

Identification of Speech Acts: A Linguistic Analysis of Advertisements in Pakistan

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Abstract

This study demonstrated the usage of speech acts in Pakistani advertisements employed to attract the addressees. Advertisements were used as a productive tool to entice the consumer to purchase the goods from the seller. The speech act theory by Searle (1969) provided a theoretical framework for the study of these advertisements. The data for this study were collected in the form of 30 written advertisements printed in newspapers and magazines and came from social media like Facebook were taken. A simple qualitative descriptive technique was used to analyze the data and to uncover the hidden directions and assertions used within the advertisements. The data were analyzed and classified according to speech act theory, and the frequency with which these speech acts had been used was noted, which provided the necessary evidence to support the idea that advertisers used speech acts usually to persuade the addressee, they provide them with information, arise their emotions and vows about the lucrative consequence of purchasing from them. The results of this study have shown that the most commonly used speech acts by advertisers are directives, commissive and assertive acts. These included the act of giving directions, orders, suggestions, and advice. They often used claim, assert, affirm, vow, and even promise the brand's reliability.

Key Words: Advertisements, Brands in Pakistan, Linguistic features, Speech act theory

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Introduction

Advertisement is a way of communication between the seller and the buyer. It is a tactic that is used to influence the buyer to attract him

to purchase the thing that is being advertised. Gillian Dyer (1982) defines advertising as a way of drawing the attention of somebody to something or informing somebody

about something. A number of tools and platforms are used to advertise an object like newspaper magazines, posters, billboards, and many electronic media platforms are extensively being used these days, like televisions and social media platforms like Facebook, YouTube, Instagram, websites, bloggers, and many others to convey the idea which compels the buyer to make a choice to purchase something from them. Dyer (1982) describes advertisements as “an attempt to manipulate people into buying a new way of life as well as things”.

Speech act theory was introduced by Austin in 1962. He defines speech acts as the expressions of psychological states (embarrassment, gratitude, regrets) used to convey a thought or idea which induces or elicit an action (e.g., ordering, warning, requesting) to maintain social interaction. He claimed that while uttering a sentence, we undergo three types of acts. One is locutionary (the act of saying something), the other is illocutionary act (the intention behind saying something) and the third one is perlocutionary (the effect created by an utterance).

Searle (1994) worked more extensively on speech act theory by stating, “speaking a language is performing speech acts”. Searle describes speaking a language as an

act of playing a game because he considers that both these actions are actually governed by some specified rules. He further argued that to master a language we need to master these rules. Searle gave the idea of illocutionary force indicating devices (IFID). He claimed that some linguistic devices are used to bring out the illocutionary force of an utterance. These linguistic devices are intonation, contour, punctuation, word order, stress, adverbs etc. He proposed if any utterance gives a clear idea of the intention of what the speaker wants to convey, then it is not important to show an illocutionary act in the utterance.

For decades different brands are not only concerned primarily with promotions of their goods and services but are also concerned with the manipulation of their social values and ideologies to hypnotize their buyers. Advertisement can be used to educate people and make them aware of their social and personal functions in an appropriate way. Many techniques are employed that use the content that has a direct association with their social values, religious values, and ethics, which leaves a huge impact on the psychological aspect of their brain. There are a lot of persuasive strategies which are used by advertisers to make the consumers to catch the attention of their product. These appeals could be

emotional, rational, humorous, adventurous, or romantic appeal. They may offer problem solving solutions to social or routine life issues.

In Pakistan, advertising agencies use enormous appeals and make exquisite use of language to attract the audience, implicitly applying a number of speech acts to make the consumers purchase their product. This paper analyzes the different kinds of speech acts used in Pakistani advertisements. The language used by Pakistani media in advertisements is generally precise, concise, and easily comprehensible enabling even the layman to understand with no difficulty because, a big fragment of the Pakistani population is unprivileged which are to be addressed at equal level. The slogans of these brands are generally in the English language from the very beginning but the full advertisement is generally addressed in the national language. However, a number of brands are now making extensive use of English to broadcast their ads in the English language.

Words are played with, to manipulate the reader. Sometimes words used are distorted to make an attractive statement like, “goooooo nite”. Bovee and Arens (1992) in *contemporary advertising* claimed “words do sell”, thus the advertisers

use unusual, stylish, and crispy language to seek the attention of readers or viewers. Sometimes imperative sentences are used like, “Feel good, Look good” by Lipton tea. Words communicate feelings; thus, words should be used with the deliberate choice to impact the viewers or reader’s psychology. Brand names of the objects are often associated with the concept that they want to convey regarding the object like “sweet sixteen” creates an image of beauty, “lifebuoy” evokes an image of health, “Sunsilk” kindles a silky-smooth image. Metaphors, symbolic language, alliteration, and rhymes are also used in advertisements.

Purpose

The purpose of this study is to analyze and focus on the linguistic aspect of written advertisements. This paper attempts to focus on the linguistic features of adverts, using speech act theory to describe how language delivers the hidden intentions of the advertisers, beyond the syntactic level. This study leads to extensive use of pragmatics in order to study meaning beyond the surface use of language. This paper argues that in analyzing the linguistic feature of an utterance or a written language it is very important to look at the context in which it is used by the user and the situation under which it has

been used by user. The language by the advertisers is generally witty, concise and picturesque to win the interest of audience. To uncover the illocution behind the language that is used in advertisements of Pakistan, is the main focus of this study.

Research Objectives

The main objectives of this study are;

1. To analyze and classify different speech acts used in written advertisements of different Pakistani brands?
2. To figure out the frequency with which the speech acts have been used in each advertisement under study?

Research Questions

1. What kind of speech acts are used in some written advertisement of Pakistan?
2. What is the frequency with which these speech acts have been used in the given advertisements?

Significance of Study

This study brings forth the use of speech acts by advertising agencies in Pakistan. It focuses on the linguistic features and the way they have been used to uncover the implicit and explicit use of speech

acts. It tends to highlight the hidden meaning of text used in advertisements and slogans of brands, which is more related to the contextual aspect of text.

This study may give a lucrative insight into the language usage and its comparative variables bring forth by different brands, which consequently, can give benefit to the advertising agencies, to have an outlook of what has already been expressed and displayed in the market. It may give them idea about how words can be used in a better way to win the audience.

Delimitations

This study solely focuses on the identification and classification of speech acts employed by advertisers to manipulate or tempt the consumers and viewers. Advertisements which have been published in print media like, newspapers, magazines and on social media like Facebook by different national and international brands in Pakistan, in the past few decades, will be taken into consideration.

This research was qualitative descriptive study in nature. Theory of speech act was employed to classify the data based on observations and interpretations.

Literature Review

This study is about the language used in written advertisements in the form of speech acts to provoke the readers or addressee. Advertisers use language as a tool to entice the customers and compel them to purchase the product. Kotler (1996), stated that the basic purpose of advertisement is the conveyance of the underlying message important to be delivered, which is generally conveyed through the images and the written forms. It is important for message in adverts to be transported well in an efficient manner, otherwise, the purpose of communication will be lost and the process will be disturbed. Suyanto (2007) claims that in advertisements, exquisite language is used for the purpose of enticing the readers to get positive responses from them. If the intention of the advertiser is not fully understood by the customers, the essence of the advertisement gets failed.

Austin proposed the idea of speech acts in his book *"How To Do Things With Words"*. He pointed out that "the total speech act in the total speech situation is the only actual phenomenon which, in the last resort, we are engaged in the elucidating" (Austin 1962). He states that speech act are the expression of psychological emotional or social

interaction which involves regrets thanks giving requesting warning etc. He classified the sentences into three acts; a locutionary act, which is the utterance of the sentence, an illocutionary act, which is the intention behind the utterance, a perlocutionary act, which define the effects of the utterance on the listener. It means the ultimate consciousness arise by the locutionary force of a sentence. Searle 1994 further extended the study of speech acts and define them as the "basic and minimal units of linguistic communication". He classifies the speech act as directives, assertive, declarative, commissive. Van Dijk (1992) differentiates speech act as micro speech act and macro speech act. Macro speech acts are the individual speech acts and macro speech acts or global speech acts are the utterances of the whole discourse. Dijk believes that advertisements and narratives discourse is generally associated with global speech acts. (Van Dijk, 1992). Taking into account the pragmatic function of discourse and interpersonal relations, Brinker classified speech acts into five textual categories i.e., information, obligation, appeal, declaration, and contact function.

An ample amount of research work has been done pertaining to the speech act analysis of advertisements. Simon (2008) at Politechnica

University of Timisoara performed a study to programmatically analyze and classify the speech acts found in written advertisements found in newspapers and magazines. These advertisements were 31 in number.

Dr. Chilwa (2007) performed research on “A speech act analysis of written adverts of soft drinks in Nigeria.” This research attempted to present and classify 20 Advertisements of soft drinks taken from print media during the period of 2000-2006 in Nigeria

The research was conducted by Novianti and Maliyani (2018) in Indonesia about the analysis of speech acts used in the advertisements regarding children milk on electronic media. The study concluded that most commonly used speech acts were representative and commissive.

A study performed by Simon and Dejica-Cartis (2014) in Politechnica University of Timisoara on the identification and classification of speech acts found in written advertisement classified the adverts on the basis of micro-speech acts and macro-speech acts. They concluded that the fundamental function of these advertisements was of persuasion and providence of information to the addressee.

Bayat (2013) conducted a study in which he studied 150

participants who were continuing their education program. The researcher researched upon the strategies with which they carry out the functions or acts of complaining, thanking apologizing and refusing. He found that the participants underwent acts of apologizing, thanking and refusing explicitly and usually they performed the complaining acts implicitly.

Al Eryani (2007) conducted a study on Yemeni learners of the English language in which he discussed speech acts with a focus on three strategies in the study. These are “excuse”, “expression of regret” and “offer of an alternative” strategies. In his study “giving a reason”, “excuses” “offering another option” or “giving an alternative” have almost the same function each other. In the same way Guo (2012) focused on similar strategies like direct, reason avoidance, criticism, and alternative. He also found that reason direct and alternative function the same way.

A study was conducted by Putri et al (2020) where the researchers discussed the illocutionary acts of judges and their comments on America’s next top model and Asia’s next top model. The framework of the study was Searle (1979) illocutionary acts and the study concluded that most used speech acts in America’s next Top

next model were assertive and declaratives accounted for 33.33%. In Asian Next top models declarative function was not found. The study also concluded that Asian's are more expressive than Americans and Americans are more formal and to the point.

Della and Sembiring (2018) performed a study for elucidating different directive speech acts used in the script of movie "the sleeping beauty". The study found that the types of speech acts used were command, request, permission, prohibition and question, among them most commonly used were of command type.

Methodology

Theoretical Framework

Speech act theory was first introduced by Austin who divided it into three acts; locutionary, perlocutionary and illocutionary. Searle (1979) further worked to categorize these acts. According to Searle speech acts are "utterances that have performative function in language and communication".

Searle classified the illocutionary acts as assertive, directives, commissives, expressives, declaratives. Assertives are those speech acts in which the speaker is committed to be true. Assertives may

be true or false these include suggestions, stating, replying, concluding, predicting, disagreeing etc. Directives are those speech acts in which the speaker attempts to get the hearer do something. Directives may be obeyed or disobeyed and include orders, commands, pleading, insisting etc. Commissives tells about the speaker's voluntary action in future. These include vows, promises, guarantees, oaths etc. Expressive acts are those in which speaker's emotions and the feeling towards something is revealed. These include thanking, apologizing, welcoming, congratulating etc. Declaratives are those speech acts which when uttered cause a change in external situation or state of an object or event. These are kind of declarations which alter external states like, firing, denouncing, pronouncing, declaring, announcing and appointing etc.

Data Collection

Data was collected in the form of morphological or syntactic features, gathered from the written advertisements printed in newspapers and magazines or the advertisements that were posted on social media like Facebook, in the past few years. Data was also collected from the language used in slogans raised by many brands in Pakistan. The brands taken under consideration are generally top brands of Pakistan selling goods that

belongs to household items or items of cleanliness, personal hygiene, electronics, fashion, beauty, textile, mobile networks and eatables of different kinds.

Sampling

A number of 30 advertisements different brands were selected for the study of linguistic features of the written advertisements in the newspapers, magazines and facebook. The criterion for the selection of these brands was, that it should either be a national brand of Pakistan or an international brand used in Pakistan.

Data Analysis Tools

Data was collected from the advertisements of Pakistani brands published in print media and social media and was analyzed using qualitative descriptive method. The simple technique of context analysis was applied and the gathered data was classified in the form of table, by employing speech act theory of linguists mentioned in this paper, to uncover the implicit or explicit intention depicted in advertisements. Their frequencies were also calculated to bring out their extent of usage.

Results and Discussions

The Data

KFC – Its finger licking good
Coca Cola – Open happiness
Macdonalds – I am lovin it
Apple – Think different
Loreal – Because you are worth it.
Mitsubishi Electric – Changes for the better.
PEL – Change your life.
Orient – Live in innovation.
Haier – Inspired living.
TUC – Invest in some real taste estate.
Hardees – Eat like you mean it.
Stylo – Run Confidently.
Sunsilk – its your time to shine.
Sunsilk – Give your hair the perfect care they deserve.
Pentene – The best solution for all hair fall problems.
Nestle Milk Pack – Eat healthy and drink healthy.
Fanta – Share the fun.
Pepsi – Dare for more
Dew – The success is beyond the fear.
Nescafe – Bring out the best in you.
Dawlance – Dawlance is reliable.
Cross stitch – Its all about wow factor.
Eden Robe – Time to splurge on the best of women ‘s wear.
Bonanza – Embrace the gardener of brilliant designs in marvelous hues, with Bonanza Satrangi.

Ego – Shopping is never a bad idea.
 Gul Ahmed Ideas – New things are good things.
 Khaadi – Unlock a fresh and vibrant look every day.

So-Kamal –Align your wardrobe with latest trends.
 Care – Care for confidence.
 Vestire Collection – Explore yourself by stepping up an

Table 4.1

Classification of Advertisements According to Respective Speech Acts

Assertive (10)	Directives (18)	Declaratives (2)	Commisives (11)	Expressive (2)
KFC	Coca Cola	Ego	Care	L'Oreal
Gul Ahmed	Bonanza	Gul Ahmed	Khaadi	MacDonald's
MacDonald's	Apple		Eden Robe	
Dew	Khaddi		Dawlance	
L'Oreal	PEL		Dew	
PEL	SO-Kamal		Pepsi	
Haier	Orient		Panteen	
Dawlance	Tuc		SunSilk	
Crosstich	Care		Haire	
Ego	Hardees		Orient	
	Vestire		Mitsubishi	
	Sunsilk			
	Nestle, Fanta and Pepsi			
	Nescafe and Eden Robe			

Table 4.1 shows the classification of adverts according to the speech acts used within them and the apparent and concealed intention

of the advertiser to influence the addressee. The results have shown that directives have been used more extensively by the advertisers which urge the addressee to take an action

and eventually cause the purchasing of goods from the sellers. These have been employed by big brand names like apple, Pel, Khaadi, Coca-Cola etc.

As in Nescafe add they direct us “to bring out the best within you”. Actually, they urge us to bring out our best version out of ourselves by taking Nescafe coffee and staying active. Assertive have also been used too much within these adds, which generally asserts, claims and states about the reliability or authenticity of the brand. Assertives are most commonly used within the ads of

brands which include electronics like Haier, Dawlance etc. and brands of foods like KFC and Dew etc.

Commissives have been employed to commit, promise, offer or assure about the lucrative act of purchasing the goods as in ads like edenrobe, Khaadi, Pantene etc. Expressive acts and declaratives have been used less often by the brands. The former incites the emotions and feelings of addressee and the later declares or pronounces about the rapport of brand or an idea raised by the brand.

Table 4.2

Frequency of usage of speech acts

Types of Speech Acts (Searle)	The frequency with which this speech acts have been used in given ads	Total number of adds
Assertives	10	
Commissives	11	
Directives	18	30
Expressives	2	
Declaratives	2	

Table 4.2 demonstrates the frequency with which these speech acts have been used in the

advertisements under study. Total number of advertisements taken understudy is 30. Directives have been used with the greater frequency,

these have been used 18 times in adverts with the percentage of 66%. Assertives have been used 10 times, with a percentage value of 33% within these ads. Frequency of commissives been used is 11 with a percentile of 36%. Whereas expressives and declaratives haven been used with equal frequencies. They have occurred two times each and have a percentage of 6.6%.

Discussion

Language is not merely used to transmit the messages but it is also used to perform an action and cause an action to occur. J.R Searle extended the theory of speech acts actually presented by J.L Austin. Searle, classified the speech acts into five major categories depending upon the function they perform. This study intends to identify, analyze and categorize the advertisements of different brands of Pakistan according to the usage of speech acts. Thirty advertisements from different sources like newspapers, magazines and Facebook, were collected. The results conclude that the most frequently used speech act within these advertisements was the directive act. Directives are the speech acts used for the purpose of giving advice, orders, suggestions, recommendations etc. It contains suggestions like “think different” as in Apple advertisement, which urges the addressee to purchase

their products and provokes an idea in you that if your purchase their product you have the ability to think from a different perspective or think at a greater level. Stylo-a famous local shoe brand in Pakistan offers girls to “run confidently”. Indirectly they suggest girls to feel confident while wearing their shoes as they are comfortable and fashionista at the same time thus enhancing their confidence levels. TUC biscuit give directions to the addressee to purchase their product and “invest in some real taste estate”, which will not be a wastage of money for them. Sunsilk-a hair care brand in Pakistan advices the girls to “give your hair the perfect care they deserve”, thus at the same time claiming the audience that their brand is a best choice for them. Directive acts are employed by a number of other brands like Nescafe, Edenrobe, Hardees et cetra mentioned in the above table.

The second most frequently used speech act in these advertisements is commissive act which generally involves commitments, promising, betting, challenges etc. A big number of advertisers use this act. Khaadi-a renowned clothing brand in Pakistan promises the women that Khaadi “unlock a fresh and vibrant look every day “in women. It also urges women to purchase from them to look vibrant and classy. Orient is a

reputable electronic brand of Pakistan and it bets that by using their products customers will” live in innovation”, implicitly it persuades the addressee to make the right choice and transform their lives into an innovative one.

The third most frequently used speech act is assertive or representative act. Assertives are generally used for the act of claiming, affirming, stating, reporting and informing, etc. These are more frequently used in the adverts of brands of electronic devices like Haier -inspired living, is an affirmation by the brand owners that Haier inspired a lot of people’s lifestyles by introducing their devices. Dawlance is a Pakistani electronic brand which asserts and confirms the addressee about its reliability as “Dawlance is reliable”. Ego a leading women clothing brand in Pakistan asserts the notion that “shopping is never a bad idea” and makes the women confess about being shopaholic, thus imparting in them, the sense of splurging over expensive outfits.

Declaratives have been used in a less frequent number by brands. These have been used to give declarations and confirmations about an idea that matches with the purpose of advertisement of a particular brand. Gul Ahmed ideas is a famous textile

brand of Pakistan and it declares that new things are the good things, thus making the addressee to think about doing some shopping to replace the old items.

Expressive acts are used to praise, greet, congratulate and welcome the addressee to make a purchase from them. The lorea’l-an international cosmetic brand used widely in Pakistan allures the women by praising them saying “because you are worth it”. By uttering this they make the women feel more expensive and worthy, to make them ready to splurge over the costly cosmetic products.

There are many instances, whereby a single advertisement has used many speech acts at the same time, giving them directions and praising or promising them at the very instant, thus performing an overall act of persuading or convincing the consumer which according to Cook (1996) is the essence of any advertisement.

Advertisements, as a whole thus, prove to have an influential impact on the huge population, which is to be addressed in no time.

Conclusions

This study has been performed to demonstrate the effective usage of speech acts in Pakistani advertisements which

influence the addressee and urge them to make a purchase. Thirty advertisements from print media and social media like Facebook were taken under study and were analyzed and classified according to the speech acts used within them as per Searle's (1976) categorization of speech acts. The results thus prove that the fundamental objective of the advertisements is to persuade the consumer to buy goods from the seller. This purpose is accomplished by making use of certain types of speech acts. The results of this study conclude that directive acts and commissive acts have been more frequently used by advertisers to attract their addressee. Assertives have also been employed to give direct statements, assertions, and information regarding the reliability and efficacy of goods and services offered by the brands. The findings support the idea that Cook (1996) claimed that the basic function of advertisements is to persuade the addressee and to give them information about the things being sold. Most often this kind of persuasion is done by giving directions and through-provoking the consumers, by building positive attitudes in them towards the products being sold using certain assertive acts.

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