

Vocabulary Analysis of the Advertising English----Take *The*

Economist as an Example

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ABSTRACT: *There are various forms of second language vocabulary learning, and advertising can be used as one of its input methods. With the popularity of "the Craze of Pursuing Graduate Studies" in China, the economist, a foreign magazine, becomes more popular due to rich articles and humorous language style. The advertisement language is exquisitely designed and commendable, it will enlighten English learners if learners further study. Therefore, the author chooses 100 pieces of advertisement in the economist as research materials to do analysis from the perspective of advertising vocabulary, so as to help senior intellectuals deeply understand the characteristics of English language and appreciate the original charming language. The purpose of this study is to help college and graduate students understand the characteristics of English language, the charm of English, in order to use English flexibly and improve English level and ability.*

KEY WORDS: advertising English, *the Economist*, English vocabulary; language feature

INTRODUCTION

In markets in which advertising is typically over-provided by the market, because firms do not account for the negative externalities of their advertising on other firms, which is the feature of advertising in markets (Rachel Griffith et al., 2021). Usually, people use language to communicate and express their thoughts and this could not be done without vocabulary (Thamer Alharthi,2020). Besides, vocabulary is considered a primary element in all language use (Schmitt, Cobb, Horst, &Schmitt, 2015) and thus it helps learners to be functional in a language in any given context. Corpus-based research indicates that second language (L2) learners need to know from 3000 to 9000 words to achieve reasonable comprehension of different kinds of discourse (e.g., Dang& Webb, 2014; Nation, 2006). Therefore, it is important for second language learners to study vocabulary in various ways. Advertisement can be classified into many

genres and there are rich words in different fields, learners could study vocabularies and foreign culture in different contexts. In a word, advertisement vocabulary leaning is necessary.

Today, a widely -accepted definition of advertising was adopted by the American Marketing Association (AMA), “Advertising is the non-personal communication of information usually paid for and usually persuasive in nature about products, services or ideas by identified sponsors through the various media.” (Yang Shenglan, 2010) The media include newspaper, magazine, radio, television and the network. It has two basic purposes: primarily, to persuade and secondarily, to inform. The advertising is widely used in our society to persuade the public to buy products and services, embrace ideas and take actions such as contributing money or sending inquiries. The ultimate objective of advertisements is increasing sales. The advertising language is an important vehicle of advertising communication. Geis said: “the language of advertising is language used to persuade or otherwise entice people to purchase products or services, vote for particular political candidates, modify their behavior or come to adopt a favorable view of some corporate entity.” (Geis, 1994:42).

The magazine *the Economist* is published by a London newspaper company in 1843. Many articles in it are full of wisdom, humor, seriousness and deep thinking. They provide the most information within limited numbers of words, which attract many elites in business and politics. According to a report in 2007, it sold 1.4million in every period around the world. And half of them are sailed to North America, fifteen percent to the European countries, and ten percent to the Asia. Therefore, it is an international magazine which is unlimited to England area. Besides, the producers of this magazine hold that the readers of *the Economist* are social elites with well-paid salaries and critical minds. Hence, they are reluctant to explain some economic words or special terms. We will also find many Latin words or French from this magazine. Based on the above reasons, it is meaningful that we do further research on English advertisements of this magazine.

In *the Economist*, advertisements can be divided into two kinds, one is commercial ones and the other is non-commercial ones. This paper regards the former one as main research targets. The first reason is the number of commercial advertisements is numerous, which is convenient for data collection and analysis. The second one is commercial ones have more prominent features of advertisements than non-commercial.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Many researchers have done the relevant researches on advertising from the perspective of translation, psychology, stylistics and linguistics. Among these researches, linguists really contributed a lot to the features of English advertising. Many of them have successfully analyzed the characteristics of English advertisements which provide us the fundamental research procedures and directions. Therefore, it is necessary for us to summarize the research work. Besides, advertising is changing with the world, so many nowadays researchers give us some new perspectives and examples to do analysis of advertising which also deserve a summary.

