

Interpersonal Function of Mood and Modal System in English Commercial Advertisements

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Abstract

This paper studies the mood and modal system and its interpersonal function of language in English commercial advertising on basis of Halliday's systemic-functional grammar theory. Starting from the examples of English commercial advertisements, this paper analyzes the characteristics of its mood system and modal system respectively, and concludes the three specific interpersonal functions of mood modal system in realizing the purpose of English commercial advertisements.

Key words: English commercial advertisements; Mood system; Modal system; The interpersonal function

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1. INTRODUCTION

By introducing products or services, commercial advertisements aim to influence and guide potential consumers with language, so that they will desire to buy products or services. Therefore, the interpersonal function of language shows prominent performance in commercial advertisements. This paper takes English commercial advertising language as the research object. Analyzing the interpersonal metafunction of this language from the mood and modal system is a basic thought and important component of Halliday's systemic-functional linguistics. The metafunction of language includes the conceptual

function, interpersonal function and discourse function. The interpersonal function of language refers to the function of language to express the speaker's identity, status, attitude, motivation and his inference, judgment and evaluation to a thing. The interpersonal function of language is achieved basically by means of three semantic systems, including mood, modality and intonation. The mood and the modal systems are regarded as the principal means to reflect interpersonal meaning. The mood system is to express the purpose that the speaker wants to achieve by means of speech, and the modal system is to express the speaker's judgment and evaluation to a thing, or to express a possibility.

2. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

According to the content, this research adopted literature method, it consulted, summarized and analyzed the relevant theory, ie. Halliday's systematic functional grammar and related literatures as the theoretical basis. Halliday's systemic-functional grammar includes systematic grammar and functional grammar. This consists of two levels: systematic grammar and functional grammar. Systemic-functional grammar was created by Halliday in the late 1950s. Halliday divided the functions of language into three categories, namely conceptual function, interpersonal function and discourse function. According to Halliday, the conceptual function corresponds to the transitive system, the mood system corresponds to the interpersonal function of language, and the discourse function is related to the thematic system.

As to the conceptual function, it has two sub-functions, they are, experiential function and logical function. Conceptual function has the function of conveying information. In the two parts of conceptual function, experiential function is divided into transitivity system and voice. Halliday further divides the function into six processes, namely, material process, psychological

process, relational process, behavioral process, speech process and existing process. For the interpersonal function, as the name implies, is the role and function that language plays in interpersonal communication. Interpersonal function consists of mood and modality. Mood refers to the roles and situations of the two parties; And modality refers to the degree of certainty of the sentence, whether it is absolute and certain, and to what extent. To further illustrate, we summarize the contents of this function into the following three aspects: mood and residue, modality and meaning, and speech function. The third is discourse function. Discourse function is the mechanism in language through which composition and coherence of text can be realized, so that a bunch of randomly arranged sentences can form actual information and at the same time give it meaning. The text function can complete the cohesion of the text, and can also highlight some elements of the text, so that the reader's attention is focused on these elements.

According to Halliday, sentence is the synthetic product of conceptual meaning, interpersonal meaning and textual meaning.

3. THE MOOD SYSTEM

The grammar of interpersonal meaning is about exchange between conversational parties, which is the basis of interaction. In the process of communication, the speaker chooses a speech role for himself, and also assigns a complementary role to the listener. In this communication process, from the perspective of grammar, every speech step realizes the speech function of a clause by selecting mood. Therefore, when analyzing a dialogue, the analysis to mood can reveal the interpersonal relationship between the participants. There are various mood systems in Halliday's treatise (Halliday 1985), which are mainly divided into: declarative mood, interrogative mood (general question and special question) and imperative mood.

Declarative mood and the expression of interpersonal meaning of commercial advertisements. The declarative mood indicates that the proposition of the clause is true. In addition, the present tense appears frequently in the declarative mood of advertising English. The present tense gives a sense of reality and urgency, indicating a habitual or permanent action and state. The time it expresses covers the past, present and future. Therefore, it makes the commodity have the same permanent characteristics as the general law in the eyes of people. The present tense is often used to express the permanence and eternity of commodity attributes. The general use of the present tense seems to make the advertising content have the meaning of objective eternal truth, which is what the advertising designers are seeking for.

