Broadcasting Service. The term 'survey' is commonly applied to a research methodology designed to collect data from a specific population, or a sample from that population, and typically utilizes a questionnaire or an interview as the survey instrument (Robson, 1993).

Surveys are used to obtain data from individuals about themselves, their house-holds, or about larger institutions (manufacturing companies). Sample surveys are an important tool for collecting and analyzing information from selected individuals as they are widely accepted as a key tool for conducting and applying basic social science and humanities research methodology (Rossi, Wright & Anderson, 1983). According to Leary (1995 in Anonymous, n.d.), there are distinct advantages in using a questionnaire versus an interview methodology: questionnaires are less expensive and easier to administer than personal interviews. Robson (1993) indicates that mailed surveys are extremely efficient at providing information in a relatively brief time period and at low cost to the researcher. For these reasons, the researchers chose a descriptive research methodology and designed a questionnaire survey instrument to assess the effcacy of product advertisement in English with reference to phonology on radio, on the Taraba State Broadcasting service and on how the advertisers use the supra-segmental features or prosodics of the English phonology to achieve their objectives.

A survey was carried out on a population of 300 people from different wards within Jalingo and Ardo-Kola Local Government Areas of Taraba State. These

wards are, A.T.C. gate/quarters (100 respondents), Nukkai (50 respondents), Road block (50 respondents), Abuja Phase 1 (50 respondents) and Magami (50 respondents). Five wards in Taraba State are identified by The Taraba State Broadcasting Service to the researchers in relation to their covered frequency. The methodology for this study is a stratified random sample of wards in Jalingo and Ardo Kola Local Government Areas of the state. Scheaffer, Mendenhall Ill, Ott, and Gerow (2011 : 115) said, "A stratified random sample is obtained by separating the population elements into non overlapping groups called strata, and then selecting a simple random sample from each stratum". Consequently, the sample in this study was disaggregated by wards to address the fact that there is wide variance in the number of radio listeners within each geographical subgroup.

The survey addresses two purposes: The first purpose was to examine the extent of radio advertisement and perceptions of the ward residents. And the second was to collect data on one advertisement presented by the Taraba State Broadcasting Service and to project the effects of the use of supra-segmental or prosodic features in English phonology. Questionnaires were administered by the researchers to each of the 300 respondents selected for the study. They were requested to complete the questionnaire and return to the researcher. Each questionnaire was accompanied by the researchers' return card that contained the researchers' phone numbers to facilitate the quick return from each respondent.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The total questionnaires administered were three hundred (300) and 244 were successfully returned, the number of questionnaires not returned was 56. Out of the 244 returned, only 230 were useful for the study, while 14 were not useful to the research. The questionnaire consisted of eight items. Each item had a peculiar number of options thus: frequently, less frequently, strongly agreed, agreed, disagreed, Yes [No and indifferent. The respondents were to give their opinions by either ticking in a bracket provided or filling a blank space. The data collected from the questionnaire cosidered two basic scores. Consumers are often unaware of

what advertisers have to offer hence they need to be enlightened through very effective means The paper presented the qualitative data collected from 'Panso oil' advertisement to indicate the effect product advertisement had on consumers especially as it relates to the use of intonation. Examples of the responses are presented as follows :

- 'Panso oil' advertisement is a locally made cooking oil.
- Wow! It is great when you cook; your husband, family and friends enjoy and wish for more.
- Brighten your marriage and cooking habit with Panso oil.
- Panso oil is a nutritional dairy oil extracted from cow, consisting of little fat, protein, and water, and promotes good health, supports the immune system and is medically tested for your good health.
- Panso oil, your dependable number one solution for delicacy, it provides irresistible taste and aroma for cooking, baking, sauce making, and frying, for breakfast, lunch and dinner; grab your Panso oil at a nearby supermarket or visit E.A.M enterprises a tA.T.C Jalingo, at an affordable price of one hundred naira, or call 08080656552, now.
- Panso oil, your dependable food's taste.

Mannell in Crombie (1987), had stated that identifying, locating and dividing the flow of speech, direction and syllables on which major movements of sound occur could be referred to as prosody. 1--1e also listed the following three British approaches to intonation: - syntactic approach, affective or attitudinal approach and discoursal approach. He further states that British schools have the following elements in common: dividing the flow of speech into tone groups or tone units (tonality), locating the syllables on which major movements of pitch occur (tonicity) and identifying the direction of pitch movements (tone). Prosody is an aspect of phonology which deals with the quality, function and more than just the natural features of a particular language. So, if product advertisements employ phonological features in their advertisement as in the case of' Panso oil', the probability of a desired patronage will be very good because it will give the product in question the

quality it requires and the sounds will pierce through the hearts of consumers, therefore persuading them to patronize.

From the data collection, there were responses to a variety of questions that pertained to issues ranging from radio users, to the effect of the 'Panso oil' advert, and to identification of phonological features that caught the listeners attention, which is the main purpose of the study. The scores revealed the approximate number of radio listeners in the identified wards of Taraba State.

This analysis has helped to identify the number of radio listeners in the wards and those that listened to the advert played on the researcher's phone and got persuaded to buy the product, or agreed that intonation can persuade consumer patronage. The study has been a successful description of the role of intonation in the art of product advertisement. The study of phonology is relevant to product 1 advertisers as it helps them to understand how sounds and speech sounds behave and how the use of speech sounds of the language in question can yield a desired result on the targeted consumers. Examination of the phonological essence took two dimensions; one was the advertiser to consumer effect, and the other was the level of response or patronage of the product as a result of the use of intonation as a phonological feature employed by advertisers.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, phonology being the first level of linguistics and an essential part of any language in existence, studies the peculiarity, qualities and functions of sounds of a given language, therefore a phonological analysis is consequential to any product advertisement because as the product is launched into the market, consumers must be persuaded through the careful and somewhat beautiful application of sounds (phonological features) of the language of communication. If the art of advertising is not properly done, the advertisers may not achieve the desired result or patronage as the case maybe. The researchers have these recommendations to make: First, product

advertisers should learn phonology and employ relevant phonological features appropriately (especially as it relates to intonation) in order to achieve success in advertisement. Second, product advertisers should make immense use of suprasegmental or prosodic features of sound in their processes of advertising.

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