



Pragmatic Analysis of Advertising Slogans from the Perspective of Politeness Principle

Jiayue Zhang

College of Foreign Languages, North China University of Science and Technology, Tangshan, 063210, China

*Author to whom correspondence should be addressed.

Abstract: *Politeness is the traditional virtue of the Chinese nation, and it is also a moral principle that people should generally abide by. This paper by using Leech's politeness principle and taking advertising slogans as the research object, to explore how to use the politeness principle to realize the artistry of advertising slogans, in order to stimulate consumers' desire to buy goods, and to achieve the desired purpose of advertisers.*

Keywords: Politeness principle, Advertising slogans, Pragmatic analysis.

Cited as: Zhang, J. (2024). Pragmatic Analysis of Advertising Slogans from the Perspective of Politeness Principle. *Journal of Theory and Practice in Linguistics*, 1(1), 15–20. Retrieved from <https://woodyinternational.com/index.php/jtpl/article/view/115>

1. Introduction

In the research of the influencing factors of College Students' physical exercise, the existing literature mainly analyzes from the subjective and objective aspects. In terms of subjective factors, Pang Minhui [1] found that students with cognitive score higher than the average score of importance of physical exercise were more likely to form physical exercise habits through logistic regression model analysis. Xiao Shuang [2] through the study of the current situation of College Students' sports consciousness and sports behavior and the correlation between them, it is concluded that the overall level of College Students' sports consciousness is general, the intensity of exercise is large, and sports cognition, sports emotion and sports will influence each other. It is necessary to take effective measures to cultivate college students' sports consciousness and improve their sports behavior. In terms of objective factors, Rong Zhenzhen [3] takes the sports associations in gaoguo as the entry point, based on the investigation of the current situation, management mode and operation of the sports associations in gaoguo, combined with the comparison between the students who have not participated in the sports associations and the students who have participated in the sports associations in various aspects, obtains that in the sports life of college students, the sports associations in gaoguo are material, spiritual, spiritual, and cultural The influence of emotion and the behavior of participating in physical exercise. Li Yan [4] studied the ways to cultivate the physical exercise atmosphere in the National Park of Gao Guo, and put forward the ways to cultivate the physical exercise atmosphere in the National Park of Gao Guo, such as optimizing the shape of the physical exercise environment in the National Park Based on people, strengthening the incentive and guidance of the physical exercise in the National Park with two wheel drive, strengthening the guarantee of the physical exercise in the National Park with multiple strategies.

Based on the above research, we can see that at present, the relevant suggestions for college students' physical exercise in China are more general. Based on the analysis of the survey data, the actual situation of College Students' physical exercise will be classified according to the main influencing factors, and more targeted suggestions will be put forward for different types of college students, so as to achieve "individualized teaching".

2. Literature Review

2.1 A Brief Introduction to the Advertising Slogans

The ultimate goal of advertising is to persuade consumers to buy their products. In order to achieve this goal,



advertisers will try their best to attract people's attention, and to persuade and induce consumers to buy their commodities.

Guy Cook (1992) uses discourse analysis to analyze advertising slogans. He views discourse as text and context, interacting in a way which is perceived as meaningful and unified by the participants. Zhu Hongtao (2003) studied the interpersonal function of interactive English advertising language based on Halliday's functional grammar theory. He believes that interactive advertising aims to sell products and services through the artful application of person system and mood system.

2.2 Previous Studies of Politeness Principle

Different linguists have different views on the Politeness Principle. Brown and Levinson (1978) define politeness much more clearly. They put forward the face-threatening act theory for the first time. They think politeness is a regressive action taken to counter-balance the destructive effect of face-threatening acts. Leech (1983) proposes the Politeness Principle based on the Grice's Cooperation Principle. He Ziran (1988) introduces in detail the category of Politeness Principle, the relations between Politeness Principle and Cooperative Principle, and the characteristics of Politeness Principle. This paper analyzes the specific examples of advertising language based on the Leech's Politeness Principle. Leech's Politeness Principle included six maxims of Politeness Principle, as follows:

