

## **The Functional Features of Written Business Advertisements-----A Case Study of a Written Business Advertisement**

**Changying Liu**

School of Foreign Language  
China West Normal University  
P.R. China

### **Abstract**

*This paper analyses the functional features of a typical business ad. by way of Halliday's Systemic-Functional Grammar and illustrates that the functional features serve the purpose of AIDA, which is the basic principle of advertisements.*

**Keywords:** Systemic-Functional Grammar; Business Advertisement; Functional Analysis; Register; Communication Role

### **1. Introduction**

The function of advertising is to persuade others to buy the goods or services. Any ads must meet the AIDA principle according to American specialist E.S.Lewis: (a) Attention (b) Interest (c) Desire (d) Action (Sun Liang, Nianxiang Zhe 1997. As a kind of very important ads, business ad must meet the principle, too. But it has its own features, so it is very necessary to analyse its text. Hallidy, the founder of Systemic Functional Grammar in the *An Introduction to Functional Grammar* (1985 B, 1994) pointed out explicitly that his purpose of the construction of Functional Grammar is to provide a theoretical framework for discourse analysis, and this framework can be used to analyze any English spoken discourse and written one. "We think Systemic Functional Grammar is a more suitable theory than any other discourse analysis theories, so we can use it in discourse analysis".(Guowen Huang) I hold the same point, so I'd like to try it on a piece of business ad.

Here is a business ad selected casually from TIME(2003) and each sentence is numbered for the purpose of analysis.

1、STEP OUT OF THE ORDINARY WITH EXTRAPRDINARY DIALTA COLOR。 2、 You're dressed to impress.3.But now, what about your documents? 4. Put your best foot forward with the multifunctional Minolta DIALTA Color image information products. 5.DIALTA Color can dress up those dull business materials with powerful, eye-popping color-which can make all the difference between just being seen and being a success. 6. It's the easy and versatile communication tool today's offices demand, with the must have results you expect. 7. High-speed, high-quality color and black & white scanning, printing and copying all in a single operation. 8. Plus, network capability to save, share, produce and print slick original business documents in a flash. 9. With affordable DIALTA Color your documents stand out. 10. Your business stands out.11. Best of all, you'll stand out. 12. Get the color of success. 13. Get Minolta. 14. To learn more, visit [www.imageinfo.minolta.com](http://www.imageinfo.minolta.com).

### **2. The Analysis of the Change of the Register and the Communication Role**

According to Halliday, the change of the register is made up of field, tone and mode and they influence the use of our languages ( Guoweng Huang,2002).Field refers to what's happening, the nature of social activities, languages or what is described. This ad is about a multi-functional copy machine named Diata Color because this name appears in 8 sentences (No.1,4,5,9) including the related word "it" in No.6,7,13 and 14 among all the 14 sentences. Tenor refers to the communicator, their relations, basic information, features, status, and roles. In this ad , the two parties are the manufacture and their targeted customers.

Although their relation is remote, the speaker (the advertiser) tries to show their close relation, which is shown by the words and sentence structures selected: pronoun "You" is widely used together with "We" to create the warm atmosphere to make the ad persuasive and believable to meet AIDA; Many cleft sentences, such as sentences No.3,7,8 and14, many imperative sentences, such as 4,12,13 are used to establish a close relation with the targeted customers. Mode refers to the role of language in communications, including channel and modification. This ad is a written discourse but an informal one because of the large number of cleft sentences.

Discourse can be addresser-centered, addressee-centered, and outsider-centered, and can also be rotation-centered between addressees and addressers.(Guoweng Huang,2002)This ad is addressee-centered because the connection between the 14 sentences is you-centered: 1) (You) (beginning) → (2) You → (3) Your→ (4) Your→ (6) You→ (9) Your→ (10) Your→ (11) You→ (12) (You)→ (13) (You)→ (14) (You). The reason why the publisher adopts this way is because information release of written ads is a one-way flow from the publisher to the audience, and the audience cannot make feedback timely, so this method can make up this shortcoming, and achieve AIDA. The "you" at the beginning helps the publisher shorten the distance between the addresser and the addressee, make the feeling of identification and pave the way to introduce the products. The third sentence is a question and then an answer made by the addresser himself. Clearly the addresser wants to use this rhetoric means to arouse the addressee's "attention" and "interest".

### **3. The Analysis of the Metafunction**

According to Halliday (1985), metafunction is made up of three functions: ideational function, interpersonal function, and texture function. In this paper, quantitative analysis of the transitivity structure, thematic structure and mood structure is made separately on the basis of this theory.

#### **3.1 The Features of Transitivity Structures**

Transitivity is a semantic system to indicate conceptions. It can divide what people do and what people say in reality into many processes and point out the concerning participants and elements(1996).There are 24 processes, among which 17 are material ones (70.8%), 2 are mental ones (8.4%), 5 are relative ones (20.8%) and no others. This figure completely meets the needs of the field of this advertisement because it must introduce its features, and make comments to attract consumers to achieve the purpose of AIDA. This advertisement is a discourse taking narrative significance mainly, supplemented by the description of textual meaning. Material process is to express what happens in reality, while relative one the ideas or attitudes, and mental one the non action process, such as feelings, recognitions and motions. Just because of the special field, no behavioural process and existential process appear in this ad. The former expresses the Physiological activity and later the existence .According to Guoweng Huang,(2002) ad is a one way communication, a one-way flow of information. That is, the advertisers send the information and the audience accept it, and there is no chance for them to exchange information, so there is no speech process in most ads, such as this one.

