

Speech Acts on McDonald's Slogans and/or Headlines in Written Advertisements

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ABSTRACT

This study of speech act was to find out about the illocutionary functions and the relationship between structural form and its communicative function. The source of the data is 24 written advertisements as published in the website *Bored Panda*. The data of this study are the 34 slogans and/or headlines found in the selected 24 McDonald's' written advertisements. The writer used qualitative approach. The theories applied consist of speech act, context and modes, body language, and copywriting. The findings reveal that regarding illocutionary functions, representatives serve as the most frequent type, followed by expressives and directives. The absence of commissives indicates that using promises/threats to promote is not a good promotional strategy. Meanwhile, the absence of declarations indicates the copywriters' non-existent institutional roles to perform the act. All (34 out of 34) the speech acts have direct relationship between the structural form and communicative function.

Keywords: speech acts, slogans, headlines, advertisements.

INTRODUCTION

Nowadays, there is a lot of advertisement which varies in many forms such as non-written advertisement (e.g. video) and written advertisement (e.g. poster). According to Moriarty, Mitchell, & Wells (2012), advertising is creative idea businesses. Copywriter mainly uses creativity in producing print ads. This is supported by the fact that Toblerone (chocolate brand) has won Effie awards a few times due to its creative ad visuals supporting its headlines (pp.267-268). Moreover, advertisement is defined as the product of advertising used to tell public about products or services in order to encourage people to buy it. Regardless of where advertisement is published (TV or other medias), advertisement is always constructed by two elements, namely headline and slogan (Sibarani, 2017, p.39). Slogan is "distinctive catch phrase that serves as a motto for a campaign, brand, or company. It is used across a variety of marketing communication messages and over an extended period of time" (Moriarty et al., 2012, p.267). Yulianti & Ardi (2013) also added that slogans are mostly unforgettable and are the important element in the advertisement (p.231). Meanwhile, headline is "a phrase or a sentence that serves as the opening to the ad. It's usually identified by a larger type or a prominent position, and its purpose is to catch attention" (Moriarty et al., 2012, p.267). Particularly in print ads, as stated by Moriarty et al. (2012), headlines act as the key element since it conveys the main message (p.268). Thus, both slogans and headlines possess importance in advertisement.

However, slogans and headlines in advertisements do not only exist to convey the advertiser's message, but also perform an action. We can recognize the type of action performed through slogans and headlines. The term used to describe the actions being performed is speech act (Yule, 2010, p.133). Referring to Yule (2008), speech acts are actions performed via utterances (p.48). Although speech acts are commonly used in speaking, according to Griffiths (2006), speech

acts can also be used in writing (p.148). Thus, speech acts can exist in written form including slogans and headlines in written advertisements. The theory of speech act was introduced by J.L Austin (1962) in his book "How to Do Things with Words". Then, Austin (1975) as in Chiappini (2009) mentioned that in speech act, there are three levels of meaning which are locution, illocution and perlocution (p.241). Next, Searle (1975) as in Chiappini (2009) expanded Austin's speech act theory by proposing further classification of speech act. This classification which becomes one general classification system has five types of speech acts, namely: representatives, directives, declarations, expressives, commissives (p.242).

As the subject of this study concerns speech act, the writer chooses written advertisements from fast-food branch, McDonald's. The writer chooses McDonald's because it is one of the most popular fast-food brands globally due to its comprehensive approach to marketing and advertising (Schneider, 2012). In regard to this study, the writer selects only 24 written advertisements from McDonald's. The reason for this selection is because the selected 24 written advertisements are listed by Tom (2010) as creative advertisements as posted in the website *Bored Panda* (www.boredpanda.com). Specifically, it was posted in the article titled "31 Creative Ads from McDonald's – Are You Loving It?".

Therefore, due to the brand's (McDonald's) global success which relates to its comprehensive approach to marketing and advertising, the writer wants to know the actions behind the most important part in advertisement (slogans and headlines) in McDonald's' creative written advertisements using speech act theories, specifically the locutionary and illocutionary act. Moreover, the writer also wants to analyze McDonald's' slogans and/or headlines based on the relationship between the slogans and/or headlines' structural form and communicative function. In that regard, this study focuses on the application of speech act theories by J.L Austen and J.R Searle as in Yule (2008), Chiappini (2009), Glenn & Gray (2013), and Tortora (2018).

