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RULE-BREAKING IN THE LANGUAGE OF ADVERTISING

1.0 INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

This thesis[1] investigates the extent to which rules or conventions of a language are "broken" in print advertising. A lot of the text that is used in advertising does not adhere to some norms that are conventionally adhered to in natural language. Research from how we learn language suggests that there are rules inherent to language that we obey. In using language, we are expected to obey these rules in order to maintain order and clarity, and to avoid wordiness and ambiguity, for example.

However, despite their infringements on these rules of natural language, advertisements are still readable, coherent and cohesive and can still be comprehended. My thesis determines which linguistic rules are violated and which are not and thus ascertains the role of such rule-breaking in advertising language. It also arrives at a conclusion as to how this rule-breaking is a tool that the advertisers use to make the product more attractive and to make the advertisement more effective.

In order to do this, this paper examines a range of advertisements in French and English, from different genres of magazines. The advertisements selected for discussion here are from a broader pool and were the ones that best illustrate a specific linguistic

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anomaly I wish to explore in detail. I have also made reference to some of the articles that I studied and that dealt with specific aspects of rule-violation in advertising language.

I have classified and divided my information according to the type of anomaly that I have found, namely those that pertain to reference, semantic roles, syntax, pragmatics and morphology. These are explored in the sections numbered 2.0 through 6.0. Within each section, I present examples of my data that display irregularities, and discuss, with reference to natural language, what it is that constitutes an irregularity in each case. Then I explain why it is that these specific linguistic irregularities are carried out in advertising and how they are actually used to lead the readers directly back to the product. After my reference page, I have included an appendix which has pictures of a lot of the advertisements that I discussed here.

2.0 REFERENCE

2.1 THE USE OF REFERRING EXPRESSIONS IN ADVERTISING

One of the main characteristics of advertisements that first struck me was their use of referring expressions such as pronouns, without any explicit linguistic antecedent. This initially seemed like gratuitous usage of these expressions. One example of this is in the two-page advertisement for Mc Naughton™ clothing. (see A1)[2]. We see a woman dressed in a richly colored brown turtleneck and skirt, lounging by a fireplace. She is very well groomed and coiffed. The text that is superimposed on the picture reads:

(1) It just looks expensive. (*In Style,* September 2001)

This use of *it* outside of the context of advertising would mean that the referent of

[2] A1 is the first page of the appendix and all the following pages are annotated in the same manner-- A2, A3 etc.

it was already mentioned in discourse. Therefore, without the linguistic antecedent, such use of *it* seemed to be a violation of this linguistic convention. This was one of many cases that operated on the same principle of not having an explicit linguistic antecedent.

A corresponding example from French advertising is an advertisement for a Sony VPL-CS2™ projector. (see A2). The picture gives us the perspective of looking at three walls and the floor and ceiling of a room. There is a different picture projected on each of these surfaces. There is also a picture of the projector below this frame. The line of text that is below this is as follows:

(2) Le projecteur qui en fait beaucoup. Pour si peu.
The projector which of it does a lot. For so little.
'The projector which does a lot of it. For so little.'
(*Air France magazine*, December 2000)

The French pronoun *en* means *some, any, of it* or *of them* and it is used where an antecedent has already been introduced into the discourse. Once again, there was no explicit linguistic antecedent here and this seemed to violate the rule that referring expressions must have an antecedent referent. In the following section, I will discuss what it is that makes these and similar examples correct in the context of advertising, although they may appear to be anomalies in natural language.

2.2 THE ROLE OF THE IMAGE IN ADVERTISING

2.2.1 IMAGES WITH THE PRODUCT IN FOCUS

First of all, I will discuss further the advertisements for Mc Naughton™ clothing and for the Sony VPL-CS2™ projector. In the advertisement for Mc Naughton™ clothing, most of the left page was a plain brown background on which was written *Norton Mc Naughton*. Then at the bottom of the page on the right, in fine print, the

website *www.mcnaughtonapparel.com* was written. These are our two indicators that the advertisement is for Mc Naughton™ clothing and this fact will disambiguate the context of the sentence *It just looks expensive*. Since we know that this is an advertisement for clothing and clothing is among one of the entities clearly pictured here, then we know that *it* refers to the clothing, as opposed to, perhaps, the woman or the fireplace. This is supported by the fact that the clothing is the most salient of the entities in the picture and the fact that the advertisement was in In Style, which is primarily a fashion magazine geared towards women. Similarly, in the advertisement for the VPL-CS2™ projector, *en* refers to the amount of work that the projector does. This is made evident in the picture, where we see five images that are simultaneously projected by the projector. A typical English approximation to the sentences in this advertisement is *The projector that does so much. For so little*. In English, when we speak of "doing a lot" or "doing very much", then we know that these expressions are referring to the amount of work that is being done.

Both of these advertisements make reference in the text but the referent is not textually contained. Instead, the referent is in the image. This is perfectly acceptable, as an antecedent referent does not only have to be introduced via explicit linguistic discourse. A referent can become known to a listener by various means— " . . . whether it has been linguistically introduced, whether it is part of general cultural knowledge, and so on." (Gundel, Hedberg, Zacharski 1993: 275). This fact allows for the occurrence of these examples addressed, where the text can potentially be ungrammatical but which, when inserted into the context of advertising, are permissible.

2.2.1 OTHER TYPES OF IMAGES

All of the examples discussed thus far in this section are the type of advertisements that picture the product and make reference to the product. There is also another type that does not necessarily picture the product, but pictures some other entity and that makes reference to that entity. Therefore, whatever it is that is pictured and to what reference is made does not have to be the product that is being advertised. One example of this type of advertisement where the reference is not made about the product is an advertisement for Aerosoles™ footwear. There is a picture of a man giving a woman a piggyback ride. We can see the shoes that she is wearing, but the text makes reference to the couple and not to the shoes. It reads:

(3) He was committed, but she was just along for the ride.

(*Cosmopolitan*, August 2001)

The reference here is not about the product at all. The advertisements of this type tend to include the product logo or brand name at the bottom of the page.