According to the collection and reading of literature, many researchers usually analyze features of advertisements from the following aspects: the lexical level, syntactic level, discourse level and rhetorical level. Some give priorities to the linguistic functions and others pay more attention to stylistic aspects.

G. Leech's "English in advertising" (1966) is the earliest book on English advertising from the linguistic perspective. He described the vocabulary and structures of advertisements but he didn't explain why he did analysis from these aspects. Although he didn't analyze details and relevant functions of advertisements, he still set a good example for descriptive research and quantitative method.

Vestergaard & Schroder's *The Language of advertising* (1985) analyzes advertisements from the sociolinguistic perspectives, which aims to explain how advertisers use linguistic strategies to achieve their selling goals. Guy Cook's book 'the discourse of advertising' (1992) is to analyze advertising as discourse.

Aiwei's paper *functional analysis of advertising English* (2004) gives us a comprehensive research perspective from linguistic functions including informative function, persuasive function and reflective function.

Guo Guilong and Zhang Hongbo's *English advertisements: style and translation* (2008) analyze features of advertisements from levels of vocabulary, syntax and rhetoric methods. The author provides us a stylistic view to do advertising analysis. Based on former theories, the author analyses how to do translation work better by means of stylistics and some advertisements in the daily life.

In Geoffrey N. Leech's book *Style in Fiction: A linguistic introduction to English fictional prose*, he analyzed all relevant knowledge of stylistics. Because he held that

stylistics builds on linguistics and in return, stylistics challenges our linguistic frameworks, reveals their deficiencies, and urges us to define them. It is important for English learners to study language or linguistics from the stylistics. Similarly, advertisements include a lot of knowledge of linguistics, and it is necessary for us to analyze stylistic features of them if we want to probe into more interesting language points and learn more about English. Therefore, the author of this paper will use some theories of Leech in this book to analyze the examples listed in the following part.

Through this review, few studies take one specific magazine as research target to do vocabulary analysis. Advertising media have many forms with different functions. If we do not differentiate the magazine from other media such as newspaper, television, we will not have an accurate recognition of magazine advertising. More importantly, no specific research target makes data collection difficult. Therefore, the author chooses *the Economist* and collects data to make this paper more convincing.

Advertising Vocabulary Analysis

The following part is the most essential part of the whole paper. The author extracted one hundred advertisements from *the Economist* to do data analyses in order to make this research clear and convincing. I looked through ten issues of the Economist from 2018-09-15 to 2019-01-05, and then extracted nearly ten pieces of advertisements from each issue. Of all of material, ten pieces of them are special because they are specific for introduction to the magazine itself, which would be introduced in the part of rhetorical features. It contains original language knowledge and cultures and will be interesting.

The following part will help domestic readers know about the language habits of native speakers. I believe that the deeper they understand the essence of language, the better they learn the English.

From perspective of linguistics, word is the smallest unit of a complete sentence with specific meaning. It can be analyzed from aspects of phonetic, semantic and construction. In terms of the features of arbitrary and creativity, English in advertising could make up some new words not seen in the dictionary. For example, in the Economist, “Protects against foot-in-mouth disease”, of which “foot-in-mouth” combines “foot-and-mouth” with “put one’s foot in one’s mouth”. This advertisement could be understood as someone who doesn’t know what does he talk about, especially in some urgent situations. Therefore, advertising designers make use of the flexibility of English to make language humorous and euphemistic. Besides, one English word sometimes has many meanings which are often used in the advertising designs. In a word, it is important to analyze words including adjectives, verbs and pronouns.

