Sentence Types in Appellative Advertisements

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Abstract: The article defines the appellative advertisements, identifies the possible sentence types used in them and proposes a new terminology for five out of the eight sentence types. The corpus comprises eighteen advertisements; two of them analysed in detail in the present article. Finally, the collected data is summarized and conclusions are drawn.

Keywords: appellative advertisements, types of directive sentences, interrogative and declarative sentences

1. Introduction

In the first part of this article, the appellative advertisements will be defined and the corpus will be introduced. The sentence types used in appellative advertisements will be identified and a new terminology will be proposed where necessary. In the second part, we shall exemplify the way in which the analysis has been conducted; we shall present the results of the analysis and draw conclusions

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with respect to the sentence types most frequently encountered in appellative advertisements.

2. Syntactic characteristics of the appellative advertisements

In a previous article (Şimon 2008: 53), the appellative advertisements were defined as those advertisements that try to get the addressee to act in a certain way. They may be:

a. **questioning** - those containing a question usually in the headline and the central topic of the question is the addressee (cf. Gieszinger 2001: 233);

b. **directive** – those containing a direction, expressed by, what I called, a *directive imperative* sentence, which is an imperative sentence ending with a period, an *emphatic directive imperative* sentence, which is an imperative sentence ending with an exclamation mark, a *directive imperative sentence without a punctuation mark*, which is an imperative sentence ending with no punctuation mark at all or *subject and predicate elliptical directive imperative sentences*, which are elliptical imperative sentences only mentioning the website, telephone number (the meaning is ‘Visit our website/ Call us at…’). There is one more way of giving directions, namely by pointing to the availability of the product/ service in a particular shop/ geographical area. This last type of directions is expressed by *elliptical directive declarative sentences* which mention only ‘available in/ from …’. Such sentences have the meaning of ‘it is available in/ from …’. It can be noticed that in some advertisements, the phrase ‘available until/ while…’ is used to give a time limit. In this particular situation it pushes the possible consumer to take
an immediate decision and does not direct him/her to do something. For this reason, I considered such sentences as simply declarative.

These directions refer to the consumption of the advertised product/service or prepare consumption (the acquisition of catalogues; coupons to be filled in and posted; telephone numbers, e-mail addresses, websites which may be helpful in order to get further information about the product/service/issue; trial of the advertised product; availability of the product/service in a limited period of time or in a particular shop/geographical area) (cf. Giezinger 2001: 228, Kotler 1994: 602). All the imperative sentences encountered in the advertisements building up the corpus direct the addressee in one way or another.

The appellative advertisements in the corpus advertise household necessities (fabric conditioner), beauty accessories (glue-on nails, cosmetic contact lenses), an investment guide, cosmetics (cream; line of cleansing, conditioning, and styling products; frizz control treatment), medicines (anti-allergy syrup, cold-sores healing cream), post boxes, food (lasagna, diet-food products), a battery powered razor for women. The advertised issues in the appellative advertisements refer to milk consumption and to non-smoking campaigns, and the advertised services are a contest, a saving plan and a service offered by banks.

The corpus comprises eighteen appellative advertisements: nine questioning-appellative and nine directive appellative. The number of the advertisements making up a sub-class is not even (nine advertisements in a sub-class), and therefore a certain characteristic is always more representative than the other, e.g. one characteristic appears in five ads, the other characteristic in four ads out of nine, so a ratio of five to four.
It is interesting to notice that ‘pure’ appellative advertisements are quite rare in the corpus, probably because they would seem too manipulative and the addressee would get the feeling that something is wrong and that is why the advertiser uses so many appeals.

3. Sentence types in appellative advertisements

We shall now illustrate the way in which the appellative advertisements have been analysed in terms of sentence types, focussing particularly on the new classes of directive sentences.

The first advertisement chosen for exemplification is an appellative advertisement, containing two questions addressed to the recipients, one, at the beginning (in the title) and one, in the end. Moreover, the slogan is also appellative and is followed by the website address. Between these appellative charges, the offer is shortly introduced. This means the advertisement is a questioning appellative advertisement with an informative-descriptive function because it emphasizes some characteristics of the advertised product:

e.g. "DOES THE IDEA OF NO PRESERVATIVES IN YOUR LASAGNA SOUND GOOD? (S1) / (P1)
IT SOUNDS GOOD TO US, TOO. (S2) / (P2)

We put a lot in our lasagna. (S3) But no preservatives. (S4) That way you can truly enjoy our freshly-made pasta, rich sauce, and naturally aged cheese. (S5) Doesn’t that sound good? (S6) / (P3)
Stouffer’s: SEE WHAT’S COOKING AT STOUFFER’S (S7) / (P4)
SeeWhatsCooking.com (S8) / (P5)“.