2.2.2 THE ROLE OF THE TEXT IN ADVERTISING

It is important to note that although there is such emphasis placed on the image in print advertising, the text is also very important. What sets advertising apart from other visual representations is that is has to be succinct. Whereas other visual representations, like paintings, can be a focal point of attention, and are created with this in mind, people do not devote as much time and attention to advertisements. Therefore, they need to say what needs to be said, in as few words as possible. Therefore, advertisements will operate with these limitations and do what they need to in order to achieve some sort of reference to the product, which was among their primary goals in the first place. Thus, it

stands as a given that in order to accomplish their purpose of marketing a product, that advertisements will make reference. In order to overcome these limitations, they allow themselves some flexibility in how they actually go about making this reference. The following two sections deal with the interaction between text and image that occurs in making reference and the types of linguistic anomalies that arise.

2.2.3 THE INTERPLAY BETWEEN TEXT AND IMAGE

The appropriate choice of a referring expression in text depends on the knowledge and ability of the writers to choose a suitable form of the expression and then also on the readers' knowledge to correctly identify the intended referent of the referring expression. The entities pictured in the image of an advertisement are in a reader's current center of attention. According to Gundel, Hedberg and Zacharski, these entities are in " . . . direct focus . . ." (1993: 275). Thus, this status of the product in the reader's mind licenses the use of the pronoun *it* as a referring expression, and, by extension, the use of other pronouns like *he*, *she* and *they*. It also follows that the text in an advertisement may use a definite article, or other determiner, or a pronoun, to refer to something that was not explicitly mentioned in the text, but which is pictured in the advertisement. Although in theory, we have this relationship between the referent and the corresponding referring expression; in practice, reference is not always as straightforward.

Firstly, there are cases where there are multiple possible referents and thus, the intended referent is not clearly discernable. This ambiguity does indeed happen in everyday language too, although it is generally not desirable. In advertising, though, the purpose with being ambiguous is to lead the reader directly back to the product that is

being advertised. A prime example of this case is a two-page advertisement for Aerosoles™ that pictures the legs of a woman who is standing up, and a baby crawling beside her. (see A3 and A4). There is a thin strip at the bottom of the page that pictures the woman and the baby looking directly at each other and smiling. The text on the page reads:

(4) Lately her morning routine had slowed to a crawl. (*In Style*, September 2001)

Both pictured people are feminine, so, the referent of *her* is not clearly designated as either the baby or the woman. One reading of the advertisement may lead to some confusion as to who is the referent, and possibly, to some conviction that the referent is the baby since it is only the baby who is actually crawling here. However, we have the context provided to work around the ambiguity in the readings: the advertisement is for Aerosoles™ footwear, which we assume is the brand of shoes that we see the woman wearing. A re-reading of the advertisement, keeping in mind that it is for Aerosoles™, will lead us to the woman as the referent, but, more importantly, to her feet, and to the shoes that she is wearing. The deliberate ambiguity is a technique that leads us directly back to the intended referent of *her* and to the advertised product. The examples that I treat in the following section are further along the spectrum of having irregularities in reference, but once again, they still end up leading the reader back to the product.

2.3 THE IRREGULARITIES OF REFERENCE WITHIN ADVERTISING

The text from four of the most deviant examples I have found with respect to reference in advertising reads as follows:

(5) I love that he knows what kind of day I had just by the way I say "hello".
(*In Style*, September 2001)

(6) She can make me laugh even when I'm mad at her.
(*Cosmopolitan*, August 2001)

(7) Nouveau Toyota Rav 4 Turbo Diesel. Aux 4x4 coins de la ville.
'New Toyota Rav 4 Turbo Diesel. In the 4x4 corners of the town.'
(*Le Point*, 7 September 2001: 1512)

(8) Vous pensez qu'une rivière n'est pas une route. Et qu'une route n'est pas une
You think that a river NEG is NEG a road. And that a road NEG is NEG a
rivière. N'y pensez plus.
river. NEG that think NEG.
'You think that a river is not a road. And that a road is not a river. Don't think so anymore.'
(*Le Point*, 7 September 2001: 1512)

The deviance in these specific examples stems from the fact that they make inadequate reference in one of two ways: either they do not use an appropriate referring expression or they do not furnish us with an antecedent referent.

The examples (5) (see A5) and (6) (see A6 and A7) are two advertisements from an advertising campaign for Diet Coke™. The series of advertisements maintains the same basic format. They have a picture of a Diet Coke™ bottle at the bottom right-hand corner of the page. There is a blank background and one line of text at the top of the page. The problem with these advertisements is that there is inadequate reference. There is no *he* or *she* mentioned previously or pictured anywhere. Pronouns ought to presuppose the existence of their referent, but these cases disregard this notion.

This apparent lack of reference is discouraged and avoided in natural language. However, it is done successfully in advertising language. This successfulness does not make it correct when it is used in the advertising context -- it is still an anomaly-- but it

opens up the door for readers to substitute various entities into the referent position. The interpretation that readers do give to an advertisement would depend heavily on the publication in which the advertisement was run and the target audience. Some among the audience may conjure up *he* to be a husband or boyfriend, others may think of a dog, and yet others may think of a brother. This particular case with sentence (5) was in In Style and was thus geared towards younger women who would most likely have interpreted *he* as a lover or as a boyfriend. Sentence (6) was in Cosmopolitan, which is also geared towards younger women, so, in the minds of readers, this could have been a sentence that could have been uttered by a lover or a boyfriend about them.

Text with an apparent lack of an antecedent referent can be successfully carried off in advertising as it can potentially increase the appeal of the advertisement. It would make the reader think and ponder on the advertisement to decipher exactly what or who the referent would be, and this would add to the memorability of the product and the effectiveness of the advertisement. Readers are able to insert their own referent into the gap that is created, and this gives the advertisement some flexibility in its targeted audience.

