
| RESEARCH ARTICLE

Foregrounding in English Advertisements: A Research based on Advertisements on TIME

Yuhan Sun

College of Foreign Studies, Jinan University, Guangzhou, China

Corresponding Author: Yuhan Sun, **E-mail:** 1412346093@qq.com

| ABSTRACT

Advertising forms an essential component of the business field, where the competition fight is the significant marker. Advertisements can give a psychological hint to consumers so that they purchase a product by using image ideology association. More than any other sign or symbol system, language employs a strong effect on consumers and their behaviors. The paper aims to apply Leech's foregrounding theory on English advertisements on *TIME* and clarify the "language games," including deviation and parallelism, so as to figure out its effects on market promotion. The author employs case analysis to examine the theoretical foundation, then presents and exhibits parallelisms and deviations in advertising using classification standards and standard examples. It is found that advertisement language parallelism and deviation is one of the essential linguistic attention-grabbing methods. With the help of the foregrounding, information contained in the advertisement acquires a new, often unexpected sound: at the minimum of the text, the maximum expression.

| KEYWORDS

English advertisement; foregrounding; *TIME*

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1. Introduction

1.1 Research Background and Objectives

Advertising has played an important role in society, especially in terms of marketing, which promotes products, services, and ideas. Many researchers have turned their attention to sociology, psychology, marketing, and linguistics as a result of its importance. In general, advertisements apply multi-modals to achieve their purpose, such as text, sounds, images, signs, etc. Among all modals, language usage in text attracts particular attention.

Advertising language is one of the most effective vehicles of ideology because of its appealing nature. According to Leech (Leech: 23), advertisements employ "loaded language" to influence and modify the will and the attitude of their target audience. On the other hand, the foregrounding strategy is a great way to draw attention to your product and differentiate it from the competition.

Therefore, based on advertising resources on *TIME*, this thesis attempts to give a detailed discussion of how foregrounding theory is applied in English advertisements.

2. Research methodology

This study analyzes magazine advertisements on *TIME*. Here are four reasons:

First, Advertisements on paper are more accessible to evaluate than advertisements on audio or video; since audio and video advertising combine and complicate the effect of sound and image, it is difficult to provide a comprehensive analysis in a single paper.;

Second, there is no evidence showing that audio and video advertising and press ones are fundamentally different in their persuasive tactics; therefore, although this paper focuses on magazine advertising, it could also shed light on advertisements in multiple forms;

Third, as one of the most successful magazines worldwide with a history of almost 100 years, *TIME* is still profitable in the age of the Internet, which may partly attribute to the income of advertising; thus, *TIME* is an ideal object to study magazine advertising. All examples in this paper are from *TIME*(JAN.18/25—APRIL 12/19, 2021). And the words and lines in advertisements will be measured and categorized according to Leech's foregrounding theories.

2. Literature Review

Leigh (1994) performs a study to determine whether advertising in magazines in the United States of America employs figures of speech and, if so, what types of figures of speech. He discovers that the vast majority of advertising (74.3 percent) includes at least one rhetorical flourish. And Tanto(2019) employs an interpretive research method to ascertain public knowledge and enjoyment of exceptional advertising language use (including repetition, reversal, hyperbole, a pun, etc..) by distributing questionnaires. In his conclusion, he successfully draws out a correlation between people's awareness and appreciation of visual and linguistic features. What's more, Forceville(2017) points out that the advertiser can utilize both visual and written language to identify the target and source in print ads and billboards, depending on the extent to which the vocal content plays a role. So it is fair to say that language or text system in advertising deserves exploring further.

3. Theoretical Foundation

Foregrounding, a notion coined by Leech in stylistics studies is regarded as a very general principle of artistic communication, implying that a piece of art deviates in some manner from established standards. And Leech (2007) defined foregrounding in two ways: parallelism and deviation. Parallelism can be thought of as an unexpected degree of regularity, whereas deviation can be thought of as an unexpected degree of irregularity. Foregrounding can occur on all language levels (phonology, graphology, morphology, lexis, syntax, semantics, and pragmatics). It is frequently employed to emphasize a text's latent significance, to aid in its prominence, or to inspire interpretation.

4 Analysis of Foregrounding in Advertisements of TIME

4.1 Parallelism

Parallelism means that some structures have similar features or are structurally equivalent in certain aspects, which may include symmetry, juxtaposition, repetition, and parallel clauses. In English advertisements, parallelism is represented by repetition in phonology and clauses. For instance,

- 1) Engineered to a higher standard, the human standard. (Lexus, March 01&08)
- 2) Ideas start the future; future is an attitude. (Audi, March 01&08)
- 3) Cares here. And here. (Purina, March 15&22)
- 4) Breathe easy. Live free. (Inogen, March 15&22)
- 5) When girls rise, we all rise. (GirlUp, March 15&22)
- 6) If you can see her, you can be her. (SeeHer, March 15&22)

In addition to the repeated words marked in italics, in example (4) (5) (6), the advertising language also uses paralleled sentence patterns, such as (4) verb + adjective, (5) subject + predicate, and (6) The sentence pattern of "you can do." Parallelism and repetition can enhance the sense of the rhythm of advertising language, thereby improving its readability and memorability. At the same time, repeated words are usually closely connected with the product concept, which also gives customers psychological hints and indirectly improves the product and brand's image.