Furthermore, in doing this study, the writer considered the context of the written advertisement (poster). Context is essential in this research because according to Paltridge (2012), in order to understand the relationship between what is said and what is understood in both written and spoken discourse, it is crucial to first have an understanding of how language functions in context (p.39). In addition, as included under the concept of context, the writer analyzed the modes (images, gesture, gaze and posture) provided in the poster. As to analyze the mentioned modes, the writer used the body language theory according to Allan & Pease (2004) in "The Definitive Book of Body Language: How to Read Others' Thoughts by Their Gestures". Additionally, the theory of copywriting by Moriarty et al. (2012) was used to help analyze the purpose of the copywriter in making the slogans as well as to detect the slogans' illocutionary acts.

METHODS

In this study, the writer used qualitative approach particularly document analysis in the form of written advertisements. The source of data for this study were 24 McDonald's' written advertisements containing slogans and/or headlines taken from an internet website *Bored Panda* (www.boredpanda.com). These 24 written advertisements were listed as the creative ones according to the website *Bored Panda* in its article post titled "31 Creative Ads from McDonald's – Are You Loving It?" written by Tom (2010). Meanwhile, the data were slogans and/or headlines that could be identified and written in English. The data were taken from an internet website *Bored Panda* (www.boredpanda.com).

In order to do this study, the writer visited the website *Bored Panda* specifically article post titled “31 Creative Ads from McDonald’s – Are You Loving It?” written by Tom (2010). Then, the writer downloaded the written advertisements posted in the article. During this process, the writer selected the written advertisement in the forms of digital poster which contain slogan and/or headlines. The writer also only selected the slogans and/or headlines that can be identified and written in English.

To analyze the speech acts, the writer analyzed each poster from the first until the 24th poster. For the first step, from each poster, the writer identified the locutionary act of the slogan and/or headlines using the speech acts theory. For the second step, the writer analyzed the illocutionary act’s type from the identified locutionary act. This analysis was based on the five functions namely representatives, directives, commissives, declarations and expressives. In order to do this analysis, the writer looked at the context, specifically the modes including body language as provided in the poster.

Next, the third step was identifying the relationship (direct/indirectness) of the speech acts. To do this analysis, the writer looked at the locutionary act’s structural form and identified it according to the 3 basic sentence types. From this step, the writer found the three sentence types, namely: declaratives, interrogatives, and imperatives. In cases when the locutionary act that had declarative form structure stood for statement, interrogative stood for question, and imperative stood for command/request, then the writer regarded the relationship as direct. Meanwhile, when the structural form was used to express different function, then the relationship was indirect. For this analysis, the writer used the following table (Table 3.1). The table consists of 5 columns, namely: number, locutionary act, illocutionary function, relationship between form and function, and context & explanation. For the content of the column “number”, the writer provided three digits (e.g. 1.1.1). The first digit stands for the poster’s number (1-24th), the second digit stands for the data type (headline (number 1), slogan (number 2)). The third digit stands for the number of the headline and slogan.

Table 3.1 Analysis of Slogans and Headlines Based on Illocutionary Function and

Relationship between Structural form and Function

o.	N	Locutionary Act	Illocutionary Act’s Function	Relationship between Form and Function	Context & Explanation

Next, the whole finding is then summarized using Table 3.2 presented below. There are five columns, namely: representatives, directives, commissives, declarations and expressives. Also, there are two rows which are direct and indirect. For the content of the tables, the writer wrote the frequency as number. For example, under the column representatives in direct row, the writer wrote the number of the speech act (slogans and/or headlines) which served as representatives for its illocutionary function and has direct relationship (between its structural form and function). Furthermore, below the table, the writer gave elaborative explanation regarding the findings.

Table 3.2 Types of Speech Acts based on Illocutionary Function and Relationship between Structural Form and Function

Illocutionary Function Structural Form: Function	representatives	Directives	Commissives	Declarations	Expressives	Total
Direct						
Indirect						

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

In this part, the writer gives the examples and discussions of the types of speech acts found based on illocutionary function as well as the relationships between the structural form and function.

The Types of Speech Acts Found in McDonald's Advertisements

The writer summarized the findings as found in the table below:

Table 4.1 Types of Speech Acts based on Illocutionary Function and Relationship between Structural Form and Function

Illocutionary Function Structural form: Function	representatives	Directives	Commissives	Declarations	Expressives	Total
Direct	7				1	4
Indirect					0	

The writer first discusses the findings regarding the types of speech acts based on illocutionary function. The first type is representatives. The writer uses the second poster (datum 2.2.1) with the headline "Big Mac" as the example for representatives type, as displayed below:



Figure 4.1 Big mac
Source: Tom (2010)

The context is the use of bigger font compared to the size of the poster's frame to emphasize the big size of Big Mac (a big-sized burger product from McDonald's). The headline's illocutionary function here is representative with the communicative intention to inform viewers about the existence of McDonald's Big mac product which is big in size and making it interesting for the viewers to try it.