The example (7) that I mentioned is of the type that makes explicit linguistic reference, by naming the product that is being advertised, but that does not show the product. (see A6 and A7). Here the referent is clear and we know that it is the Toyota™ car but we do not see it in the picture. In the foreground of the picture there is a woman in an evening gown standing at the top of a building. She is holding a sign that says *Lyon* in her hand, as if she may be trying to hitch a ride. The rest of the picture shows the rest of the buildings in the city. This example thoroughly stumped me as I scrutinized the

picture to see where the picture of the Toyota™ car theoretically should have been inserted. However, I could not come up with a possible location. The text and the image were intended to lead me back to the product, except that there was no product there. It was only on turning the page that the reference became clear to me. This second page of the advertisement had the same formatting as the first and also had the same line of text, but this time, the car was pictured. Considered in isolation, this second page is the perfect example of how it is that reference ought to be made in order to preserve clarity. However, this coherence on the second page does not insert any reference into the first page of the advertisement. This first page is still regarded by itself before the second page, and therefore, there is explicit reference made but there is no referent present. The effect of this is almost to send the reader in search of the car. The label names the car so therefore, the readers think that the car ought to be in the picture and they would look around to find it. It is when they give up on finding it that they would turn the page, and here they are presented with a picture of the car—the very object that they were trying to retrieve. Due to how the reference was made, the car is presented as the reward after a hunt.

The text that I presented as example (8) is the text for an advertisement for the Jeep Cherokee™. (see A8) In the picture, there is a Jeep™ in the foreground. It is on a very rocky surface that may be a dried up riverbed. The text mentions a river and a road, neither of which is pictured here. It does not mention the vehicle, but compels the reader to incorporate a reading of the vehicle into the text. After having read the three lines of text, the most natural step is that, in response to the command *N'y pensez plus (Don't think so anymore*), readers ask themselves *Mais pourquoi? —But why?* The jeep

provides the answer to this question. It is because of the jeep that they should no longer make distinctions between different types of terrain like roads and rivers, as the jeep can go everywhere. This case is like an agglomeration of both anomalies of reference. There is reference made, without an antecedent referent, and there is also a possible antecedent that is pictured but to which no reference is made. This possible antecedent, which is the vehicle, is in the foreground of the advertisement. Its prominence here is one that the advertisers can use to force a reading of the Jeep™ into the text of the advertisement.

Therefore, the case with advertising is that the image is allowed this role as referent. The role of other visual representations, like paintings, for example, would not be to showcase one particular entity, so this item would not have to be in direct focus. In addition, for other visual representations, there is not usually a limit on how much discourse can occur. Advertising, however, has such limits due to constraints on space, so the language must make reference in as succinct a manner as possible.

3.0 SEMANTIC ROLES

3.1 MISASSIGNMENT OF THE AGENT ROLE

The violation that I have found with respect to semantic roles is that the language in advertising assigns the semantic role of agent to entities that cannot be agentive. This mis-assignment of semantic roles is frequent in advertisements for cars where the car or some part of the car is assigned an agent role that it cannot occupy. One example is:

(9) The RX 300 understands that nothing ruins a weekend faster than the need for a Medevac unit. (*In Style*, September 2001)

The RX 300™ is a make of jeep by Lexus and in this sentence, it is the entity that is doing the comprehending, but it is not possible for a vehicle to be placed in the role of agent with relation to the verb *to understand*.

Outside of this context, though, such statements may prove to lose their credibility by being too much on the absurd and nonsensical side. This is not to say that their presence in advertisements means that they are not absurd. They still are absurd statements in and of themselves, but they may serve a purpose here of making the vehicle more familiar to the reader, and also of entertaining the reader. The reader may feel like if he or she knows the vehicle and has built up a relationship with them.

An example of misassignment of semantic roles that cultivates a similar sort of intimacy with an inanimate object is an advertisement for a French television station. (see A9). It reads:

(10) TV5 vous accompagne partout dans le monde.
TV5 you accompanies everywhere in the world.
'TV5 accompanies you everywhere in the world.'
(*Air France magazine*, December 2000)

A TV station cannot be in the agent role with relation to the verb *accompagner (to accompany*). It can indeed be broadcast in different parts of the world but it cannot physically go from one place to another, which is the sense in which *accompany* is used here.

Another example from English, and one that does not deal with the product itself is as follows:

(11) Even nature can't contain its excitement. (*Mode*, February 2001)

The picture shows a jeep parked at the roadside (see A10 and A11). There is a tree growing nearby and the sidewalk surrounding the tree has been ruptured, apparently by the tree's roots. *Nature*, an abstract entity, does not get excited, and cannot be placed in the agent role in relation to the condition of containing its excitement.

3.2 DISCUSSION OF EXAMPLES AND OF THE AGENT ROLE

The anomaly that these examples share is that they cast non-agentive entities into the semantic role of agent. Normally, a noun phrase that has " . . . any one of the three features cause, control and change . . ." (Schlesinger, 1995:31)-- which are the agentive features-- is a candidate for being an agent. When an agent causes an activity, it is the source for that activity's occurring and it brings it about. Then, when it controls the activity, it has the ability to monitor the activity. In addition, in changing the activity, the agent brings about adjustments in the activity. It is only entities that can do one of these three of cause, control and change, that can be assigned the agent case. It is important to note here that this is not the same as personification. Personification encompasses when inanimate objects are given qualities that are possessed by humans or are spoken of as if they were humans. Therefore, the technique of assigning some elements an agentive case can only occur with personification. However, the occurrence of personification does not necessarily entail the misassignment of the agent role and in this case, should not be equated exclusively and strictly with it. The wrong assignment of the agentive case that occurs in advertisements goes over and beyond the issue of personification to one of assigning the role of agent to entities that never cause, control or change an activity.

It is the case in advertising that certain entities are wrongly assigned the agentive role and no other semantic role. In other words, they are the entity that acts upon another, and not the one that is acted upon. The effect of this technique in the cases like examples (9) and (10), where the reference is made about the product, is that it allows the product name to precede the verb and to be in the subject position. Therefore, the advertisement presents us with the product first and this helps in making the advertising very direct and to-the-point. In addition, the product is endowed with favorable qualities. They can make the product sound as if it cares about the consumers, and therefore, that makes the product more desirable in the eyes of the consumer.