Interrogative mood and the expression of interpersonal meaning of commercial advertisements. Interrogative

sentences are often used in English advertisements to catch customers' eyes, especially in advertising topic sentence. Interrogative sentences are preferred in advertising English, because interrogative sentences require people to answer certain question, and they are easy to arouse people's response.

Imperative mood and expression of interpersonal meaning in commercial advertisements. The purpose of advertising is to implement its guiding function, while the imperative structure can well achieve this purpose. Thus, this structure frequently appears in advertising English. These imperative sentences can be used to persuade and urge consumers to take action. Besides, in order to achieve the most effective publicity effect, a large number of ellipsis sentences are used in advertising English to make the sentences short and clear.

4. THE MODAL SYSTEM

Halliday divided the modal system into two parts: modality and mentality, in which modality is the speaker's judgment to the possibility and regularity of a discourse proposition. The mentality is the judgment made by the speaker on the obligation and willingness covered in a discourse proposition. As a result, the following article will analyze the interpersonal function of English commercial advertisements from the modality and mentality.

A. Modality in English commercial advertisement. Halliday believed that in English, modality is the speaker's judgment to the possibility and usualness of his discourse proposition. The possibility and usualness expressed by modal can be expressed in three ways: a restricted modal verb in a verb phrase, a modal adverb expressing possibility or usualness, or both. In the following, we will use examples to specifically analyze how the above language forms realize the two modalities of "possibility" and "usualness" in English commercial advertisement.

a) Possibility. English modal verbs are widely used in the modal system of English commercial advertisements. They not only help to express the views and attitudes of manufacturers towards products or services, but also play a very important role in guiding consumers to buy this advertising target. Here is an excerpt from a cosmetic TV advertisement. In the whole chapter, the modal verbs "can" and "will" are repeatedly used to indicate the possibility of modality.

Skin that shines, that radiates with that healthy glow. It can happen with Nouvisage....Start applying the mask at the eyes and nose first, you'll find the Nouvisage Deep-Hydration Mask clings to your face like a second skin....Using Nouvisage on a regular basis can bring back the appearance of younger healthier looking skin.

When you order now, you'll also receive as our special gift to you, a bonus of 16 shapes at no extra cost....call our 24 hour hot line 1833311 today, the New Visage month of

beauty can be yours and too easy installments of only 275 HK \$.

It is not difficult to find that the first part of the advertisement is the introduction to the product itself. It uses “can” and “will” to illustrate the remarkable effect that the product may have on consumers, which promotes consumers’ recognition and confidence in the product and manufacturers, and creates sufficient conditions for the generation of consumption desire. The second part is to explain that customers can get products and additional gifts if they place an order immediately. At this time, the use of “can” and “will” is a direct signal to stimulate and encourage consumers to generate purchase intention, which is extremely tempting and appealing.

b) Usualness. In the modal system of advertising, the meaning of usualness can be expressed by modal adverbs (and phrases) except modal verbs, because they can reflect the speaker’s attitude towards the proposition, so as to achieve interpersonal meaning. Here is an excerpt from an advertisement for diet food. “Never” and “always”, two diametrically-opposite modal adverbs expressing usualness are used cooperatively to achieve a good modal effect.

What Weight Watchers Frozen Meals offers you is 28 dishes specially made for a sensible weight loss program. 28 dishes you never in your wildest dreams thought you could eat without feeling guilty.... Let the dishes that always tempted you off your diet, tempt you on. You’ve got nothing to lose, except maybe a few pounds.

In this advertisement, the manufacturer that produces diet food conveys the message to those who want to lose weight: If the consumers bought Weight Watchers Frozen Meals, they could continue to enjoy the food that they have dared to eat before, without worrying about the failure of weight loss. The message, which is so tempting to potential consumers, is conveyed largely by the modal adverbs “never” and “always”.

