

Speech Acts in GEICO's Short Stories and Nursery Rhymes Advertisements

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ABSTRACT

In this study, the writer analysed the visual and the verbal data from four of GEICO's 2010 advertisement campaign using speech acts theories. The illocutionary acts that are found in the advertisements are representatives (16), followed by expressives (4), and directives (4). Through the speech acts types and the visuals, GEICO wants to persuade the audiences to emotionally believe in their company and hopefully use their insurance service. From this study, the writer wants to say that through constructing and formulating the right words in literary works adaptation, one can create a powerful promotion tool that will persuade the audiences to do some beneficial future actions for the speaker.

Key words: Speech act, nursery rhyme, short story, advertisement, persuasion, emotional connection.

INTRODUCTION

There have been many changes in the way people advertise their product. Formerly, people use direct marketing strategy, but now people tend to use indirect marketing strategy. Direct advertising is a form of advertising that directly engage with the target audience through direct mail, and range of online formats (Mahon, 2010, p. 123). However, indirect marketing focuses on creating information that customers are passionate about so they actually pay attention to the marketing tool. This strategy is used by GEICO, a famous insurance company from United States. GEICO has adapted some famous nursery rhymes and short stories as its advertisement's storyline.

There are four advertisements that has been analyzed in this research. They are *Mary had a Little Lamb*, *Jack be Nimble*, *Hensel and Gretel*, and also *The Three Little Pigs*. From those four advertisements, the writer seeks to know the message that GEICO wants to convey from those four chosen advertisements. Therefore, to obtain that goal, the writer decides to analyze the speech acts types in each utterance in them and also how the visuals support each speech acts types in the advertisements. The writer chose those four out of thirteen advertisements from GEICO's 2010 advertisements campaign because she believed that they already represented the whole campaign. The whole 2010 campaign is about promoting the renter insurance and homeowner insurance. *Mary had a Little Lamb* and *Jack be Nimble* are made to advertise renter insurance. *Hensel and Gretel* and *The Three Little Pigs* promotes the homeowner insurance. Therefore, the data that the writer will get from those sources of data later will be adequate for her to reveal all the layers of speech acts in the advertisements. In addition, the writer believes that Indonesians will be more familiar with the story of those chosen advertisements. Thus, they can relate more to this research.

In analyzing her data, the writer uses main theories and also supporting theories. The main theories are the speech acts theories. Speech acts theory is about the way meaning is expressed through the utterance (Verschueren, 2009, p. 229). This meaning then will have its own force for the hearers to do certain acts based on that utterance's meaning. She will analyze the data using locutionary act and illocutionary act. The writer does not include perlocutionary act because they writer is not going to ask the audience's actions after watching these advertisements. As for the supporting theories, the writer is going to discuss the persuasive speech acts in advertising theories.

METHOD

This research is a qualitative research that focuses on analyzing the visual data and the verbal data taken from GEICO's advertisements using the speech acts theories. The four chosen

advertisements, *Mary had a Little Lamb*, *Jack be Nimble Hensel and Gretel* and *The Three Little Pigs* were all taken from GEICO's 2010 advertisements campaign entitled "Short Stories and Tall Tales".

In collecting the source of data, the writer first looked and downloaded all the advertisements in GEICO's 2010 campaign from two different sources, from GEICO's YouTube channel and from www.ispot.tv. The writer then, watched each advertisement for about four times. She chose four out of thirteen advertisements that she had found from those sources based on the content and the story line in the advertisements. This way, the study would be more relatable and easily understood for the readers. After choosing four advertisements, the writer started to transcribe those chosen advertisements. Finally, the writer analyze her source of data.

Using Speech Acts theories, the writer started to analyze the four chosen advertisements (Paltridge, 2012, p. 40). The locutionary notion was basically the literal meaning of an utterance. The writer then divided the locutionary notion into three types, declarative, imperative, and interrogative (Kisno, 2012, p. 100). As for the illocutionary notion, which referred to speaker's intention of the utterance, using Searle's theory, the writer divided the illocutionary notions into five types; representatives, directives, commissives, expressives, and declaratives (Searle & Vanderveken, 1985). After analyzing the speech acts types, the writer added some examples related to the visual in the advertisements. The writer did this to prove that the visuals in the advertisements indeed supported the speech acts in the advertisements.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

In the findings and discussions, the writer is going to divide this section into two major notions. The first one, she will discuss about the speech acts analysis of the four chosen advertisements. Secondly, she discusses the visuals in the advertisements. She will discuss about how the visuals support the speech act force in each utterance in GEICO's advertisements

Types of Speech Acts in GEICO's Advertisements

Below is the table of the analysis of the speech acts types in each utterance in the advertisements (Table 1). From her findings, the writer is able to find the locutionary act in the form of declarative (20) sentences and also imperative sentences (4). The most used types of illocutionary act that has been found in the data are representatives (16), followed by expressives (4), and directives (4).