4.0 SYNTACTIC ANOMALIES WITHIN ADVERTISING

4.1 SENTENCE FRAGMENTS

Generally, written language tends to be more formal than spoken language. This brings me to another peculiarity of print advertising language where "the language used in the advertisements involves a mixture of spoken and written patterns of language" (Fries 1992: 468). Within advertisements, we can find language that is clearly written to be read and not spoken, like logos. At the same time, we also find patterns that are typical of spoken language and that are intended to represent spoken language, like the use of contractions or sentence fragments. By "sentence fragment" I am referring to any segment of text which does not contain an independent clause. I have found various types of sentence fragments. They range from the one-word sentence fragments to clauses.

4.1.1 ONE-WORD SENTENCE FRAGMENTS

The one-word sentence fragments designate a particular entity and thus act as a label. For example, there are the following sentence fragments:

(12) Jeep. The only one. (*Mode*, August 2001) (see A14)

(13) Hermès. Premiers pas dans le siècle.
'Hermès. First steps in the century.'
(*Air France magazine*, December 2000)

The first part of each of these examples is a one-word sentence fragment. This type of fragment tends to relate to the visual material directly. However, although they do indeed name the product, we cannot assume that that is their sole function in advertising. This is the function of labels in natural language, but in advertising, this use of labels is one way that the advertisers can repeat the name of the product, even when it is obvious what the product is. In this way, the advertisement can read like a conversation. The reader may see the product, and may wonder, "What is this?" and then read the product's name. Therefore, this use of the product's name as a label is not simply to name the product or to repeat the name wantonly. The name connects back to and answers the question that the reader may have had at the beginning. This is very important as we have a scenario where the product is inserted as the answer that the readers were seeking. In addition, they are followed by more information about the product, and in this sense, they act as would a discourse-opener in natural language. They do not just name the product and leave it at that.

4.1.2 SUBJECT DELETION IN SENTENCE FRAGMENTS

In advertising, the sentence fragments that are clauses are of the type that lacks a subject. These can relate to either the visual information or to the linguistic material that was presented in the text before. This subject deletion is borne out of the fact that the advertisements do not foster adequate reference. It so happens in these cases that the referring expression would have occupied the subject position in the sentence. Such sentences then violate syntactic rules, as they do not contain a subject, yet they are the types of sentences that would require them.

One example of this is the text for a French advertisement that reads:

(14) Le temps change tout. Excepte votre Rado.
'Time/the weather changes everything. Makes an exception of your Rado. '
(*Air France magazine*, December 2000)

The second sentence in this case lacks a subject. (see A12) The advertisers here could be exploiting the fact that this would be a possible utterance in spoken language. In speech, though, *excepte* could be interpreted as the third person singular of the verb *excepter* (*to be apart from; to be except for; to make an exception of)* (The Oxford Hachette French dictionary 1997). In this case, if this sentence is supposed to represent a spoken one, the period here would represent a pause and the utterance may be heard as one sentence *Le temps change tout; excepte votre Rado* or, *Time/ the weather changes everything; excludes your Rado*. It is essential to note that among all the sentence fragments that are clauses, they all drop their subjects.

Another example of this kind is:

(15) Blows curves' minds (*In Style*, September 2001)

This is the text for an advertisement for a jeep. It is set against a picture of the jeep speeding along on a curved road. The fragment *blows' curves minds* refers to the jeep and to how it apparently overwhelms and impresses the curves on the road with its speed and agility in driving.

A second example of this sort is:

(16) Somewhere between tuxedo and birthday suit. (*In Style*, September 2001)

This is an advertisement for the Volkswagen™ Passat Wagon. It pictures two mannequins in the foreground. In the background and in the space between the mannequins, we see a Passat Wagon going by on the road. One of the mannequins is a male one and is wearing a suit. The other one is a female one and is dressed in a very fun, casual outfit. The line of text is written close to the bottom of the page. The text is about the Passat Wagon, which strikes a balance between the formality of a tuxedo and the freedom and abandon of nudity. In the picture, the car is physically placed between two mannequins that are meant to represent these two extremes of "tuxedo" and "birthday suit". However, the text itself does not specify that it is the car that is "between" these two, so that fact would not be clear on reading the text. The picture fills in the blank for us as it has highlighted the car as the missing referent for the sentence.

A parallel example with subject deletion is an advertisement for a French telephone company (see A13):

(17) Plus de 100 destinations dans le monde. Et nous ne sommes pas une compagnie aérienne
More than 100 destinations in the world. And we NEG are NEG a company airline.
'More than 100 destinations in the world. And we are not an airline company.'
(*Air France magazine*, December 2000)

Here, the fragment *plus de 100 destinations dans le monde* is supposed to refer to the number of places in the world that you can call with the SFR company™, but they do

not explicitly state this. It would initially sound like the number of destinations in the world to which an airline would fly, but the second sentence clarifies that this is not the case. This construction has the effect of priming the readers for what is to follow. They would want to know what is so special about those "more than 100 destinations in the world" and what the significance of that phrase is. Then, the deleted referring expression is presented to them in the form of the company that is being advertised.

Syntactically, these sentences are ungrammatical since they have no subjects. The only time that I can think of when subjects are dropped in English is with imperatives but the subject *you,* in these cases, is recoverable and is understood when dropped. For instance, we can understand *You give me the book* in the command *Give me the book.* Outside of English, when subjects are dropped, they are not dropped at the cost of comprehension. For example, in Spanish, the markings for number and person are contained in the endings on the verb so that the subject is understood even when deleted. Therefore, we can translate the sentence *They ate* as *Comieron*. We do not use the subject pronoun *ellos* here, as that information on person and number is all contained in the *-ieron* ending. If there were going to be ambiguity as to who exactly was the referent, then the subject would be used. The advertisements do indeed have referents pictured, but the sentences themselves make no reference to the referents whatsoever. These are then irregularities, but are still allowed to occur in the context of advertising as they may end up being a bit more eye-catching. Since the linguistic reference is not made explicitly, readers may have to re-read and spend more time looking at the advertisement in order to discover the reference.

