

Field report for the course "Semiotics in Russian and American advertising"

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Since the old times advertising has always been present in our life. It is the only means of communication that can penetrate our life wherever we are and whether we want it or not. Advertising may make us sad, excited and offended. It may unite nations or show how different they are. Advertisements are for everybody who is able to pay for the goods being advertised. To get the advertising message you do not need to have a special education or background. But is it really so easy to decode an advertising message, encoded for us? What does it depend on?

First of all, an advertising message is not so simple and easily-decoded as it may seem. Advertising discourse itself is many-sided and diverse; it touches upon most of spheres of our life. One and the same advertisement may include a number of different messages and deliver them simultaneously. These messages can be aimed at different age, gender and social groups and so on.

Secondly, the language of advertising is one of the most important tools of manipulation over the human mind in the modern world. The language of advertising uses a variety of verbal and non-verbal means of communication. It is made up of two kinds of linguistic signs, each of which is a pairing of a form and a meaning. In the language of advertising, the form may be a sound or a visual sign. So, the linguistic analysis in advertising must concern both verbal and non-verbal means. The effectiveness of modern advertising is based on the successful combination of these means. That is why it needs a combination of various analyses.

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Thirdly, modern advertising is a continuous reflection of our modern life and culture. The course “Semiotics in Russian and American Advertising” intends to deal with the question of how advertising communication is intertwined at various levels of language and culture. Additionally, we would like to address the question of what kind of alterations can be used to adapt existing models of text analysis and communication theories for understanding modern advertising.

Fourthly, to understand the two cultures and the impact of American advertising on Russian advertising we have to analyse similar Russian and American advertisements. Thus, the advertising texts form a sort of a core phenomenon for understanding how each language encodes meaning. The analysis of similar advertisements is expected to help to explore what is culture-specific for each culture and what is borrowed by Russian advertising culture. It will also help to get the general idea of modern situation in Russian culture. As we live in the globalized world, everything is intertwined or under the exposure and impact of a more hegemonic power.

It is obvious that in case of Russian advertising we can speak about the exposure of American culture on Russian language and culture that can be seen through analysis of current language situation. From this point of view, it makes the need for semiotic analysis as obvious as the need for linguistic expertise because modern advertising being at the same time culture-specific and “globalized”.

The main aim of the course “**Semiotics in Russian and American Advertising**” is to address the questions above and to provide students of Cultural Studies, Linguistics, Media Studies with better understanding of current advertising culture in the global world. The course is designed for upper-level undergraduate and graduate students who have had introductory courses in the theory of Cultural Studies, Linguistics, Media Studies and are acquainted with their main issues. We will demonstrate the interdependence between culture and language of advertising in

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the contemporary language situation through analysis of linguistic and cultural phenomena and show the impact of the American advertising on the culture and language of the Russian advertising. It is important not only to observe the diversity of similar linguistic devices in Russian and American advertising discourse but also to create an interdisciplinary model of comparative analysis and to prove the need of semiotic analysis for the comparative study of advertising. The key categories, semiotic analysis, intercultural communication, globalization, will be examined along with text analysis, use of linguistic and paralinguistic means.

In accordance with the main aim of the course it is divided into three main sets, reflecting specific objectives: conceptual blending in advertising, comparative analysis of Russian and American Advertising, global advertising discourse.

The sources of the courses are primarily in English, so the first requirement of the course is advanced level of English, especially perceptive skills.

There will be no formal lectures in this course. The seminars are centered on discussion and are built upon questions which are to be answered and posed by students themselves. The task of the lecturer in this course is to be a moderator and facilitator. In addition to providing students with theoretical knowledge the course is aimed at improving students’ analytical reading skills and critical thinking competences on the course material. That is why the course requirements include annotations and presentations. The lecturer is expected to provide students with tips for analytical reading in general and special guidelines for theoretical literature.

It is important to create “a friendly environment” in the class, some space where students can exchange their opinions, ideas, where the lecturer can post additional readings or recourses, comment on assignments, announce cancelled or rescheduled class meetings and so on. It is planned to create a course website for class participants. The final exam is going to consist of a

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final essay and a test on theoretical issues. The essays are to be posted on the course website where they can be evaluated by other class participants.

Last Comment: My visit gave me a valuable experience about teaching process in UCB. The workshop gave me the opportunity to continue my research of advertising, to review the key literature, theoretical approaches, and practical methods for my course.

Thanks to the possibility to participate in the joint CASE-UC Berkeley Field Project I have met prominent scholars and enthusiastic people who are deeply interested in the development of academic environment. With their help I improved the course syllabus, its structure and theoretical base. At the UCB library I collected a lot of documents and materials to be used in my course. They all were of great help and gave me "a direction" for my further personal development both as a teacher and a scholar. I discovered some interesting new aspects of American advertising culture and language.