There are more representatives found in the four chosen advertisements because they are used to tell the audiences the storyline's in the advertisements. It is because one of the traits of representatives is used to tell something (Searle & Vanderveken, 1985). GEICO decided to use their own storyline and just adapted some famous characters from the famous nursery rhymes (*Mary had a Little Lamb* and *Jack be Nimble*) and famous short stories (*Hensel and Gretel*, and *The Three Little Pigs*). It adapted Mary and her little white lamb from *Mary had a Little Lamb*, Jack from *Jack be Nimble*, Hensel, Gretel and the witch from *Hensel and Gretel* and the little pig with straw house and the wolf in *The Three Little Pigs*. Therefore, 16 utterances in the table can be labelled as representatives because they are used to tell the audiences the storyline of the advertisements. For example, utterance 1.1 (Table 1), the utterance tells the audience about Mary and her little white lamb. This utterance is there to tell the audience that in that particular advertisement, there are Mary and her little white lamb as the main characters in the advertisement. This utterance, then, will give the audiences the "hint" that this advertisement will tell them about those two famous characters.

One of the keywords to categorize an utterance into expressives is thanking. Thanking is expressing gratitude towards someone (Searle & Vanderveken, 1985). However, the expressive utterances in GEICO's advertisements have implied meaning. They imply positive traits of GEICO as an insurance company. This will evoke and build emotional connection, which is trust, between the audiences and GEICO and hopefully they will decide to use its service. For instance, in utterance 2.3. (Table 1), the word "Luckily" expresses the feeling of Jack, the main characters in the story, being grateful because GEICO has helped him to solve his problem after an unfortunate fire accident in his house. However, through this word, GEICO also wants to imply that they are the hero in the story. Heroes are often associated with responsible and reliable character. This is the image that

GEICO wants the audience to see from these short stories and nursery rhymes advertisements. GEICO wants the audiences to know that they are a responsible and reliable insurance company so that they will trust GEICO. This is a subtle persuasion to convince the audiences to finally use GEICO's service.

The last type of illocutionary act found in the four chosen advertisements is directives. One of the characteristics of directives utterance is urging someone to do something (Searle & Vanderveken, 1985). There must be reasons why one is urging someone else to do something. In this case, GEICO wants the audience to use their insurance service. Therefore, the illocutionary act that GEICO uses to directly urge the audience to do some future action, which is to visit its website or directly call its customer service. The writer found out that these directives utterances are the most forward and direct utterance that GEICO uses to sell their insurance in its four analyzed advertisements. Although it is straight forward, GEICO just urges the audience to contact them not directly ask them to use their insurance service.

Table 1: Speech Acts Types in GEICO's Advertisements

Utterance	Locutionary Acts	Illocutionary Acts	Notes
1.1. Mary had a little lamb whose fleece was white as snow. 2.1. Jack be nimble, Jack be quick, Jack knocked over a candlestick onto the shag carpeting. 3.1. Once upon a time Hansel and Gretel came upon a house made out of gingerbread. 4.1. Once, there was a little pig that had built his house out of straw.	Declarative	Representatives	Telling the same story's beginning as the original version
1.2. But after an electrical fire from faulty wiring, Mary's vintage clothing and designer shoes collection were ruined. 2.2. When his pants ignited into flames, causing him to stop, drop and roll. 3.2. Being quite hungry, they started eating the roof. 4.2. One day a big bad wolf huffed and he puffed and blew the house down.	Declarative	Representatives	Telling the conflicts of the story

<p>3.3. The homeowner was outraged.</p>	<p>Declarative</p>	<p>Representatives</p>	<p>Telling the main character's emotion regarding the previous event</p>
<p>1.3. Luckily, the GEICO Insurance agency has recently helped Mary with renters' insurance and she got a totally a fab replacement wardrobe at Bloomingdale's. 4.3. Luckily the GEICO insurance agency had helped the pig with homeowners' insurance.</p>	<p>Declarative</p>	<p>Expressives and Representatives</p>	<p>Expressing GEICO was the hero of the story</p>
<p>2.4. because all of his belongings went up in flames.</p>	<p>Declarative</p>	<p>Representatives</p>	<p>Telling the continuation of the previous event in the story</p>
<p>1.4. Mary was inspired to start her own fashion line, exclusively for little lambs. 2.5. Jack got full replacement and now had pants he ordered from Banana Republic. 3.5. She got all her shingles replaced. 4.4. He had replacement cost coverage so his house was rebuilt, good as new.</p>	<p>Declarative</p>	<p>Representatives</p>	<p>Telling the resolution of the story</p>
<p>3.6. Hansel and Gretel were last seen eating their way through the candy cane forest 4.5. The big bad wolf now had a job on a wind farm.</p>	<p>Declarative</p>	<p>Representatives</p>	<p>Telling the happy endings of the story</p>