So, in this case in advertising, where the subject is dropped, it can be represented by and recovered in the image, but in order to do this, readers will have to devote more attention to the advertisement. Readers may even end up with a certain feeling of accomplishment when they have figured out exactly that the referent is supposed to be the product itself. On reading the text presented in number (15), for example, they may want to know what it is that "blows curves' minds", and then they discover that it is the jeep. They discovered something and this is usually accompanied by a reward, and here we can take it to mean that the jeep is the reward. If this is true, then this can transform the jeep into something that is attained, and this increases its overall desirability to potential consumers. So, subject deletion in advertising leads the readers right back to the product and increases its appeal, without having made reference to it.

4.2 REFLEXIVE PRONOUNS

As far as other syntactic matters are concerned, the only types of irregularity that I have found thus far are cases where a reflexive pronoun is not employed where it is supposed to be. One of these cases is an advertisement for candy, where one of the most prominent lines of text reads:

(18) From you to you™. (*Cosmopolitan*, January 2001)

This sentence is trademarked as the company's logo. (see A14) The advertisement is marketing the candy as a gift that someone can give to himself or to herself. Therefore, the occurrences of *you* in the example (18) above are co-referential and, thus, the second occurrence of *you* ought to be in the reflexive form.

So, strictly speaking, this sentence is ungrammatical and would not be employed effectively in natural language, but it can be correctly interpreted here. Readers would know the sense of each individual word and would then be able to put these together and then be able to comprehend the action that is being conveyed. Also, the advertisement may be intended to sound as if it is addressing only one person at a time. Because of this, when the person is reading it, there may not be any need to reiterate to them that the action of giving something to themselves is reflexive as they already know this fact. They can read the sentence in the parts *from you* and then *to you* and understand the meaning just as it would have been conveyed with the sentence *From you to yourself*. In addition, this sentence using the reflexive pronoun sounds a bit too formal and a bit too awkward for this medium of advertising.

Another way of thinking about this is that there is an element of surprise contained within the second *you* in this statement. On reading *from you*, one may expect the second part of the sentence to read *to* somebody else-- somebody other than the first *you*. The fact that you would give yourself something makes "you" special and also makes what it is that you are giving special. This special product is not mentioned in the text but is inserted by the image.

The second example that I have is the text from a Ray-Ban™ advertisement which reads *I kill me* (*Cosmopolitan*, November 2000). The picture that accompanies it is of a young man wearing a pair of Ray-Ban™ sunglasses, staring at the camera with a very smug grin on his face (see A15). This use of the verb *to kill* here is the colloquial sense, which, according to the Concise Oxford dictionary is to “overwhelm (a person) with amusement, delight, etc.” (1990: 649). Once again, this is another reflexive action here

as the young man supposedly overwhelms himself with delight. Therefore, the object pronoun ought to be reflexive in order to produce a grammatical reading.

However, I feel that making this statement without a reflexive pronoun may be more appropriate to the context of advertising. If the reflexive pronoun *myself* were used, then this would have produced a more literal, somber reading of *I kill myself,* meaning that "I commit suicide". This would have been completely out of sync with the tone and the marketing goals of the campaign. Therefore, *I kill me*, although ungrammatical, is still better suited to this case. It could also apply here again that *I* in subject position adds an element of surprise. The readings obtained from a sentence *I kill . . .* could most likely be the literal one as it is possible that I may indeed have killed someone since I am still here to talk about it. Therefore, this is the type of sentence that we would expect. The readings obtained from a sentence *. . . kills me* would not be literal, since if someone did kill me, I would not be here to talk about it. Therefore, we would not expect to read such a sentence. Furthermore, we would not expect the word in that subject position to be *I*, as this adds to the unfeasibility of the action.

5.0 PRAGMATICS

A lot of French advertisements use sentences that are not appropriate to the context. They have a picture of the product and then the text in the advertisement is superimposed on the picture. The text is a sentence that consists of the product name and is followed by an adverb of intensity like *évidemment, naturellement* (*evidently, naturally*). Some examples of this are as follows:

(19) Vivagel, bien sûr. (Garric, 1996: 82)
Vivagel, of course.

(20) Heudebert, naturellment. (Garric, 1996:82)
Heudebert, naturally.

(21) Francine, incontestablement. (Garric 1996:82)
Francine, incontestably.

What we have here is a situation where the product name is our referring expression and is presenting us with information for which we have a background provided. We have already seen the product Vivagel™, and therefore the name *Vivagel* is presenting old information. However, the adverbial expressions like *bien sûr* are not referring to or modifying the product or the product name. They are intensifying and affirming a proposition that was made previously and about which we have no information.

Sentences of this type are typically used in a conversational context and not when they stand in isolation as they do here. More specifically, in natural language, they are not discourse openers, but they may be the responses that are given to questions like *Quel plat aimez-vous*? or *Que choisir parmi ce rayonnage*? (*What dish do you like*? or *What to choose from among all these shelves*?). This fact then may be able to account for their apparent isolated occurrence in advertising where it may be that they are not, in fact, isolated. In this context, any preceding question is not presented to us but can hypothetically be posed by a reader. The question may be something as simple as *Qu'est-ce que c'est*? (*What is this?*), but can feasibly be asked by a reader and then the text instantaneously leads them back to the product in giving them the answer.

6.0 MORPHOLOGY

I have found two relatively well-known examples of morphological anomalies that are in widespread use in advertising campaigns. The first example is in the campaign for 7-UP™, where the product is marketed as the *uncola*. Morphological rules in English would not permit the prefixing of *un-* to *cola*, as *cola* is a noun. *Un-* can be affixed to verbs, where the word in which it results has the sense of a reversal of the original verb form. One example is the verb *untie*, where the action reverses the action of the uninflected verb form *tie*. *Un-* can also be attached to adjectives where it ends up negating the adjective in the process. An example of this is with the adjective *kind* and *unkind* where the addition of the affix *un-* to the stem *kind* produces an adjective which is opposite in meaning.