3.2 Pronouns

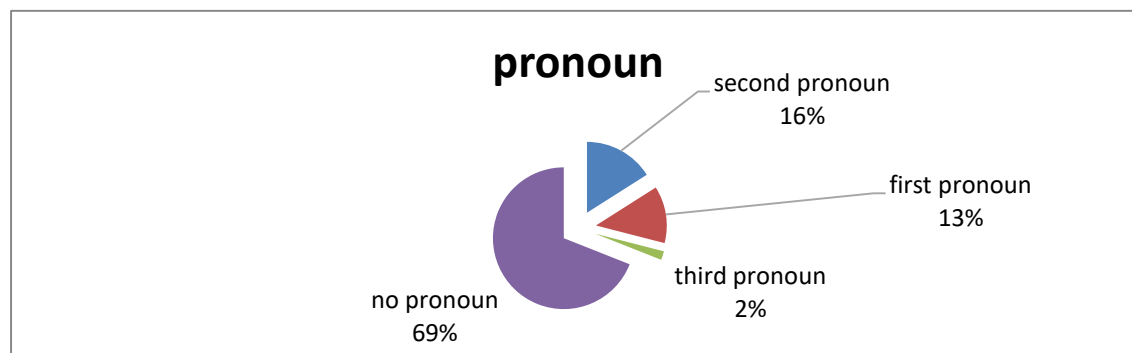


Chart 1 frequency of pronoun

In one hundred advertisements, I list the first, second and third pronouns in Excel, and then count the total number of them respectively. Out of 100 advertisements, 13 use first-pronoun, that is, 13percent. Of thirteen pieces of advertisements, the first pronoun singular appeared three times including “I” and “my”. The rest nine first pronoun are plural. Therefore, we infer that advertisers prefer to use first-pronoun plural. Out of 100advertisements, 16 use second-pronoun, that is, 16%. Of these ones, 7 use the pronoun “you”, 8 use adjective possessive pronoun, and one uses noun possessive pronoun. Out of all advertisements, two of them use the third pronoun, “she and he”. The rest of the ads haven’t pronouns.

In order to enhance customers’ sense of participation, English advertisers often use pronouns. The first pronoun usually refers to admen, and the second pronoun symbolizes customers. The third pronoun usually is someone who is familiar with readers. From the chart1, we conclude that admen prone to use second-person pronouns and first-person plural pronouns because it will shorten the distance between customers and sellers. We also find that most of advertisements are not use pronouns because admen want to make their advertisements more brief or simple. The fourth one is a good example. If we use the pronoun, we have to make a complete sentence. The following examples are good proofs of the above explanations.

Examples:

1. We are our choices. (Etihad: choosewell)
2. When your perseverance/ thanks you to the next level, you’ve made history (watch)
3. We understand wealth. But more importantly, we understand you.
4. Impossible. (Grab)

The first one uses first-pronoun plural “we” and “our”. They refer to the speaker plus

others. It seems like talking to a friend, which narrows the gap between buyers and sellers. The use of this strategy actually is to improve the businessmen's selling. Why advertisers don't use the first-pronoun singular? It sometimes thought egocentric to use "I".

The second instance uses the second-pronoun "you" and the adjective possessive pronoun "your". "You" refers to one specific person who is named by the speaker. The second one used three second-pronouns which shortened the psychological distance between the admen and target audiences as if they were having a face-to-face talk. It creates an atmosphere of informality and intimacy. (Xuehanrong, 2003:193) Besides, the use of adjective possessive pronoun connotes that something belongs to consumers, which make them happy and think that they are owners of these objects. It is really skillful method to attract customers to buy their products.

The third advertisement is the combination of the second-person pronoun and the third-person pronoun. After reading this one, I feel like the seller and I are good friends who help can help each other. Therefore, this one prominently shorten the distance between two bodies.

In a word, the first-person plural pronouns and the second-person pronouns are often used in advertisements. We can conclude that pronouns can broaden the meaning of advertisements and are easy to mislead customers. Therefore, students could analyze pronouns used in the English articles to feel the effects of different situation.