<p>1.5 Visit GEICO.com and see how affordable renters' insurance can be.</p> <p>3.7. Call GEICO and see how easy it is to switch and save on homeowners' insurance</p>	Imperative	Directives	Directing the audiences to do some future action.
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2. Visual Data in GEICO's Advertisements

All the visuals are made to support the speech act in the stories. Because the stories are the adaptation of some famous nursery rhymes and short stories that has existed for a long time, GEICO makes the visuals that fits the vintage and the story time vibes. The visual in the advertisements are made as if the narrator is reading a story directly to the audience. This way, the audience may feel like the narrator is narrating a story to the audience. Thus, it will create a personal feeling as well as nostalgic feeling for the audiences because it will evoke the nostalgic feeling in their childhood when their loved one read a bedtime story for them. GEICO aims to build the emotional connection between the audiences and it by giving something meaningful to the audiences.

To make it clearer, in the advertisement, there is a man sitting in front of the fireplace and holding a thick brown covered book with old worn edges. During the advertisements, the narrator will occasionally flip the pages of that book and read out loud the story inside the storybook. Inside the book, there are also some illustrations. These illustrations are the projection of some keywords inside the texts that are also being read out loud by the narrator. For instance, in the opening of the "*Mary had a Little Lamb*", there is a picture of a little girl walking with her leased little white lamb. This image is used to support the utterance that is said by the narrator which can be categorized as representatives. To open the advertisements, the narrator starts the storyline with telling and introducing the main characters of the story, who are adapted from a famous nursery rhyme. That opening utterance is "Mary had a little lamb whose fleece was white as snow" (1.1. in Table 1). The keywords in that utterance is Mary, little lamb and white as snow. Therefore, that it is safe to say that the girl in the picture is Mary, and the leased white lamb is hers. Another example is from utterance 1.5 (Table 1), this is the last utterance in the "*Mary had a Little Lamb*" advertisement. In every last utterance of the four chosen advertisement, GEICO always uses directives utterance. The same illocutionary acts also can be found in 1.5. utterance. The utterance is: "Visit GEICO.com and see how affordable renters' insurance can be". GEICO decides to illustrate that utterance with just writings to really deliver its desired message to the audiences. The writings are "GEICO", "renters insurance" and "offered by GEICO Insurance Company". The word GEICO is written with big bold blue letters. Then below it there is renter insurance because the advertisement is about promoting GEICO's renter insurance. Lastly, GEICO also makes it obvious that the company that has made the advertisement is it. By doing this, the audiences can directly understand that GEICO aims to share their company's information so they will where to reach when they want to use GEICO's insurance service.

They are all made to emphasize the story time vibes in the advertisements, which is the point of the whole advertisements. "Emotional advertisements can help a brand craft its story and create relatable content that resonates with consumers because it engages and entertains them, rather than coming off as an advertisement" (Coleman, 2015). Related to that quotation, GEICO also wants to say the same thing through its advertisements

CONCLUSION

In analysis, the writer can conclude that the types of illocutionary acts that are found in the advertisements are representatives, expressives and directives. The findings above are correlated with one of the theories in the persuasive speech act in the advertisement. "The rhetorical that was used for persuading are repetitions, question, and exclamations" (Janoschka, 2004). Those can be

categorized in the four types of illocutionary act, commissives, representatives, directives and expressives. Thus, it is obvious that GEICO used the utterances in the advertisement to persuade their audiences to use their service. Those speech acts above are further supported by the advertisements' visuals. All the visual data and verbal data are made to persuade the audiences to use GEICO's insurance service. It persuades the audience through building emotional connection, which is trust with the audiences. This emotional connection is developed in the advertisements by the visuals and also the speech act force in them. From all the data, the writer can find that GEICO want to imply that they are reliable, and accountable insurance company. The writer can grasp those implications from analysing the speech acts of each utterance and also the context of the story. Through its advertisements content, GEICO wants the audience to relate, engage and as well as entertain them. Then, hopefully, it will trigger the audiences to trust in GEICO and finally they will be persuaded to use its insurance service.

Learning from GEICO, even literary works can be adapted and made as the tool to promote or sell a service, in this case, insurance service. GEICO proves that promoting is not all about selling but also about making emotional connection with the target market. It turns out that constructing and formulating the words in adaptation of literary works to emotionally persuade the audiences can create powerful speech force.

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