The second type of illocutionary function the writer discusses is expressives type. The writer uses the seventh poster (datum 7.2.1) as the example for directives type. The headline is "make a deal M happy meals". The poster is as provided below:



Figure 4.7 McDonald's amusement park
Source: Tom (2010)

The context for the seventh poster is an image of a boy in amusement park displaying happiness signified by a genuine smile gesture (raised cheeks muscle). The boy faces a grandma in closed position (demanding attention) with the right hand grabbing grandma's hand, the left hand displaying palm-closed-finger-pointed gesture directed at where "Make a deal M happy meals" headline is placed. The headline's "L" letter has a long tail which ends with a hand poking the grandma's shoulder (demanding attention). These all indicate the boy wanting the grandma to notice him and look where he happily directs his pointing finger (make a deal M happy meals). This ad shows that viewers should notice McDonald's happy meals product like the happy boy. The headline's illocutionary function is directives requesting viewers to "make a deal" (buy) McDonald's product (M happy meals). This ad's communicative intention is to request (directives) viewers to think about purchasing McDonald's products.

Next, the third type of illocutionary function the writer discusses is directives type. The writer uses the third poster (datum 3.2.1) used to express happiness/joy as the instance for expressives type. The poster is as seen below:



Figure 4.10 McDonald's open 6AM
Source: Tom (2010)

The third poster's headline (datum 3.2.1) is "yass open 6 AM". Meanwhile, the context is the image of a person driving a car in the morning (represented by light blue sky) indicating that the person is going to McDonald at 6AM, which is considered as early morning where people just wake up. People go straight to McDonald's right after waking up meaning McDonald is important for them. The headline's illocutionary function is expressives stating the feeling of happiness indicated by the word "Yass". This ad's communicative intention is to make viewers notice the pleasant fact that McDonald's opens early and that they can try McDonald's product early in the morning.

Then, the writer discusses the findings regarding the relationships between the structural form and function. Out of the total slogans/and or headlines found in the selected 24 McDonald's written advertisements, 100% (34 out of 34) are classified as direct speech act. Moreover, the writer found out that all direct speech act types in the selected 24 McDonald's written advertisements are found in the representatives, directives, and expressives speech act types.

Firstly, the writer discusses the slogans and/or headlines belonging to representatives type. There are 17 slogans/and or headlines belonging to the representatives speech act type. Furthermore, all the representatives found (17 out of 17) are deemed as having direct relationship between its structural form and the communicative function. Additionally, all the direct representatives type found have declaratives as its structural form and statement as its communicative intention.

The writer takes the sixth poster's headline (datum 6.2.1) as example of the direct Relationship analysis (between structural form and communicative function) belonging to representatives type. For the 6th poster, the headline is "free coffee from April 20th until May 3rd". This headline is declaratives as it is not ended with (?) or (!), functions as statement, it does not start with verb, and it consists of subject ('Free Coffee'). Then, this headline has the communicative function of statement (specifically to inform) (see segment 4.1.1). Consequently, this makes the datum 6.2.1 have direct Relationship between its structural form (declaratives) and communicative function (statement).

Secondly, the writer discusses the slogans and/or headlines belonging to directives type. There are 6 slogans/and or headlines belonging to the directives speech act type. Moreover, 100% (6 out of 6) of them are regarded as direct speech act type. The direct directives speech acts are found having the relationship of its structural form and communicative function being either interrogatives-question or imperatives-request.

The writer uses the fifth poster as the example of the direct relationship analysis (between structural form and communicative function) belonging to directives type. For the fifth poster, the headline is "can you manage it?". This headline is ended with interrogative marker (?) which makes it have interrogative as its structural form. Besides, this headline has the communicative function of requesting an answer (see segment 4.1.1). As a result, this makes the headline (datum 5.2.2) have direct relationship between its structural form (interrogatives) and communicative function (questioning).