3.3 Adjective

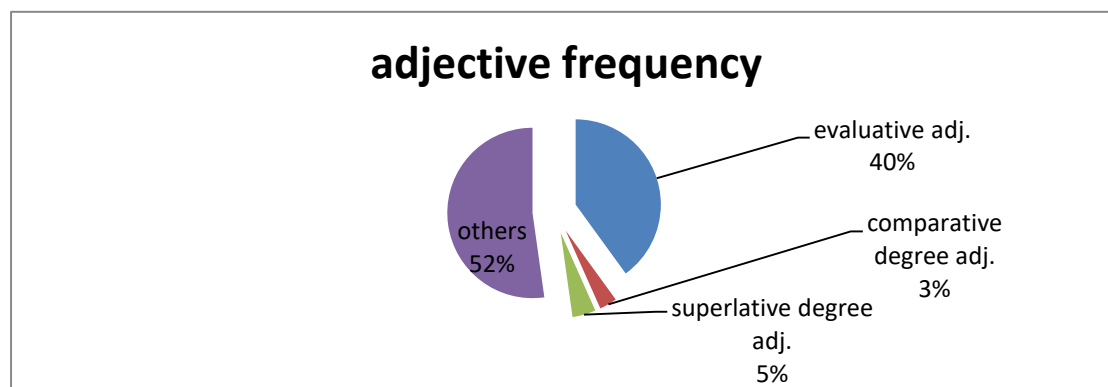


Chart 2 adjective frequency

In one hundred pieces of advertisements, there are thirty six evaluative adjectives, that is, forty percent. Out of one hundred advertisements, three are comparative degree adjectives, that is, three percent, and four superlative degree adjectives, that is, five percent. the rest of the advertisements haven't adjectives.

The adjectives in advertisements can be classified into two kinds in terms of the advertising contents: the first one is information introduction which tells customers relevant functions of products. The second one is subjective judgements with complimentary words or strong emotions, which is called evaluative adjective, for example, good, beautiful, delicious and so on. The frequency of evaluative adjectives is high, so I will give priority to them. The superlative and comparative adjectives have the similar function, which are also important research point. Admen analyze these adjectives because advertisements are not implicit. Tangkesheng said: “The advertisements are different from poems which need implicit beauty. The former aims to propagandize their own products to urge customers buy them. Therefore, the language of advertisements is more direct and clear for readers’ convenience. The following part is good explanation.

Examples:

1. Don’t just watch TV, experience it in *stunning* 4k and *captivating* color. (Samsung)
2. Three continents. One *truly global* MBA. (Washington University in StLouis)
Leading with *world-class* / expertise in Shanghai, Barcelona, Washington D.C. and St.Louis.
3. This Watch has seen the *deepest* frontier. (Rolex:watch)
4. Bouncing back even better than before (tourist)

Most ads are fond of using evaluative emotive adjectives to appeal to the feelings and emotions of the consumers. For example, in this magazine, “global” is one word that frequently appears in many ads. Other evaluative adjectives, such as, “unique” “inspired” “stunning” “captivating”, which show the prominent advantages of products. Besides, in reading these magazines, I find that most of admen choose more specific positive words or some new words that could symbolize their things better. Most of ads avoid using common and simple words such as “wonderful” “charming” “complete”. This phenomenon indicates that admen pay more attention to the sense of sincerity in order to persuade audiences buy their products.

The second advertisement is a complete one which has some special points. Firstly, the title of this on includes two figures which clearly indicate that the advantage of Washington University in MBA.

The last two sentences use comparative degree and superlative degree to intensify the degree of satisfaction. for the third one, it uses the superlative degree to tell audiences the Rolex watch are the best on in the world. The forth one also has the effects of high phrase of the touring company.