- (1) Tact Maxim
 - a) minimize cost to other
 - b) maximize benefit to other
- (2) Generosity Maxim
 - a) minimize benefit to self
 - b) maximize cost to self
- (3) Approbation Maxim
 - a) minimize dispraise to other
 - b) maximize praise to other
- (4) Modesty Maxim
 - a) minimize praise to self
 - b) maximize dispraise to self
- (5) Agreement Maxim
 - a) minimize disagreement between self and other
 - b) maximize agreement between self and other
- (6) Sympathy Maxim
 - a) minimize antipathy between self and other
 - b) maximize sympathy between self and other

3. Pragmatic Analysis of Advertising Slogans

3.1 The Use of Tact Maxim

The Tact Maxim refers to minimize cost to other, or maximize benefit to other. In daily communication, A avoids threatening B's dignity when proposing a guiding requirement, and uses some language skills to reduce or even eliminate it. A will try to convince B that it will benefit it, if instructions are accepted and executed. A plays a decisive role in implementing the guidelines. The goal of the Tact Maxim is to make people benefit more. They need to highlight the benefits that customers get from the products they buy, therefore, advertising slogans could better apply the tact maxim.

Example 1:

Delight in a surprising new pleasure. Embrace the velvety, voluptuous bouquet, infused with Rose, Jasmine, Lily and ylang warned by golden woods and Vanilla New flowers New Pleasures. (Estee Lauder)

This is one of Estee Lauder perfumes advertising slogans. In this advertisement, used the words “surprising”, “velvety” and “voluptuous” to highlight the product’s ability, that is to bring new fun and extraordinary experience to consumers. This advertising slogans achieves the purpose of selling their products and conveys the signal that buying their product is certainly beneficial.

Example 2:

不运动不节食，偷偷瘦出小蛮腰。无效退款，爱美的你还在等待什么。(Advertising for Weight-loss Drugs)

There are many advertisements for diet pills, which show the promise of “minimize cost to other, or maximize benefit to other” vividly. Unlike general advertising slogans, it does not urge consumers to buy it now, but to persuade consumers not to make a decision immediately, they can try it at the first. On the one hand, it demonstrates the sellers’ determination to “let the customers be benefited rather than be costed”, on the other hand, it also demonstrates that the sellers are full confident of the quality of their products. Facing with the promise of sellers, consumers will surely be moved. Under these circumstances, sellers have achieved their own goals, that is, selling goods to consumers successfully, and comply with Politeness Principle’ Tact Maxim.

3.2 The Use of Generosity Maxim

The specific requirements of the Generosity Maxim refers to minimize benefit to self and maximize cost to self. Consumers often decide whether they buy goods by how much the merchant has costed. Some advertisers use this mentality to guide consumers to buy goods, so the Generosity Maxim can also be reflected in advertising slogans. There are two aspects of Generosity Maxims, one is cost to self and benefit to other; the other is only cost to self.

Example 3:

All your imaginations can be created. (Dell)

This slogan is about Dell laptops. The advertiser guarantees that the design of the computer will satisfy the requirements of customers fully. This slogan is cost to the seller, but benefit to the customer. Therefore, it properly used Generosity Maxim, which is the success of advertising slogan.

Example 4:

Give me the rubbish and leave the beauty for you. (Environmental protection)

Example 5:

“挥泪大减价”、“跳楼价”、“亏本促销”。(some promotional advertising)

Example 4 is the public service advertisement about environmental protection, which shows that it cost to itself and benefit to tourists through the advertisement clearly. Example 5 is a slogans about the promotional advertising, these so-called big price drop or discount are under the pretext of “minimize benefit to consumers, and maximize cost to seller”, in order to encourage consumers to buy their products. These two slogans are examples of the appropriate application of Generosity Maxim.

3.3 The Use of Approbation Maxim

The Approbation Maxim refers to that minimize dispraise to other; maximize praise to other. Normally, in our daily communication, people often praise to others people rather than dispraise. Everyone likes to be praised, because praise means that his ability or behavior is recognized and affirmed by others. Most people also have a desire to be praised by other people for their abilities and strengths. Consumers usually like to hear praises, which can make the advertisers to win more attention from consumers. However, the real purpose of advertisers is to increase their chances of selling goods by praising their customers.