B. The mentality of English commercial advertisements. According to Halliday’s theory, mentality is also included in the generalized modal system, which is the speaker’s judgment to obligations and wishes covered by a discourse proposition. Expressions of mentality include definitive modal verbs, passive phrasal verbs, or predicate adjectives. In the following, we will use examples to specifically analyze how the corresponding language forms realize the two ideological expressions of “obligation” and “will” in English commercial advertisements.

a) Obligations. In addition to expressing the possibility and usualness in modality, modal verbs in English can also be used in mentality to express obligations or wishes. The following is an excerpt from an advertisement for a shampoo product:

To rid your hair of this unwelcome build-up you must switch to a shampoo with superior rinsability-even if it’s just a temporary change, move to shampoo that have the ability to revitalize you hair and leave it thoroughly

clean.... If you feel you need to revitalize your hair, try Neutrogena shampoo for just 14 days.... Use Neutrogena whenever you need to get your hair really clean.

First, the highest ranking modal verb “must” is used in the advertisement to indicate the seriousness of the unwelcome hair washing problem on consumers and the urgency to get rid of it, so as to urge consumers to accept the manufacturer’s point of view. Then, the manufacturer used the modal verb “need” with a lower level than “must” in two consecutive places in the advertisement, tactfully emphasizing to the consumers the necessity to change the shampoo, so as to urge them to buy.

b) Willingness. Willingness is another important aspect of mentality. In English advertisements, the language of expression “will” is more common than the expression of “obligation”. The reason is that the speaker of the advertisement, namely the manufacturer, does not have the absolute power to order potential consumers to make purchase. Improper use of the language expressing “obligation” will violate the right of consumers for free choice and then affect sales; however, the manufacturer can express their confidence in products or their determination to provide services by means of willing language, so as to guide consumers to accept and purchase products psychologically and emotionally. The following is a commercial advertisement for a photocopier:

It took a lot of intelligence for Richon to come up with a digital copier that could copy, fax and print. If Leonardo De Vinci were around today, would he not be working for us? That’s why Richon is number one in digital copiers in Europe and in the U. S. When choosing a network print-copier, choose Richon Aficio.

Perhaps the most impressive section of this advertisement is the sentence with the modal verb “would”. Here, the use of “would” in conjunction with the sentence pattern of rhetorical questions fully demonstrates the confidence and recognition of manufacturer in its products, so that potential consumers will be infected by language after reading or watching, and trust and accept the products, then have purchase intention. In addition, it is common to rely on willing language to convey the determination and sincerity of manufacturer to provide good service, because willing language can help manufacturer to build good interpersonal relationship with consumers, making consumers easier to accept manufacturer and its services psychologically.

5. THE INTERPERSONAL FUNCTION OF MOOD AND MODAL SYSTEM IN ENGLISH COMMERCIAL ADVERTISEMENTS

Based on the above analysis to the modal system of mood in English commercial advertisements, we can conclude that its interpersonal function mainly includes three aspects:

Provide product or service information. Halliday believed that although the discourse roles of language are various, their most basic tasks are only two: to give and to ask, that are, the speaker to give something to the listener, or to ask for something from him. Therefore, in the language form of advertising, the basic function of the mood system is also to provide listeners who are potential consumers with information about related goods or services, to make them communicative in communication.

Arouse consumers' interest and build interpersonal platform. One of the preconditions for advertising success is that consumers are interested in and impressed by the content of advertisements, and modal system plays an important role in realizing this prerequisite. Proper use of modality and mentality expressions will not only stimulate potential consumers' attention and interest in products or services, but also gain their psychological identity, shorten the psychological distance between manufacturer and potential consumers, and build an interpersonal platform for sales and purchase relationships.

Promote consumers to take action, to buy product or service. There is no doubt that all the content in advertising discourse serves a final purpose that is the successful sale of a product or service. It is worth noting that the mood and modal system play a key role in achieving this purpose of commercial advertising.

CONCLUSION

Through the above analysis to mood and modal system in English commercial advertisements, we can conclude that the persuasiveness of advertisements depends largely on the use of mood and modal system. On internationalization of contemporary Chinese products, we should pay attention to and actively use the interpersonal functions of advertisements to better promote products

and brands, so that Chinese products can be warmly accepted by the foreign consumers.

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