3.4 Verb

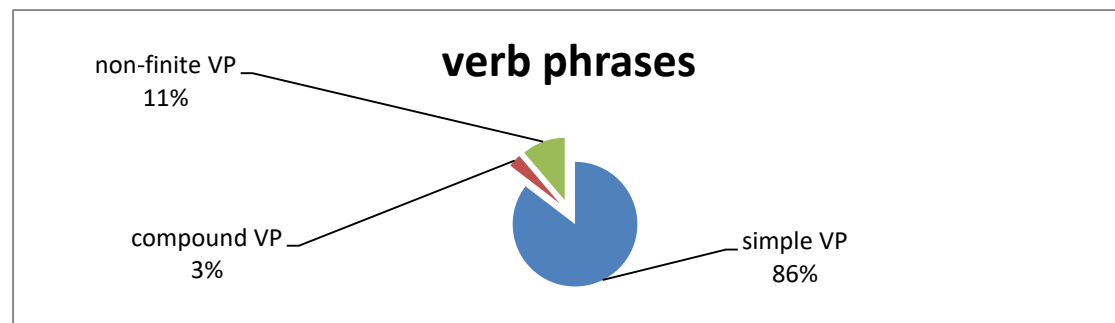


Chart 3 genres of verb phrases

Out of one hundred advertisements, there are 89 verb phrases. Out of all verb phrases, 76 are simple verb phrases, that is 86 percent, and 3 are compound verb phrases, that is 3%. The rest of these are non-finite verbs which have 10, that is 11 percent. For the simple ones, there are 27 verb phrases which belong to auxiliary verbs, and the rest 49 belong to lexical verbs which equal to finite verbs. Finite verbs have tense, but my research point is not on this because its tense characteristics are not prominent. Therefore, I will prefer to the analysis of non-finite verbs.

According to Laura Wright and Jonathan Hope, verb phrases consist of an obligatory main verb to which other, auxiliary, verbs may be added, as well as negative particles and adverbs. They can be either simple or complex, finite or non-finite. Simple verb phrases have only one verb in them. Complex ones have at least two verb forms. Certain verbs typically add non-finite forms to their right. Sometimes, authors usually use both the simple verb phrases and complex ones. In the book: *Stylistics: A Practical Coursebook*, the author writes that the effect of this frequency of simple verb phrases is to give the texts their matter-of-fact atmosphere. They are full of statements, of events undistanced from the ready by complex time-frames. (Laura Wright, Jonathan Hope, 2000) For infinitive verbs, there are usually three forms: to+ base forms, -ing forms, and past participle. They lack of tense and they are to indicate interior thought, so it's worthwhile being analyzed. The following advertisements in the Economics are evidence.

Examples:

1. Go make it. We'll protect it. (Google Cloud)
2. Money talks. See what yours is saying. (Personal Capital)
3. Packaging innovation that gets results. It's our DNA. (smurfitkappa)
4. Prepared to defend at any moment.

The first one uses three simple verbs which are simple in language and strong in voice.

It seems to lead us to do things bravely and promise us a good result. The user needn't worry about some risks which all involved in Google's services. As Laura Wright and Jonathan Hope said, simple verb phrases give us matter-of-fact atmosphere. Compared to the first one, second sentence uses simple verb "talks" and the complex verb "is saying" which are more vivid than the first one. "Money talks" is an instant action and it persuades us money can talk, and then the later part is a delaying action which gives us choices to believe their company or not. I think the second one give respects for customers or it is a business strategy to attract buyers. The first one make one exciting and is easily arose people's interest.

The third and the fourth one belong to non-finite verb phrases. I find that there is a little difference between the third one and the fourth. The former uses "-ing" form which appeared four times in all advertisements tells us it is an active action and it will be going on forever. By contrast, the past participle is rarely used in advertisements because it denotes a little passive meaning and it's tense is easily mislead to the past tense. Except for both of them, "to+ base" form deserves some research because the frequency of this form is high. Taking the fourth one as an example, "to defend" not only indicate the action in behavior but also interior thought in psychology. In a word, the "to+ base" form and the present participle are frequently used in advertisements. When we study advertising language, we may pay more attention to it.

