Review Article

The Interconnection between Systemic Functional Language and the Grammar of Visual Design in the Context of Advertising Language

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Abstract: The research investigates the interconnection between Systemic Functional Theory (SFT) and the grammar of visual design in the context of advertising language. Systemic Functional Theory, a linguistic model introduced by Halliday (1985), emphasizes the functional aspects of language, focusing on how language functions within its social context. This study aims to explore the synergy between SFL by Halliday (1985) and the grammar of visual design by Kress & Van Leeuwen (2006), particularly in the domain of advertising language. The examination encompasses the analysis of linguistic elements, such as sentence structure and vocabulary, alongside non-linguistic elements inherent in visual design, seeking to unveil the intricate relationship between linguistic and visual choices in advertising. By delving into this intersection, the research aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of how Systemic Functional Theory informs and enriches the grammar of visual design within the realm of advertising language.

Keywords: Systemic Functional Theory (SFT), Visual Design, Grammar.

1. INTRODUCTION

In the contemporary landscape of advertising, the fusion of linguistic and visual elements plays a pivotal role in crafting impactful and persuasive messages for diverse audiences. As scholars and practitioners alike seek to comprehend the intricate dynamics at play within advertising language, an exploration of the interconnection between Systemic Functional Theory (SFL) proposed by Michael Halliday (1985) and the grammar of visual design formulated by Kress and Van Leeuwen (2006) becomes essential.

Systemic Functional Theory, rooted in the functionalist tradition, offers a unique perspective on language by emphasizing its social functions and contextual roles. Concurrently, the grammar of visual design, as articulated by Kress and Van Leeuwen, provides a theoretical framework for understanding how images and visual elements communicate meaning. This research endeavors to unravel the symbiotic relationship between SFL and the grammar of visual design within the specific context of advertising language.

As advertising continually evolves as a dynamic form of communication, this study aims to scrutinize how SFL's focus on the systemic functions of language converges with the principles of visual grammar. The partnership between these theoretical frameworks is particularly potent in understanding how linguistic and visual elements collaboratively contribute to the construction and interpretation of meaning within advertising discourse.

The language of advertising must always contain new, captivating, easily understandable information and convey a clear message, as it serves as a unique means of communication between the author and the audience, who may not coexist and

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may not use verbal language, with all information conveyed through advertising language. Therefore, those creating advertising language need to combine both linguistic and non-linguistic elements to effectively communicate product information and messages to the advertising audience. Recent studies have begun to pay attention to this combination, although the relationship between linguistic and non-linguistic elements in advertising posters has not been deeply explored.

This investigation involves a comprehensive analysis of linguistic features—such as sentence structures and vocabulary—coupled with an exploration of non-linguistic elements embedded in visual design. By adopting a holistic approach, we aspire to illuminate the nuanced relationship between the systemic functions of language posited by Halliday's SFL (1985) and the visual grammar delineated by Kress and Van Leeuwen (2006), offering valuable insights into the rich tapestry of advertising language and communication.

2. Some Relevant Theoretical Concepts
2.1. The concept of advertising and advertising language
2.1.1 Definition
The passage provides an overview of various perspectives on advertising derived from the works of researchers such as Dyan (1995), Well (1993), and Aren (1992). It synthesizes key viewpoints on advertising, including its nature as paid information, unilateral communication aimed at supporting products, brands, purposes, candidates, or organizations. The dichotomy between commercial and non-commercial advertising is acknowledged, emphasizing that advertising serves as a means to convey non-personal information, often sponsored by specific entities and characterized by persuasive content related to products or ideas. Additionally, advertising is portrayed as a societal mirror, inseparable from and reflective of the broader social context. The intricate art of conveying information about products, services, or organizational ideas through various media tools for the purpose of persuasion and influence is underscored.

The research adopts Cook (2006) definition of advertising as a form of communication utilizing language and images to persuade individuals to engage with advertising for product purchase or service utilization. Building upon Cook (2001) perspective, the complexity of advertising is acknowledged, emphasizing the multifaceted nature that necessitates in-depth analysis and discussion. Cook posits that describing advertising as discourse, especially complex discourse like advertising, presents challenges due to its intention to encompass all factors and their interrelated influences.

Moreover, the fluid and ever-changing nature of advertising is emphasized, portraying it not as a stable entity but as an ongoing synthesis of various elements.

