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Homework: Maxims and Advertising

According to lecture, advertisers use Grice's maxims in many ads and in many ways. The maxims are apart of the cooperative principle. This principle is what helps makes conversation flow and people able to understand each other. The maxims are as follows: maxim of relevance, maxim of quality, maxim of quantity, and maxim of manner. I found some advertisements that have some of these maxims in them.

For example, I came across an ad for Verizon wireless cell phones. It had the trademark man with the thick black glasses and black hair. Behind him are mountains with no other signs of life; a place where most cell phones would not get very good reception because the satellites would not be able to pick up the signal. Next to his head the ad said, "Can you hear me now? Good." This is also the question that in every commercial or ad that this man is saying while he is talking on his cell phone. Then it says at the bottom, "Simply everything you need to know about your wireless services." This advertisement is using the maxim of relevance. What the man says is tied to what is said at the bottom of the ad. It expects the viewer or reader of the ad to interpret that Verizon cell phones have great reception no matter where the person is using it and that it is probably better than almost every phone out there reception wise. The phrase at the bottom suggests that reception is basically the only important thing when it comes to a cell phone and Verizon cell phones get awesome reception.

Another advertisement that I saw was showing guitar amplifiers for Marshall. It had a picture of the new amp in the center with pictures of other amps with no names on them in the background. These other amps were much smaller. At the top it said, "Only

Marshall can bring you the full 300 watts that only the truest guitar player need.” The maxim used here is that of quantity. It does not tell more than what is necessary. It says it brings a full 300 watts, but all major amplifier companies have 300 watt amps.

Another maxim used is the maxim of relevance again because it suggests that “only the truest guitar player” uses a Marshall amp. This suggests to the reader or viewer that what is meant by “truest” is “best” and that the best guitar players use Marshall amplifiers so if you buy one you will become good at guitar.

The last ad that I saw was for Jim Beam hard liquor. It had a picture of the bottle and a blue collar worker to the side looking as if he were talking to the reader or viewer of the ad. At the bottom of this ad it simply said, “Dare I say ‘high class?’” At the left side of the ad it said, “Who are you at the end of the day?” I laughed simply because this is just cheesy, but it does use the maxim of relevance. The two phrases along with the picture of the blue collar rugged worker suggest that any can feel rich if they drink this Jim Beam alcohol, even if the person is not even close to what society thinks being rich is.