STANDARD ADVERTISING
LANGUAGE
Imperative mood, clause elements
Word formation

Wear This Button!
Save 18th Amendment
Help Build Up!
Don't Tear Down!
Fight Wet Propaganda
Show Your Colors!
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. 000OPS. EMERGENCY CONTRACEPTION!!! QUICK. PHARMACY. BUY LEVONELLE... phew

You can now buy the Emergency Contraception Pill from the pharmacy. It's called Levonelle and needs to be within 72 hours but can be used up to 72 hours after unprotected sex.

Levonelle Ask your pharmacist

LEVONELLE HEPPLING 905-856-9561

'Tis the season for giving.

Enjoy our quality responsibly. Visit crownroyal.com
'Tis the season for giving.
Appeal for Notice

Imagine a place that reflects who I am

Imagine no more. Discover five star living; 57 luxury urban village apartments from £79,950. Firth Street, Huddersfield. Call Knight Frank on 01484 534388.
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?
Can a Vodka be a work of art?
Do you feel like daily life is driving you away?
SAL – CLAUSES: INTERROGATIVE MOOD

Rhetorical Questions

TWO HOURS TALKING TECHNICAL, OR TEN MINUTES TALKING TISCALI?

Can you remember when a RAM was a sheep with horns, bytes were something you took out of cookies? And cookies - they were something to enjoy with a cup of tea?

Naturally, you need to harness the power of technology. But frankly, you don’t need to spend hours jockeying with jargon, just to make it make sense.

You need an Internet and Telecommunications partner with the technical strength and expertise to talk to you in the kind of language you want to hear - the language of business.

So why get tied up talking technical, when you could simply be talking Tiscali?
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
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

• If the *for* phrase contains an abstract noun group, we have a benefit associated with the products:

*for your minidisc trading pleasure*
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.

The World's Finest Gummi Bears.
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.

IF THE BOTTLE DIDN’T GET YOUR ATTENTION, THE AWARDS SHOULD.

98 RATING
WINE ENTHUSIAST MAGAZINE, 2000

BEST WHITE SPIRIT
SAN FRANCISCO WORLD SPIRITS COMPETITION, 2000

BEST NEW PRODUCT INTRODUCTION
MARKET WATCH LEADERS’ CHOICE AWARDS, 2000

5 STAR RATING
THE SPIRIT JOURNAL, 2003

FINESST WHITE SPIRIT
THE SPIRIT JOURNAL, 2001

BEST NEW GIN
FOOD & WINE MAGAZINE, 2001

SPIRIT OF THE YEAR
GROG CATAGOY
MAGAZINE AND SPIRITS ANNUAL BUYING GUIDE, 2001

Tanqueray NO. TEN

Sip responsibly.
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*
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.
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 Brandy.
Good friends. Smooth times.
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 coordinating, 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
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
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
Standard Advertising Language
Nominal groups: premodifiers

• **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 brandname
    - *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.
SAL: New Words - Compounding

- 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
SAL: VOCABULARY

• 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
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*