(“Parents”, September 2006) (S = sentence; P = paragraph)
The advertisement questions us first whether we prefer eating lasagna with or without preservatives. The offer is obviously lasagna with no preservatives, rich sauce, and naturally aged cheese. After the offer has been introduced, the advertiser checks out our opinion about the offer. Finally, the imperative slogan and the website solicit feedback.

From a syntactic viewpoint, the advertisement makes recourse to declarative (S2, S3, S4, S5), interrogative (S1, S6), subject and predicate elliptical directive sentences (website) (S8), and directive sentences without a punctuation mark (slogan). (S7)

The second advertisement refers to a service offered by banks and is mainly directive, but it also has a secondary informative-descriptive function because it gives some details about the service:

e.g. "Go online and save time. (S1) / (P1)  
Pay your bills at www.visabillpay.com (S2) / (P2)

The simplest, safest way to pay bills. (S3)  
Absolutely free! (S4) / (P3)  
As a VISA Credit Cardholder, you can now pay your bills online at www.visabillpay.com (S5)  
It’s simple, safe and convenient. (S6) Just follow these three easy steps to pay your bills quickly. (S7)  

• Log on and choose from two payment options. (S8)  
• Enter your bill and VISA Credit Card details. (S9)  
• Click to pay. (S10) / (P4)

VISA Bill Pay  
When it comes to your bill, just chill. (S11) / (P5)"

(“The Times of India”, 1 September 2006) (S = sentence; P = paragraph)

The title of the advertisement (P1) highlights a problem that we all face nowadays: the lack of time, but you can save time if you pay your bills online, as it is suggested in the subtitle (P2) and quasi-subtitle (P3). The next part of the
advertisement presents the offer in detail and gives precise directions which may help the addressee become a successful and satisfied user of the bank’s service. Finally, the offer is reinforced once more in the final slogan.

The sentence types used in this advertisement are: directive sentences without punctuation marks (S2, S5), declarative (S3, S6, S7), directive imperative sentences (S1, S8, S9, S10, S11) and an exclamatory sentence (S4), expressing surprise.

The table below presents the data collected from the analysis of the sentence types most frequently used in appellative advertisements:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Advertisement type</th>
<th>Sentence type</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Questioning appellative advertisements (9 ads)</td>
<td>Declarative sentence</td>
<td>9 ads</td>
<td>0 ads</td>
<td>4 ads</td>
<td>6 ads</td>
<td>0 ads</td>
<td>1 ad (final reference to the website)</td>
<td>1 ad (expressing surprise)</td>
<td>9 ads</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Directive appellative advertisements (9 ads)</td>
<td>Elliptical directive declarative sentence (availability)</td>
<td>8 ads</td>
<td>1 ad</td>
<td>2 ads</td>
<td>7 ads + 1 ad (final website without www)</td>
<td>1 ad</td>
<td>4 ads (final reference to the website)</td>
<td>2 ads (expressing surprise)</td>
<td>0 ads</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
It can be concluded that all questioning appellative advertisements resort to interrogative and declarative sentences. The directive imperative sentences are used very often, while the subject and predicate elliptical directive sentences are moderately met in questioning appellative advertisements. Emphatic directive imperative sentences do not occur in any advertisement of this sub-class, probably because, if too many appellative devices had been present in one single advertisement, the message would have been too coercing. All directive appellative advertisements have declarative and directive imperative sentences of some kind. One of the directive appellative sentences ends with the website address which, however, does not mention the initial www, while all the other sentences ending with the full website address are directive sentences without punctuation marks. All the other kinds of directive sentences are quite rarely identifiable.

4. Conclusions

In the first part of this article, the appellative advertisements have been defined and the corpus has been introduced. Eight sentence types have been identified and, for five of them (those emphasised), a new terminology has been proposed (exclamatory sentence, interrogative sentence, declarative sentence, elliptical declarative directive sentence, directive imperative sentence, emphatic directive imperative sentence, directive imperative sentence without a punctuation mark, subject and predicate elliptical directive sentence). The second part of the present article has exemplified the way in which the analysis has been conducted and has presented the conclusions that have been drawn. So, the sentence types most often encountered in appellative advertisements are the declarative and the
directive imperative sentences. Subject and predicate elliptical directive sentences are used in about a quarter of the analysed advertisements. The advertisers prefer to give the website address or telephone number in a directive imperative sentence or directive sentence without a punctuation mark. It clearly comes out of this study that if the sentence ends with the website address, no punctuation mark is used. If the website address is followed by some descriptive text, the sentence ends with a punctuation mark (period or exclamation mark). Interrogative, emphatic directive and exclamatory sentences are used quite rarely (the latter always express surprise).

References