4.2 Deviation

A linguistic deviation is a disruption of the regular communication process: it creates a void in the reader's comprehension of the text. The void can be filled and the divergence significantly reduced, but only if the reader uses his imagination to discern some deeper connection that compensates for the superficial peculiarity (Leech, 1969). And in this paper, advertising deviation classifies as follows,

4.2.1 Deviation of phonology

Leech introduced many forms of phonology deviations, including syncope, aphaesis, apocope, unusual pronunciation for the sake of rhyme, etc. As Alexander Pope mentioned, "the sound must seem an echo to the sense"; expressions with varying pronunciations will lead to varying impacts. In English advertising, the phonological deviation is manifested by the frequent occurrence of alliteration, beginning-end rhyme, homograph, and so forth. For example,

- 1) Accelerate together. (IBM, March 29&April 05)
- 2) The only future that matters is a future that's fair. (BMO, Feb. 15&22)
- 3) Seismic or small, change is all around. (Accenture, Feb. 15&22)
- 4) Lead with love. (P&G, Feb. 01&08)
- 5) Empowering employees professionally and personally. (Geico, Feb. 01&08)

Example (2) demonstrates the advertisement's use of alliteration of "f," which conveys a strong determination to pursue fairness. In example (5), empower, and employee are pronounced and spelled similarly. By combining these together, readers' will feel the power of employees. Other examples also attract customers in similar ways.

4.2.2 Deviation of graphology

The most straightforward (and also most powerful) method of capturing readers' attention is to alter the shape or size of a word, phrase, or even the entire discourse. English has a variety of word spelling variations. Spelling irregularities are widely and frequently used to convey strong, vivid, associative, and noticeable messages through repetition of morphemes, words, and punctuation, capitalization, misplacement, deletion, addition, substitution, and malapropism. (Chi: 2013) For instance, We, the women. (DWEN, March 15&22)

This advertising put the brand into the words "D" refers to Dell, and the rest letters "W" "E," "N" can be found in the advertisements, which helps customers accept and remember the brand much easier.

4.2.3 Deviation of semantics

It is acceptable to mentally translate the term "semantic deviation" as "nonsense" or "absurdity." Indeed, its sheer peculiarity endows it with an exceptional degree of significance. The same is true in English advertising. For example,

- 1) Change has a new home. (Vital Voices, March 15&22)
- 2) Cares here. And here. (Purina, March 15&22)

The first example uses personification and suggests that Vital Voices is the first of its kind physical and digital hub where women leaders will together tackle the world's toughest challenges. In example (2), the two "here" refer to two different things: the former refers to the product, and the latter refers to its ingredients, which suggest that the product is safe to use.

5 Effects on Promotion

5.1 Attractiveness

In order to be effective, advertisements must grab the viewer's attention and pique their interest. And foregrounding in advertisements can achieve defamiliarization through breaking conventions of language usage, thus drawing the attention of customers.

5.2 Readability

Once advertisements have captured the reader's attention, the reader's interest must be maintained, always keeping in mind that the reader is looking for quick and straightforward information. As a result, the style of advertisements is predominantly conversational, employing easy and familiar language. Even written language exhibits many characteristics of spoken language in marketing. To begin, advertising language is highly repetitive and parallel in nature. Elliptic phrase forms are another indicator of verbal communication that is prevalent in advertising. Additionally, phrasal verbs, idioms, and contractions are distinctive aspects of advertising language, attesting to its high level of colloquialism. All of these features assure that customers can grasp any information they want in quite a short time.

5.3 Easy to remember

The message of an advertisement must be remembered and identified as familiar by the recipient. From a linguistic perspective, several linguistic devices are used in high frequency in advertising language, such as alliteration (repeating the initial sound), metrical rhythm (repeating the same rhythmic pattern), rhyme (repeating the same ending sounds), grammatical parallelism (repeating the same grammatical structure) as well as semantic and syntactic repetition (i.e., using the same syntactic structure or words from the same word field). Moreover, the continuous repetition of slogans, brands, and product names equally contributes to the memorability of the product and the related advertising messages.

5.4 Power to persuade

In the end, commercials are meant to promote something. Ensuring that individuals know exactly what to do next is essential for motivating them to do the correct thing. All foregrounding methods mentioned above have effects in persuading customers to buy the target products or improving the brand image.

5. Conclusion

This paper aims to make a detailed analysis of various methods of foregrounding used in English advertising. Firstly, it examines what advertising is, as well as the theoretical foundation. The author then presents and exhibits several parallelisms and deviations in advertising using classification standards and standard examples. It is found that advertisement language parallelism and deviation is one of the essential linguistic attention-grabbing methods since it is considered to be the use of language that defies regular rules. Based on language deviation studies, it is shown that with the help of the foregrounding, information contained in the advertisement acquires a new, often unexpected sound. Obviously, it is one of the methods to create a vivid advertising message: at the minimum of the text, the maximum expression. This study suggests that foregrounding in English advertisements, which is extensively utilized in advertising on good grounds, can draw the customer's attention and even encourage them to purchase the offered products. Additionally, this paper sheds light on the future study of advertising in other media. As a whole, it is fair to say that foregrounding in advertising helps to improve advertising communication, thus improving commercial business. However, there are still some limitations in this study. For example, the research object is limited to print magazines. Therefore, the study based on foregrounding theory on advertising in other media still needs to be improved in the future.

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