So, although in natural language, morphology does not allow for *un-* to be affixed to nouns, this is being done purposefully in advertising, as this case goes to show. It can be done because, although it is not a productive phenomenon, the sense of the two morphemes can be interpreted quite literally here. This is to say that readers can get the sense of *cola* and know what a cola is and then they can also have the sense of the prefix *un-* carrying out a reversal process on the cola, or negating it in some way. This can then be construed as meaning that 7-UP™, which is still a cola, has some qualities that make it something that is not a cola. It may mean that it lacks some of the typical qualities of a cola. When my student reader and I asked people what they thought of when they heard the word *uncola*, they thought of a cola that was not brown and did not have any caffeine. These are exactly two of the qualities of 7-UP™. So, it was as if they reversed the typical qualities of a cola, which are being brown and having caffeine. By any token, this

morphological process manages to suggest that there is something special and extraordinary about 7-UP™.

Another type of morphological irregularity that I have found is one where the brand name of a product was inflected with a morpheme that is not a lexical nor a derivational nor an inflectional affix. This was an ongoing campaign for the liqueur Cointreau™, where the line of text read:

(22) Be **Cointreau**versial. (*Cosmopolitan*, October 2001)

The word *Cointreau* was in orange and the suffix *-versial* was in black. - In addition to this, the fact that the product name is Cointreau™, suggests that the word *Cointreau* itself was inflected by adding on a suffix *-versial*. The resulting word exploits very well the fact that it closely resembles *controversial*. However, the suffix used to produce *controversial* is not the same. *Controversial* was formed from the addition of the suffix *-sial* to the noun *controversy*. I cannot think of, or I just do not know a suffix *-versial* existing in English.

Therefore, a process like this, which produced a word like *Cointreauversial* would not at all be productive as this word would lack sense in natural language. This is done quite effectively in the realm of advertising as it can exploit its resemblance to the word *controversial* and can thus encourage the readers of the advertisement and the consumers of the product to be controversial by drinking Cointreau™. In addition, this word *cointreauversial* still maintains the product name *Cointreau* as easily identifiable and retrievable as part of it. This is important, as the word *Cointreau* is French and may not be familiar to non-French speakers. This process then helps them to be able to say

the word as it inserts it into a familiar environment so that readers can know that it is pronounced similarly to the *contro-* in *controversial*.

7.0 DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

Although advertisements take liberties as far as linguistic conventions are concerned, they still do not disregard all of the conventions. For example, I have not found any examples where they disregard agreement between subjects and verbs, or between a noun and its determiner. This is partly because if they did so, they would begin to sound extremely ungrammatical, unprofessional and lacking in finesse, which would be to their detriment. It is also partly because this type of rule-breaking would not aid the advertisement in drawing the reader directly back to the product.

Advertisements disregard rules and conventions that end up affecting mainly the reference to the product and would make readers have to reconstruct them and insert a referent. In doing so, readers will arrive back at a certain entity as the referent and at the product as the focus of the advertisement. This pattern of rule-breaking then is very valuable and beneficial to the realm of advertising as it helps advertisers achieve their goal of marketing a product as one that is desirable.