Example 6:

巴黎欧莱雅，你值得拥有！（巴黎欧莱雅）

Example 7:

我们能证明，你看起来更年轻。（玉兰油护肤霜）

Both of these two slogans are about cosmetics. On the surface, these two advertising slogans are both praising customers, in order to satisfy the consumer's psychology of listening to praise. In fact, the true intention of the seller is to show the effect and quality of his goods. In the Olay' advertising slogan, the word "Young" is mentioned. Young is a state that all women want to possess. Consumers increase their preference for this product naturally, which enhances the desire to buy goods. The expression of this slogan is not only implied that the high quality of the product, but also flattered the consumer.

Example 8:

Life is running because of you. (Voluntary blood donation)

Example 9:

What is more precious than the blood donated is your true feelings. (Voluntary blood donation)

Example 8 and Example 9 are about voluntary blood donation. These two examples follow the Approbation Maxim. The words "running", "precious" and other words are used to praise the listeners who have donated blood or the people will donate blood voluntarily to the extent. This advertising slogan satisfied the self-esteem of blood donors greatly. At the same time, it can also call on more people to donate blood voluntarily, so as to achieve the effect required by advertisements.

3.4 The Use of Modesty Maxim

The Modesty Maxim refers to minimize praise to self; maximize dispraise to self, which is contrary to the Approbation Maxim. It is often to praise oneself, exaggerate the derogation to oneself as far as possible. Some cosmetics advertisements abandon the usual praise or exaggeration in advertising slogan and use modest language to impress consumers. This is the application of the Modesty Maxim. Let's look at the following examples in cosmetics:

Example 10:

没有最好，只有更好 (SK-II护肤品)

Example 11:

My radiance comes from your elegant demeanor. (Sassoon Shampoo)

These two advertising slogans followed the Modesty Maxim, while making promises for the authenticity of cosmetic effect and completing the function of expression, they introduce the efficacy of cosmetics in sincere with plain language. They do not boast about it. Instead, they can have a strong appeal to consumers and achieve the goals that advertisers want to achieve effectively. In the Sassoon Shampoo's advertising slogan, it is further emphasized that this shampoo is famous for its use by consumers, which is a pretty modest expression. In addition to the use in the cosmetics, the Modesty Maxim are also used in other types of advertising.

Example 12:

The relentless pursuit of perfection. (Lexus)

Example 13:

Let's make things better. (Philips)

The two advertising slogans of Example 12 and Example 13 belong to the same type. Both of them showed that their goods may not be perfect, but they will continue to pursue perfection. This kind of advertising slogan does not exaggerate its products, but has a reasonable evaluation of its products. These two advertising slogans are used the Modesty Maxim properly.

3.5 The Use of Agreement Maxim

The Agreement Maxim refers to minimize disagreement between self and other, and maximize agreement between self and other. When people in communication, there is always a tendency to show that the speaker agrees with others. In this way, the speaker and the listener will look very intimate because they can find common ground, or just have the same idea. However, this is not always the same. Therefore, in this case, if the listener wants to

express a different opinion from the speaker, he should try to express his opinion politely. In this way, people can minimize the disagreement between them.

Example 14:

原来生活可以更美的(美的)

People should follow the Agreement Maxim and emphasize the consistency of views between the two sides. Generally speaking, when the two sides have similar positions and similar interests, the requests and instructions put forward by one side are more acceptable to the other side. “Meidi” electrical appliances put forward the advertising slogan “life can be more beautiful”, which emphasizes the pursuit of a better life with customers. It implies that your life is better with “Meidi”.

Example 15:

For the health of you and your family, please don't smoke. (No Smoking)

Example 16:

To be kind to the old is to be kind to yourself in the future. (Respect for the elderly)

Example 15 and Example 16 are belong to public service advertising slogan. Following the Agreement Maxim, advertisers strive to maintain consistency with consumers' views and feelings, in order to reduce differences. The above two examples both follow this rules very well. Everyone wants to have a healthy body and a happy family, sellers used the psychology of consumers to design such advertisements. Therefore, the design of these two advertising slogans conformed to the Agreement Maxim and achieved satisfactory results for both sellers and consumers.

3.6 The Use of Sympathy Maxim

The Sympathy Maxim refers to minimize antipathy between self and other, and maximize sympathy between self and other. When people are in high mood, they are usually more willing to share information with others and they are more happier. Besides, when people are in low mood, they are still willing to tell others to get some comforting words. So if we make a few proper utterances to share their sweetness or bitterness, it could make the relationship between them much closer. This is the core of the Sympathy Maxim. Successful advertisements often start from sympathizing with customers' difficulties to win the consumers' love and trust, and achieve the goal of selling products ultimately.