#### **3.2 The Features of Mood Structure**

According to Halliday, Speech function is made up of statement, question, offer and order. These functions are expressed through mood, intonation and vocabulary ( Zhuangling Hu, Yongsheng Zhu, Delu Zhang,1996).This paper only analyses the mood. In a discourse, grammatical structure is made up of finite and mood. In the field of finite, present tense takes up 83% among the clauses. In the field of mood, there are 22 statements, taking up 92%; one interrogative sentence, 6.7%; 5 exclamatory sentences, 33%; no imperative sentence. The present tense accounts for the vast majority because it is mainly used to describe their products, and it is consistent with the language of ads. The other two tenses accounts for the vast minority because future tense is mainly used to predict the advantages of the products and to enhance its persuasive. The past tense is to make a contrast between the past situation where there is no such products and the present situation to produce a contrast effect to enhance the persuasive. Future tense and past tense are rare and supplementary just because the field of ads about the present situation.

Modal system is the addresser's judgment on the possibility of success and effectiveness of the his proposition, or the addresser requests the other party to assume obligations in the proposition, or expresses personal wishes in a proposal.(Zhuangling Hu, 1996). In this advertisement, the advertiser, in order to persuade the audience, tries to make objective statements, reduces personal comments, and seldom uses modal verbs and exclamatory sentences.

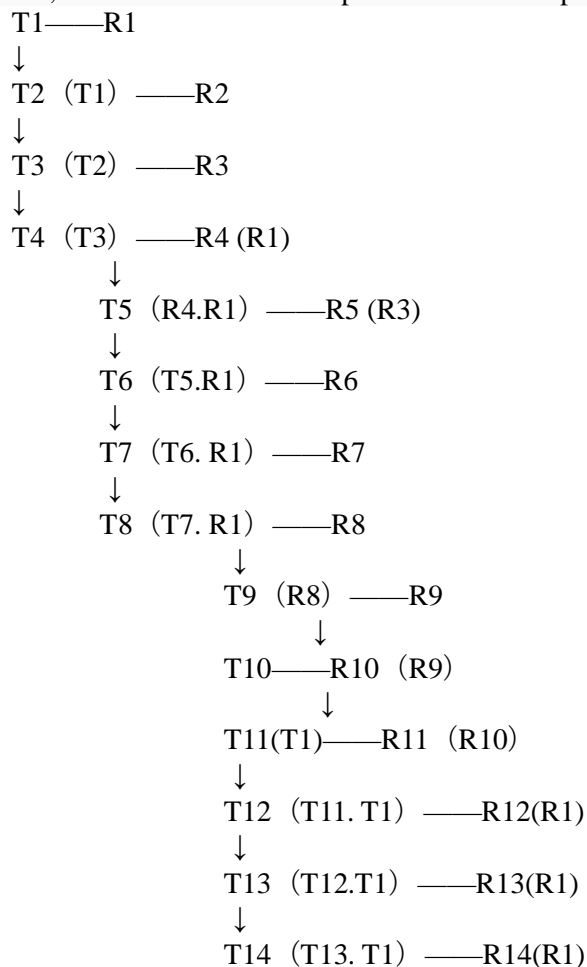
Statements are widely used just because advertising is a one-way communication, and interaction cannot be made timely and effectively. Question in this paper is to ask the advertiser himself a question to attract the attention of the audience. It's a strategy, not a real communication.

### 3.3 The Features of Thematic Structures

Thematic structure expresses textual meanings. In order to organize the ideational meaning and interpersonal meaning effectively, ads must choose textual meanings correspondingly. For the thematic structures, there are 12 themes, among which 2 are marked (all are adverbial themes), taking up 17%, and 10 are unmarked, taking up 83%. This means the word order of the most sentences is normal, and meets the needs to provide information. And in order to achieve the purpose of AIDA, try to be objective, and state the facts rationally, only adverbial themes are adopted, and there is no objective theme. This is because objective themes are marked and have very strong emotions.

Thematic progression is the continuous choice of the themes in the process of the formation of a discourse. But what is chosen is controlled by the situational context, reflects the textual information development approach. (Delu Zhang, 1988) These methods are different stylistic effects in certain situational context. Thematic progression in the ads is the following:

(T stands for theme, R stands for rheme, the Arabic numerals on the right of T or R stands for the number of the sentences, and Parentheses means part or all of the repeating relationship)



T1---You

R1---dialta color

R3---documents

From here we can see there are both continuation types and parallel types in this discourse (Zhanzi Li, 1992) but parallel types are the main ones.

This is because of the AIDA principle because the parallel type is to use the same thing as the topic to continue to control the flow of information, to focus on things, characteristics and the process of behavior, to enhance the expression of stress (Delu Zhang, 1998). In fact, this discourse is You centered, focuses on the description and introduction of various features and functions of the product, in the hope of drawing attention, stimulating the purchase desire and action so that the advertising purpose can be achieved successfully. (Zhanzi Li, 1992)

#### **4. Conclusion**

Based on quantitative analysis of all clauses in the ad, register variation and communicative roles, we can see clearly that in order to achieve the purpose of AIDA, , “You” is used as far as possible on the tone to form a chain to unify the whole text , and this corresponds to the potential “we”. In terms of register; many elliptical sentence patterns make the discourse an informal style; in communicative role at the same time, addressee-centered mode is adopted, and an intimate atmosphere is created; in the field of transitivity, most of the clauses belong to material processes and relative ones; in the field of mood structure, present tense and statements are widely used but modal verbs are rarely used; in the field of thematic structures, most are unmarked ;and in the field of thematic progressions, most are parallel ones. Obviously, the purpose is achieved.

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