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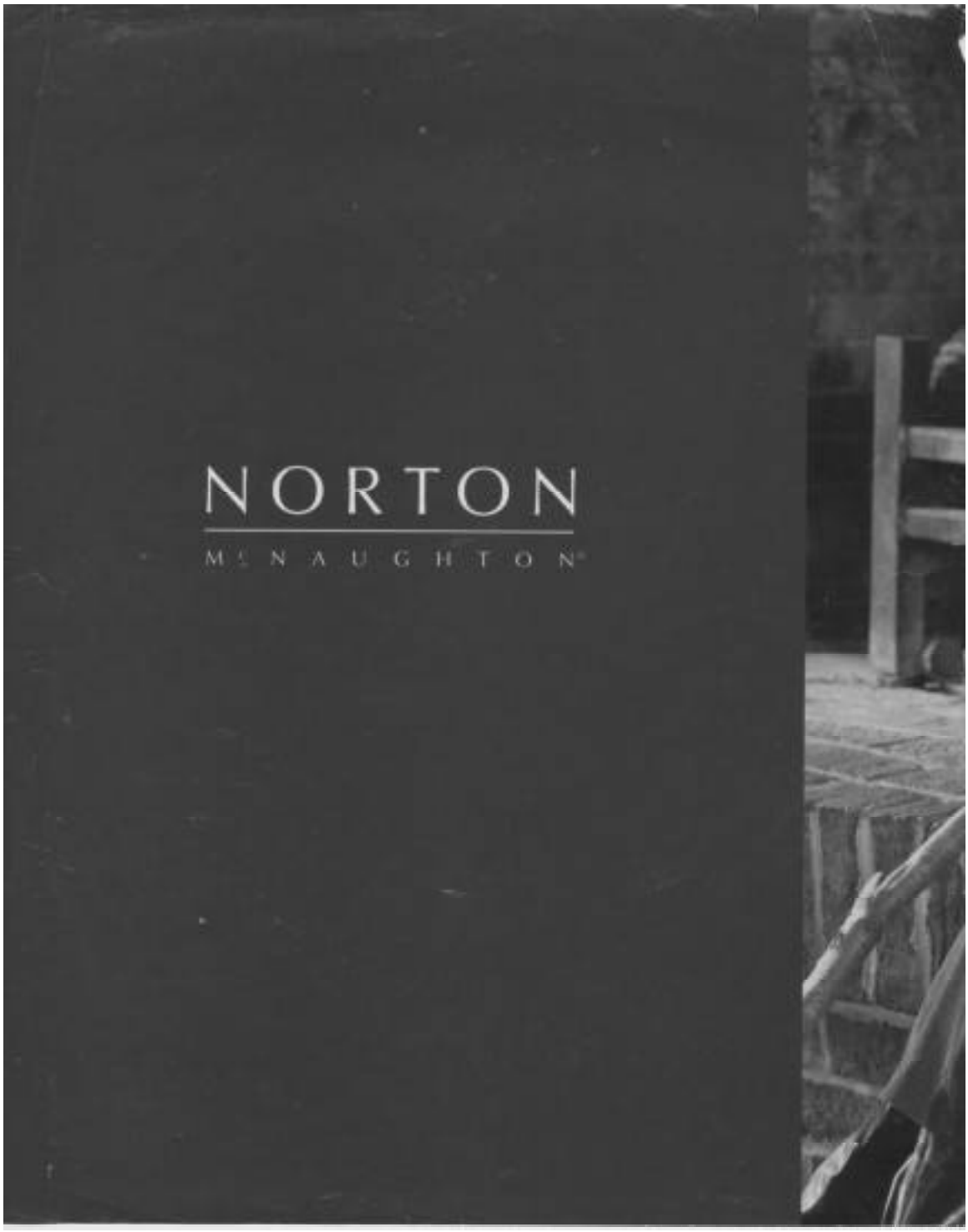
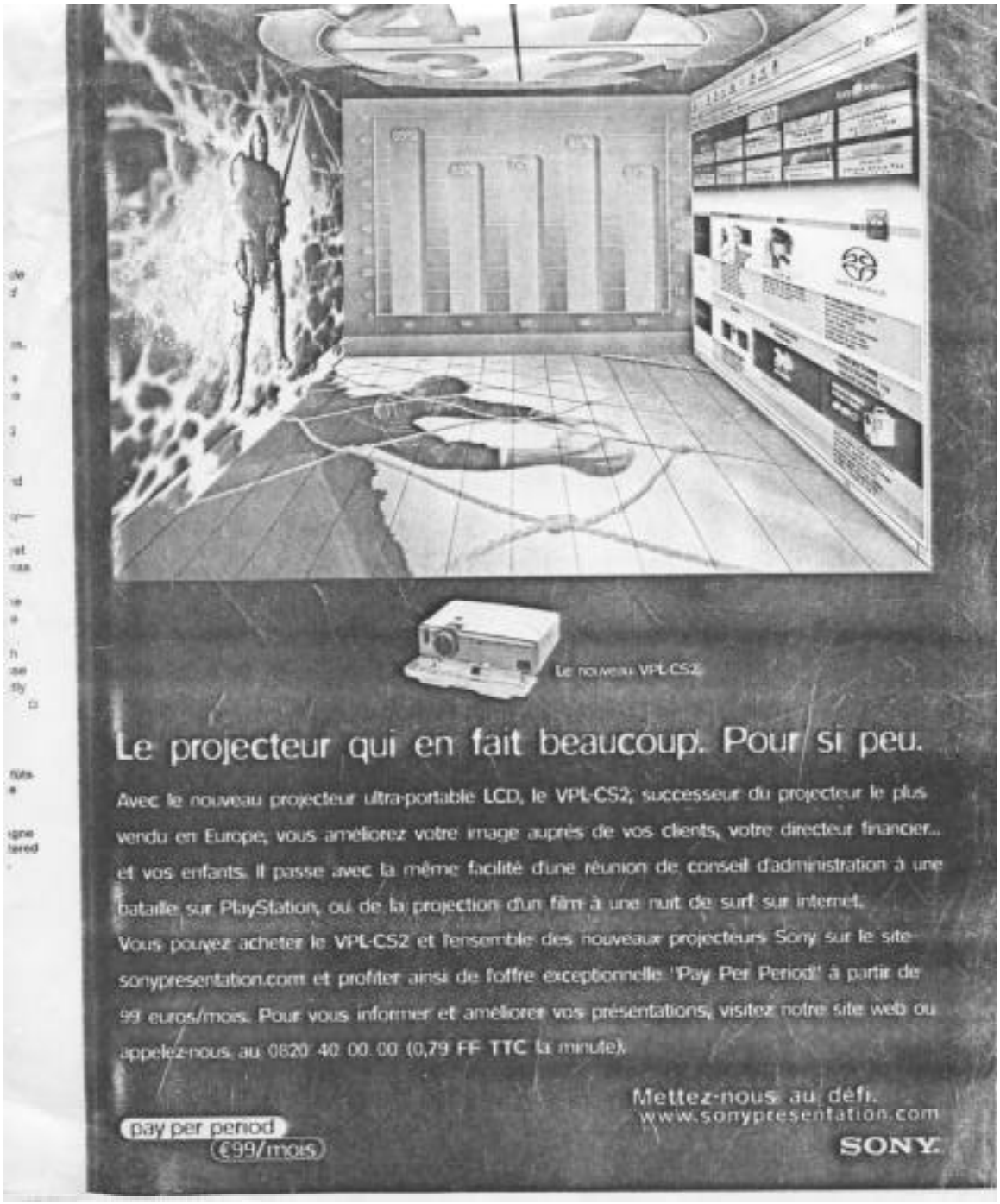
APPENDIX