Example 17:

暖暖的, 很贴心。(999感冒灵颗粒)

The purpose of this advertising slogan is to win the trust of consumers from the perspective of the Sympathy Maxim. As everyone knows, when people have a cold, they will feel cold, and no strength. The words “warm, very sweet” implied to effect of taking this pill, so as to achieve the purpose of selling the product.

Example 18:

关心牙齿更关心你。(益达)

People are more willing to accept the advice and requirements of those who sympathize with and understand themselves, because people know that such advice and requirements are mostly good and friendly. In this advertising slogan, as we all known, teeth are very important to everybody. This advertising slogan used the Sympathy Maxim properly to show the function of chewing gum to protect the teeth. This advertising slogan gives people the impression that the seller is very concerned about the health of the consumer's teeth.

4. Reasons for the Application of Politeness Principle in Advertising Slogan

Advertising designers use the above Politeness Principle to convey shopping instructions to consumers implicitly, eliminate consumer's potential exclusion and resistance to advertising, and win their trust in products.

First of all, it is due to the need for practicality. Advertising is to achieve economic benefits. The advertising slogan

can achieve economic benefits, and good advertising slogans can make advertising more economical. In the selection of advertising words, if the Politeness Principle is violated, too direct shopping instructions will cause rebelliousness to consumers, which will not only can not sell the products successfully, but also have a bad influence.

Secondly, it is to cater to the needs of consumers. Consumers have the psychological requirements of being respected and favored in the implementation of purchasing behavior, and Tact Maxim, Generosity Maxim, Approbation Maxim, Modesty Maxim, Agreement Maxim, Sympathy Maxim in the Politeness Principle can satisfy this kind of demanding. Therefore, smart advertising designers fully consider this kind of psychological needs of customers when they creating advertising slogans. Advertising designers use a lot of indirect methods, and polite words to exaggerate the “benefit” that the advertising consumers can obtain as much as possible, and minimize their “cost”.

Finally, it is derived from the pursuit of art. Language is an art, and advertising slogans have higher artistic requirements. The Politeness Principle is applied to the advertising slogans to make it more implicit, which is meet with the Chinese language expression habits.

5. Conclusion

In this paper, the author tries to make analysis on advertising slogans under the framework of Politeness Principle proposed by Leech. The diversity of advertising language provides sufficient examples for this research purpose.

When using the Politeness Principle to create advertising slogans, people should not use the Politeness Principle directly, but use the various maxims flexibly according to the actual situation. In order to convince consumers to buy goods, advertising slogans hide the true intentions of communication through a large number of indirect words, and transform direct speech acts into a verbal commitment, so as to make advertisement audiences perceive that advertising slogans maximizes their own interests, and then, realize voluntary consumption. This makes the advertising slogans, which uses the Politeness Principle appropriately to produce the ideal effect in the consumers. In summary, the advertising slogan is to achieve the characteristics of the language through the Politeness Principle, to stimulate consumers to purchase desires, and achieve the goals of the advertiser.

References

- [1] Brown, P., & Levinson, S. C. (1987). *Politeness: Some universals in language usage* (No. 4). Cambridge university press.
- [2] Willig, C. (2003). Discourse analysis. *Qualitative psychology*, 159-183.
- [3] Leech, G. N. (2016). *Principles of pragmatics*. Routledge.
- [4] Taguchi, N., & Ishihara, N. (2018). The pragmatics of English as a lingua franca: Research and pedagogy in the era of globalization. *Annual Review of Applied Linguistics*, 38, 80-101.
- [5] Fatmawati, E., Syathroh, I. L., Siagian, C. B., Anggraini, D. F., & Herman, H. (2024). Understanding the Meaning of an Advertisement Text through Interpersonal Function Analysis. *Anglophile Journal*, 4(1), 30-37.

Disclaimer/Publisher’s Note: The statements, opinions and data contained in all publications are solely those of the individual author(s) and contributor(s) and not of Woody International Publish Limited and/or the editor(s). Woody International Publish Limited and/or the editor(s) disclaim responsibility for any injury to people or property resulting from any ideas, methods, instructions or products referred to in the content.