.The last characteristic of verb phrases is the use of brief verbs. I find that admen prefer to use common and daily words rather than the formal or academic words. I hold targets of this magazine are not limited to elites but general people. For example, using "get" replaces "obtain", and "buy" substitute for "purchase", which aims to make advertisements easier. Usually, the following verbs are often seen in magazines: make, some, get, go, give, know, have, keep, look, see, need, buy, love, use, take, feel, like, taste, choose, be, try, serve, let, call, etc.

3.5 Negatives

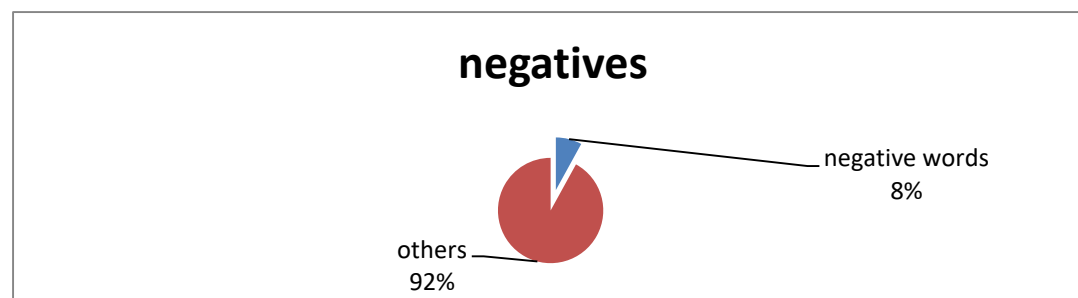


Chart 4 negatives frequency

Out of one hundred advertisements, there are 8 pieces of them which used negative words including “not, nothing, without”. And the word “not” appeared six times. A scholar XueHanrong said: “Negatives tend to be used very sparingly because the purpose of all advertising is to familiarize customers with or remind them of a particular product in the hope that they will buy it. But when negatives do occur, they are usually placed in an emphatic position to highlight the special merits of a product.” (2003:192) As for advertisements I collected, I find that the negative words usually appeared in the end of one sentence, which is more emphatic than the beginning or the middle of one sentence.

Examples:

1. Commitment to service without borders (Air China)
2. introducing the 2018 QLED TV see nothing else (三星)
3. Actual investors think in decades. Not quarters (Baillie Gifford)投资

Negatives avoid bad feelings or expressions that customers have. The use of negative words kills doubts of buyers who are skeptical of terrible influence or results of these products. For example, the first one, the airplane company emphasizes that their service hasn't borders to attract more audiences to take their planes. Besides, negative words highlight some special characters that other products haven't. Furthermore, some business men want to highlight some prominent characters of their products by means of negative words. Taking the second one as an example, SAMSUNG uses “nothing” to tell readers their products are best in the world and you needn't to see the other similar ones. Moreover, in order to cater for the psychology of consumers admen often choose “all” “everyone” and “none” to persuade audiences that the unbelievable functions of products have been accepted by most of consumers.

CONCLUSION

It is necessary for English learners who want to be proficient in English. English needs attention to some details and to know functions behind the language. Only we understand them and make some comparison with Chinese ones, we will have new feelings to advert ising translation as well as the usage of English. Besides, we also conclude that the vocabularies are really essential to learning. In our daily life, we must memorize kinds of meanings and make clear of its variations as well as their functions in specific contexts. Furthermore, some strange words or sentences need to pay more attention to and they are worth thinking from views of functions. details are easily to make a whole sentence totally different. Lastly, figures of speech help writers or readers know about language and make them more active.

Because of limited data tool, the article only presents one hundred pieces of advertisements which are not enough to have an exact result as well as an authoritative research result. In the future, the researcher could expand the amounts of advertisements and make use of relevant software to do analysis. Meanwhile, some analyses are subjective opinions which may not be convincing. Besides, there are still other stylistic phenomena deserving careful analyses. In the future study, the researchers may find out more useful and interesting topics and knowledge to help second language learners.

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