A1

A2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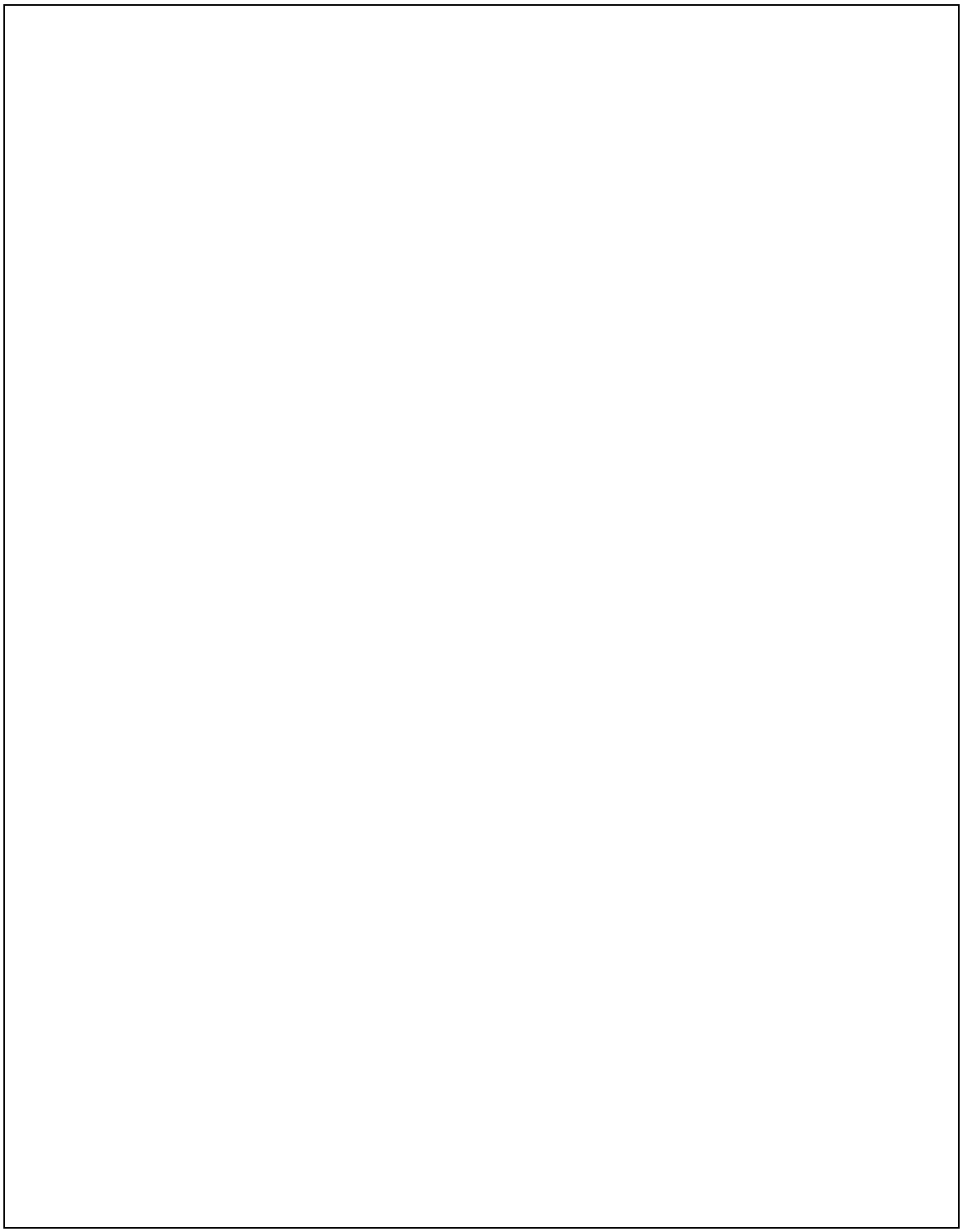
A3



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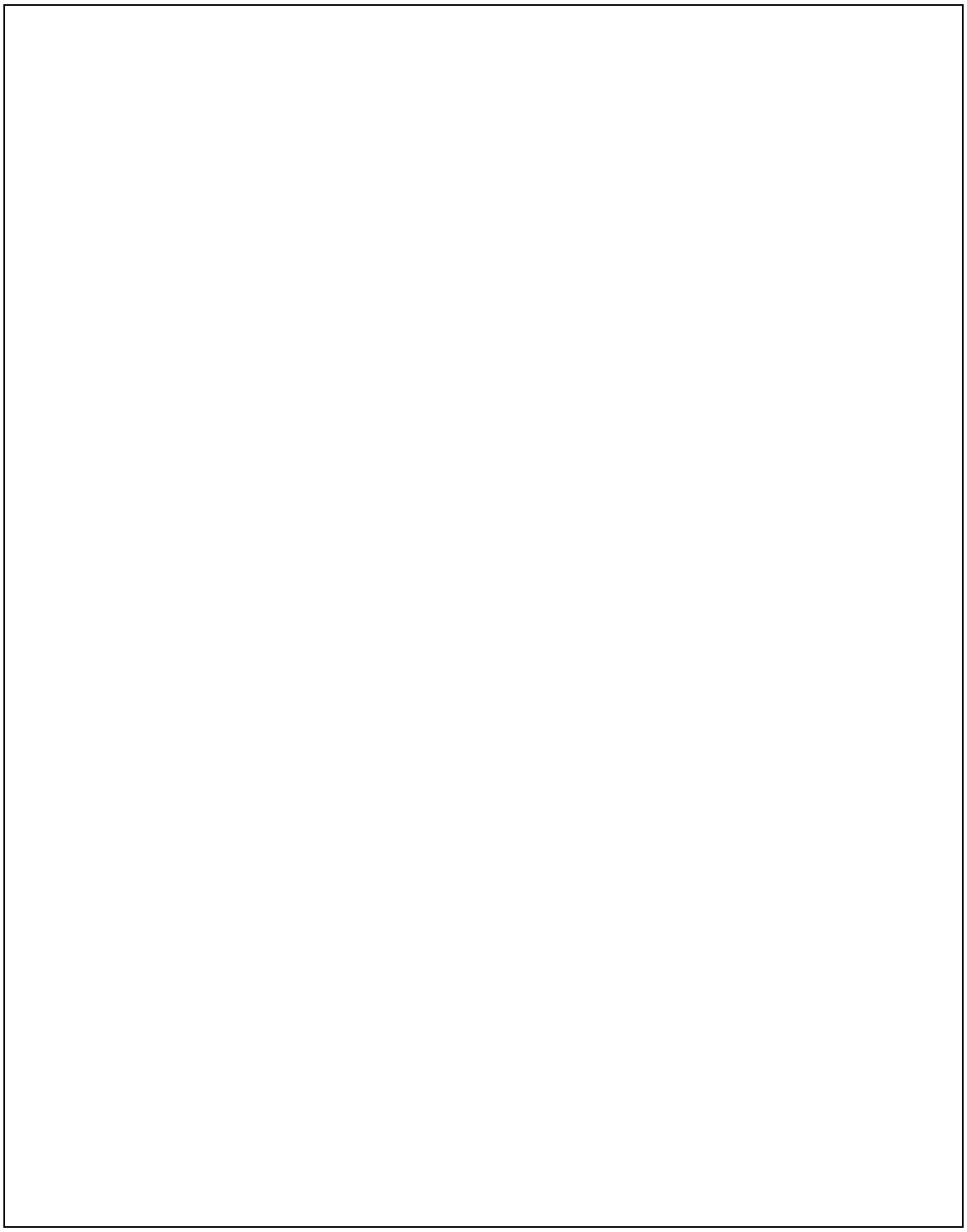

A5