Lastly, the writer discusses the slogans and/or headlines belonging to expressives type. Based on the analysis, there are 11 slogans/and or headlines belonging to the expressives speech act type. Furthermore, all the expressives found (11 out of 11) are deemed as having direct relationship between its structural form and its communicative function. Additionally, all the direct expressive type found have declaratives as its structural form and statement as its communicative intention.

For further elaboration, the writer takes the 16th poster's slogan (datum 16.1.1) as example of the direct relationship between structural form and communicative function belonging to expressives type. For the 16th poster, the slogan is "I'm lovin' it". This slogan suits the basic structural form and it is not ended with (?) or (!), functions as statement, it does not start with verb, and it consists of subject ('I'). Hence, this slogan is declared as having declaratives structural form. Next, this slogan has the communicative function of statement (of psychological state/feeling) (see segment 4.1.1). Consequently, this makes the slogan have direct relationship between its structural form (declaratives) and communicative function (statement).

From the findings, the writer found representatives, directives, and expressives types based on speech act's illocutionary function types. Representatives types, which serves to relay information, exist as the most frequent type found, followed by expressives (to express feelings of happiness/joy and love) and directives (to request actions/questioning). Meanwhile, there are no commissives and declaratives types found. The copywriters do not commit in future action (commissives), indicating that they do not regard McDonald's written ads as the medium to make promises/threats (further implying that using promises/threats in written ads to promote is not seen as a good promotion strategy by the copywriters). In addition, the declaration type is not used since the copywriters are not in the position and do not have the needed authority to change the viewers' state. Moreover, despite the varying illocutionary functions, the findings all have direct relationship between its communicative function and structural form.

CONCLUSION

In this study, the writer aims to analyze and find out the types of speech acts from the selected 24 McDonald's written advertisements. In analyzing the advertisements, the writer analyzed the visual and verbal data, particularly headlines/and or slogans, images, and body languages provided in the written advertisements (digital posters). The theories applied to analyze the data consist of speech act theory by J.L Austin (1975) and J.R Searle (1975) as in Yule (2008), Chiappini (2009), Glenn & Gray (2013), and Tortora (2018) as the main theories. Meanwhile, the supporting theories are the theory of context and modes as in Paltridge (2012), the body language theory by Allan & Pease (2004) which was used to analyse the actors' body language (as mode), and the theory of copywriting by Moriarty, Mitchell, & Wells (2012). To conduct this study, the writer used qualitative approach, particularly in document analysis in the form of written advertisements.

The findings reveal that among the speech acts found, as based on its illocutionary functions, representatives (to relay information) serves as the highest types of speech act (17 out of 34), followed by expressives (11 out of 11) to express feelings (happiness/joy and love) and directives (6 out of 6) to tell viewers to do some actions/requests. However, commissives (to commit in future action) and declaratives (to change status) speech act types do not exist in the selected advertisements, which indicates that not all speech act types are utilized in creating written advertisements.

Next, related to the relationship between the structural form and communicative function, the writer found out that all (34 out of 34) the speech acts are direct speech act. For representatives, the slogans and/or headlines have declaratives as its structural form and statement (to relay information) as its communicative function. Furthermore, for directives, the slogans and/or

headlines either has interrogative as its structural form and questioning as its communicative function or imperatives as its structural form and requesting as its communicative function. At last, all the expressives found have declaratives as its structural form and statement as its communicative intention.

The findings imply that in creating written advertisements, the copywriters tend to relay information to viewers through representatives (resulting in informative written ads) and involve viewers' emotions (expressives). Then, as directives speech act type is rarely found, it seems that there is disfavor in the promoting method by explicitly telling viewers to do some action. Also, the copywriters do not commit in future action (commissives). It implies that the copywriters do not regard McDonald's written ads as the medium to make promises/threats (further implying that using promises/threats in written ads to promote is not seen as good promotion strategy by the copywriters). In addition, the declaration type is not used since the copywriters are not in the position and do not have the authority to change the state of the viewers. Moreover, despite the varying illocutionary functions, the copywriters in the end want to promote McDonald's products/branches/side facilities. Furthermore, as the findings are all direct speech acts, it indicates that McDonald's written ads are honest since there is consistency between what visually appears (the structural form slogans/and or headlines) and its communicative functions. Besides, in regard to copywriting theory, the copywriters mostly directly relay their intention through headlines.

Learning from McDonald's written advertisements, the writer realized that McDonald's promotion strategy by using the method of relaying information, involving emotions, not explicitly demanding actions, and directness in relaying intention should be referred as a sample in successful advertising strategy.

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