2.1.2 Classification
According to Dyer (1988, pp. 18-19), advertising encompasses various types, including Commercial Consumer Advertising, Trade and Technical Advertisements, Prestige, Business, and Financial Advertising, Small Ads, and Government and Charity Advertising. Among these types, Dyer suggests that Consumer Advertising holds the advantage and is the most prevalent in contemporary society.

Cook (2001) further categorizes advertising based on four criteria: Medium, Product, Technique, and Consumer Advertising. In this classification, Cook aligns with Brierley (1995, pp. 25-41) and Myers (1999, pp. 52-67), emphasizing the significance and dominance of Consumer Advertising. Vestergard & Schoder (1985) divide advertising into two types: Commercial Advertising and Non-Commercial Advertising

Regarding the target audience, there are Consumer Advertising and Business Advertising. Additionally, based on purpose, there are Commercial and Non-Commercial Advertising. Considering presentation format, there are Display Advertising, Classified Advertising, and Notice Advertising. Lastly, if viewed through the criterion of the disseminated target, there are Product Advertising and Non-Product Advertising.

2.1.3 Function
Harris and Seldon (1962) argued that "Advertising is designed to disseminate information with the hope of increasing the marketing volume of products and services" (p. 40). The purpose of advertising is to provide information about a particular product or service that influences potential customers in terms of their perception or shopping behavior through various communication channels. Additionally, Goddard (1988) contends that "Advertising attempts to attract our attention and directs us toward them.

Based on these factors, the thesis deduces several functions of advertising. First, advertising is an action or activity aimed at attracting the attention of the public or directing attention to a business, product, service, or entertainment. Second, advertising serves as communication between producers and potential customers. Third, both commercial and non-commercial advertising ultimately aim to persuade consumers through language, imagery, techniques, and tricks.

2.2 Systematic functional language

Firth (1956), the founding father of linguistics in England, initiated and made significant contributions to Systemic Functional Grammar (SFG). Later, Halliday continued to develop SFG, unifying meaning with function (Thompson, 1996, p. 8). In contrast to traditional grammar, SFG considers the text as the unit of analysis rather than the sentence. SFG is deemed an effective approach as it is built on the notion that language is a human communication system.

Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL) is a comprehensive linguistic framework that emphasizes the functional aspects of language, considering language as a system of choices for meaning in context. Within SFL, three metafunctions—Experiential, Interpersonal, and Textual—serve as key components for analyzing and understanding the various functions of language in communication.

2.2.1 The experiential metafunction

The experiential metafunction is concerned with how language represents our experience and perception of the world. It focuses on the content or meaning proposition of the message. This metafunction is realized through the transitivity system, which involves examining how participants (Actors), processes (Actions), and circumstances (Goals, etc.) are grammatically realized in clauses. In essence, the experiential metafunction explores how language constructs our understanding of events, actions, and entities.

2.2.2 The interpersonal metafunction

The interpersonal metafunction revolves around the social aspects of language, emphasizing how language is used to interact with others. It is concerned with the relationship between the speaker and the listener, as well as the speaker's attitude and engagement with the audience. The Mood system is a central part of the interpersonal metafunction, encompassing elements like Subject and Finite that reflect the exchange and negotiation of meaning between participants in communication. This metafunction addresses how language serves to express meanings related to mood, modality, and the speaker's engagement in discourse.

2.2.3 The textual metafunction

The textual metafunction is centered on the organization and cohesion of language in creating a coherent and cohesive text. It deals with how language functions to meet the demands and expectations of various types of discourse. The textual metafunction involves considerations of coherence, thematic structure, and information flow within the text. It explores how language choices contribute to the overall structure and organization of a text, ensuring that the message is conveyed effectively and in a manner appropriate to the context.

In summary, the three metafunctions of SFL provide a holistic approach to understanding language as a dynamic and purposeful system. They collectively address the experiential content of language, the interpersonal relationships within communication, and the organization of language in creating meaningful texts. This framework enables linguists and analysts to explore the diverse functions and choices inherent in language use across different contexts and communication situations.

2.3 The grammar of visual design

Based on these three functions, the analysis of visual grammar has been developed. Visual grammar examines multimodal discourse across four aspects:

- Representation: Narrative Representation and Conceptual Representation
- