STANDARD ADVERTISING
LANGUAGE
Imperative mood, clause elements
Word formation
STANDARD ADVERTISING LANGUAGE (SAL)

From now on, see Leech, *English in Advertising* – Chapters 11-22

• Linguistic features that are unique in SAL

• Linguistic features that are *more frequently* employed in SAL than in other registers
FEATURES TO BE INVESTIGATED IN:

- Clauses
  - Mood
  - Questions
  - Absence of subordination (minor/non finite sentences with disjunctive language)
  - Coordination
- Cohesion / Lack of cohesion
- Verbal groups
- Nominal groups
- Words and compounds
- Vocabulary
SAL – Clauses
Imperative Mood

• Higher occurrence of imperatives in SAL than in other registers.
• They stir an active response
• Used for three main reasons:
  – **Product acquisition** (addressed to the consumer): buy, choose, ask for
  – **Product consumption / use**: have, try, use, enjoy
  – **Appeal for notice/fear** (common in commercials of the demonstration type & to admonish or learn a lesson for the future – see Leech, p. 28): remember, make sure, see, look, watch
Clauses: Imperative Mood

Product acquisition vs Product consumption

MISSED PILL. OOOOPS. EMERGENCY CONTRACEPTION!!! QUICK. PHARMACY. BUY LEVONELLE... phew...

You can now buy the emergency contraception pill from the pharmacy. It’s called Levonelle and works best within 72 hours but can be used up to 120 hours after unprotected sex.

Levonelle®
Ask your pharmacist

'If the season for giving.

Enjoy our quality responsibly. Visit crownroyal.com
’Tis the season for giving.

Enjoy our quality responsibly • Visit crownroyal.com
Appeal for Notice
SAL – Clauses
Interrogative MOOD

- Questions are more frequent in INDIRECT address than in direct address
- Questions require an answer BUT advertising is a one-way channel of communication
- Why then asking questions? Because they stir a verbal response
SAL – Clauses: Interrogative MOOD

• **YES/NO questions** stir the expected answer according to the product
  • Ultimately, *Yes/No questions* are a special form or a sub-category of *rhetorical questions*.

• **Rhetorical questions** are rarely used in SAL (though exceptions happen)

• **WH- questions** are psychologically structured in problem/solution [i.e. headline/bodycopy] patterns; linguistically they are employed to make easier a sentence which otherwise would be complex
When you call for technical support, do you ever wonder who’s on the other end?
SAL – CLAUSES: INTERROGATIVE MOOD
Yes/No Questions

Can a Vodka be a work of art?

Christiana

ULTRA PREMIUM VODKA IMPORTED FROM NORWAY
SAL – CLAUSES: INTERROGATIVE MOOD

Yes/No Questions

Do you feel like daily life is driving you away?
SAL – CLAUSES: INTERROGATIVE MOOD

Rhetorical Questions

So now what’s your excuse?

The Windrunner for men and women.

Nike Air

Do you want to lose 20 pounds in two weeks???
SAL – CLAUSES
INTERROGATIVE MOOD
Wh- questions
SAL – CLAUSES
Minor/non-finite System

• non-finite and minor clauses are a feature of disjunctive grammar;

• They are independent.
  – The chief signal of clause subordination in English is given by the following:
    • An initial subordinating clause (why, when, if, whether, because, that, etc.), i.e. the presence of a subordinating conjunction
    • Non finite verbs
SAL – CLAUSES
Minor/non-finite System

Your Business
working together we can improve performance
SAL – CLAUSES

Minor/Non-finite System

• Non-finite & minor clauses have a very simple grammar.

• Particularly characteristic clauses are those whose initial adjuncts are prepositional phrases beginning with FOR
SAL – CLAUSES
Minor/Non-finite System
SAL – CLAUSES
Minor/Non-finite System

• When the *for* phrase contains a personal noun group, it denotes the potential beneficiary:
SAL – CLAUSES
Minor/Non-finite System

• When the *for* phrase contains a personal noun group, it denotes the potential beneficiary:
SAL – DEPENDENT CLAUSES: WHEN, IF and BECAUSE

• *When* is equivalent to *whenever* and means:
  – whenever $X$ is used, $Y$ is the result
  – whenever you want $Y$, use $X$
When diamonds are no longer enough.
SAL DEPENDENT CLAUSES: WHEN, IF and BECAUSE

• In IF-clauses, there is a strong tendency to have the dependent clause BEFORE the independent

• Reasons:
  – To single out the right category of consumers.
  – To make an initial bid for attention by appealing the consumer’s interest
IF WE CARIBBEANS TOOK LIFE THIS SERIOUSLY, MALIBU WOULD'VE NEVER BEEN INVENTED.
SERIOUSLY EASY GOING.
**SAL DEPENDENT CLAUSES: WHEN, IF and BECAUSE**

- **BECAUSE** = giving a reason for buying the product.
- The main meaning is ‘buy X. Because Y will be the result’.
- position of the *because*-clause is always AFTER the independent one.
- Whenever the copywriter wants to state the reason **before** the conclusion, the alternative version is given by *so* or **that’s why**
SAL
Cohesion and Coherence

«Clare loves potatoes. She was born in Ireland»

- The two sentences are cohesive (Clare/she)....
- The pronoun provides a link with the proper noun Clare in the 1° sentence

But they are only coherent if .................

- Cohesion is only part of coherence in reading and writing.
- Cohesion is a guide to coherence, which is something created by readers in the act of reading a text.
- Coherence is the feeling that a text makes sense and that it is not a jumble of sentences.
SAL: COHESION & COHERENCE

• Meaning is conveyed thanks to cohesion and coherence.
• In advertising language meaning is granted by cohesion, coherence and anchorage (a necessity as the texts intermingle with the visuals).
• Main features of cohesion and coherence in SAL:
  • Coordination (even in those cases in which subordination better defines meaning) – apposition
  • Parataxis rather than a hypotaxis
A frequent type of coordination is apposition. Apposition = coordination created by two noun groups, one of which - in the case of advertising – is the brandname:

- *Lifeguard. The disinfectant you trust completely.*
- *Churchman’s Olympic Tipped. The cigarette that leads the way.*

Apposition associates the brandname with a tag-line (sometimes the slogan) => positive image of the product.

Paul Masson Grande Amber Brandy

Aged Longer, Tastes Smoother.

Please enjoy Paul Masson Brandy Amber Brandy responsibly.
COHESION & COHERENCE
COORDINATION

– Anaphora can also be regarded as a type of coordination
Parataxis is a technique that favours short, simple sentences, with the use of coordinatig, rather than subordinating conjunctions.

Why? Because the colloquial style is exploited by SAL

- Parataxis examples sometimes include no conjunctions at all, though there can be coordinating conjunctions such as “but,” “and,” “for,” “yet,” “so,” “or,” and so on. Parataxis examples never include linking words such as “while,” “that,” “until,” and so on (i.e., no subordinating conjunctions).
COHESION & COHERENCE
PARATAxis (2)

• The text is divided in smaller and more digestible units which can be better stored in the short term memory of the readers – thus facilitating readability.

• We have a strong presence of the lexical repetition of the same item, usually the brandname – this for obvious reasons which may be lead to the concept of memorability.
COHESION & COHERENCE
PARATAxis (2)

• “Melts in your mouth, not in your hands.”—M&Ms
• “Maybe she’s born with it. Maybe it’s Maybelline.”—Maybelline
• “Nothing outlasts the Energizer. It keeps going and going and going.”—Energizer batteries
• “Thousands of possibilities. Get yours.”—Best Buy
**SAL - VERBAL GROUPS**

• Verbal groups consist of a single verb.
• Auxiliaries are found rarely.
• Present tense is always used even in those cases where the present continuous or the present perfect are required.
• In this way the present is unrestricted and has a universal reference
• Past tense is used in prestige ad only
• Passive is never used.
SAL - VERBAL GROUPS

• Exceptions: CAN and WILL
• WILL = PROMISE (consumer ads), a sort of conditional sentence with an unexpressed condition;
• CAN = OPPORTUNITY & POSSIBILITY;
  – Subject
    • animate (YOU) - OPPORTUNITY,
    • unanimated subject & associated with the brand name - POSSIBILITIES.
SAL - VERBAL GROUPS

WILL & CAN

Make it a night you won't forget, not one you can't remember.
Pete’s Wicked is celebrated as America’s Original Brown Ale. Its inviting ruby-brown color, distinctive malts and aromatic Brewer’s Gold hops will stir up a devilish urge to let loose. Seize the moment...

Ask for Pete’s Wicked New Beers at a store near you.
SAL - VERBAL GROUPS

CAN
Standard advertising language: Noun/Nominal Groups

- The car
- The red car
- The bright red car
- The beautiful bright red car
- The new beautiful bright red car
- The almost new beautiful bright red car
- Dad’s almost new beautiful bright red car
Standard Advertising Language:

• **NOUN GROUP**

  • **PRE-MODIFIER**
  • *The*
  • *The red*
  • *The bright red*
  • *The beautiful bright red*
  • *The new beautiful bright red*
  • *The almost new beautiful bright red*
  • *Dad’s almost new beautiful bright red*

  • **Premodifier**: articles, adjectives, adverbs, substantives
  • **Head**: substantives
Standard Advertising Language
Nominal groups: premodifiers

• What is the purpose of pre-modifiers?
• To add more information to the head, to univocally specify or identify the head, to avoid ambiguity
Standard Advertising Language
Nominal groups: premodifiers

• In advertising language, we have:

  – Technical pre-modifiers
  – Attributive pre-modifiers
  – Mixed modifiers (because they are both attributive and designatives)
  – Product-name pre-modifiers
Technical premodifiers:

- Fantastic acceleration from the 95 b.h.p. Coventry Climax O.H.C. engine, more stopping power from the new 4-wheel servo assisted disc brakes and greater flexibility from the all synchromesh close ratio gearbox. These and many other new refinements combine to present the finest and fastest light G.T. car in the world.

- The technical characteristics of the noun groups are indicated by premodifiers.

- They supply specific details.

- Typical of handbooks.

- This pre-modification compacts the discourse and gives a more specific description of the head as belonging to a category.
SAL: **Attributive premodification**

- Glowing attractive description of the product.
- Highly positively connoted adjectives such as: *good, lovely, excellent* (evaluative types).
- **Clusters** of two adjectives = more emphatically emotive effect:
  - repetition of the same adjective (*the wonderful wonderful Rome*)
  - approbatory adjective + concrete adjective (*this wonderful new toothbrush*).
  - Typical of colloquial English (used by adults in addressing children).
SAL: *Mixed premodifiers*

- Cluster of two adjectives:
  - the first is evaluative, the second specifies the class of the product more specifically.
  - Examples:
    - *Elegant tapered slacks*
    - *Rugged western style jeans*
    - *Snappy ankle flared beat jeans*
    - *Natural germ-killing action*
    - *A really first-class imported sherry*

- Copywriters match praise/approval with practicality.
SAL: *Product Nouns*

- Heavy premodification when frequent references to advertised product.
- Reference by quoting:
  - the brandname
    - *C2; Travelmate 290; 101*
  - the trademark
    - *Citroen; Acer; Levi’s.*
  - Type of the product modified by trademark/brandname
    - *Campbell’s Soup; Fray Benton Steak and Kidney Pie*
  - the trademark + the trademarkname
    - *Kraft Superfine Margarine*
    - *Carling’s Black label Canadian Lager*
The **BALANCE** ratio of carbs, protein and dietary fat for energy that lasts.
"Before a race I'll ride the course and plan my attacks. Maybe change my kit or adjust my bike. At this level, it's the little things that make a difference." Be great.

This is defined by Leech as *Product Name Premodification*. Usually, when the brand name is used as premodifier it is singled out from the rest by extra large fonts
SAL: PREMODIFICATION
Products Nouns

• Sometimes, the brand-name-premodifier is BEFORE an adjective:
  – *The Austin 55 sport cars gear level*

• In other cases, the brand name acts as a head
  – *Liquid Bubbly Stergene*
• **Genitives**: refer to the manufacturer’s name
• **Comparatives and superlatives**: augment positive and attributive features in the advertised products.
• **Noun modifiers**: usually identified with the brand name. If not so, they have an emotive function (poetic licence) and no relation with their head:
  – *Summer freshness*;
  – *Sunshine Flavour*. 
SAL: New Words – Infixes (affixes)

• English = productive language
• New words are coined with (1) infixes, (2) compounds.
• Usually, the most common infixes employed by copywriters are:
  – the prefix *super*
    • superfine; superpractical; superlight
  – the suffix –*y* (widely used because it evokes an appeal by means of a reference to the sensible properties, flavour or texture, of the product)
    • crispy, creamy, bubbly, minty, crunchy, juicy, milky, nutty, porky, silky, spicy.
New words are formed through compounding.
A compound is a lexically restricted unit (noun group) in an embedded structure.
This means that a compound is a sequence of words acting as a single word.
The lexical constraints on compound formation are less stringent in advertising language than anywhere else.
SAL: COMPOUNDS

• Compounds as heads
• The most productive and widespread compound head consists of two nouns:
  – Toothbrush; Bedtime.
• In SAL, noun+noun compounds have a semi-technical meaning in describing the product, or the sphere of the human activity with which the product is associated:
  – cheese compartments; door shelves; ice tray; storage space; shelf area; colour freshness; jelly addict
SAL: COMPOUNDS

• Compounds as premodifiers:

  Adjectival compounds:
  First-class; brand-new; icy-cold; home-made; good-looking; hard-working

  Embedded noun groups
  High-fashion knitware; Wonderful freshmilk taste; Fuller-flavour fishsteaks; Happy-family menus; Any-time cereal; All-purpose garden fertilizer

  Embedded adjective groups
  A wholesome ready-to-eat cereal; Easy-to-paint picture

  Embedded adverbial groups
  All-around protection; Under-the-weather feeling

  Embedded verbal groups
  This eight-page pull-out booklet; Keep-it-up energy; Do-it-yourself kit
THE NEW YEAR’S RESOLUTION DIET
THE FIRST-REAL-DATE-IN-TWO-YEARS DIET
THE WEDDING DAY DIET
THE HONEYMOON DIET
THE IT-CAN’T-BE-SUMMER-I-HAVEN’T-LOST-ANY-WEIGHT-YET DIET
THE I-WISH-I-WAS-HER DIET
THE BEFORE-THE-BABY DIET
THE AFTER-THE-BABY-DIET
THE IF-FERGIE-CAN-LOSE-IT-SO-CAN-I DIET
The 20 most commonly used adjectives are:

1. New
2. good/better/best
3. Free
4. Fresh
5. Delicious
6. Full
7. Sure
8. Clean
9. Wonderful
10. Special
11. crisp
12. fine
13. big
14. great
15. real
16. easy
17. bright
18. extra
19. safe
20. rich
SAL Vocabulary: adjectives (2)

- *new, good, better, best* = commonly used, but not very often – general all-purpose meaning
- *wonderful, fine, great* = general commendation
- *delicious, crisp, fresh, rich* = generally used associated with food
- *Fresh, clean* = toothpaste; *clean* also with shampoo, detergents, etc
- *sure* = connected with humans
- *sure/clean* = connected with hygiene
- *extra/special* = similar to *new*, express uniqueness
- *nice, lovely, marvellous* = common in indirect address
SAL Vocabulary: Verbs

• The twenty most frequent verbs:

1. Make
2. Get
3. Give
4. Have
5. See
6. Buy
7. Come
8. Go
9. Know
10. Keep
11. look
12. need
13. love
14. use
15. feel
16. like
17. choose
18. take
19. start
20. Taste

• Features: monosyllabic, colloquial and from Germanic
SEMANTICS:
UNIQUENESS OF REFERENCE & UNIVERSALITY OF REFERENCE

• Copywriters seem to speak to each of us and not to the mob (UNIQUENESS OF REFERENCE).

• How? Using:
  – YOU
  – THE
  – THAT (sometimes SUCH or SO)
    • Be THE girl with the Bush. Beautiful. Clever. The perfect partner.
    • A green Shield Worthington gives every man THAT great feeling
    • SUCH a goot natural Cheddar
    • Fresh daisy cream tastes SO good
SEMANTICS: UNIQUENESS OF REFERENCE & UNIVERSALITY OF REFERENCE (2)

• Uniqueness is accompanied by adjectives of positive universal meaning such as ALL, EVERY, EVERYONE, ALWAYS
  – Its instant germ-killing action kills ALL germs twelve times faster
  – There’s a fertilizer for EVERY crop
  – She ALWAYS uses Kraft Superfine Margarine
  – EVERYONE loves Hartley’s Jam
SEMANTICS:
UNIQUENESS OF REFERENCE & UNIVERSALITY OF REFERENCE (3)

• Universal negators (*No, Never*) are seldom used.

• When they are, they occur in a sentence with a further negative implication that has the effect of uncompromising positiveness:
  – *NEVER go to be with a cold without decongestant Vick vapor Rub*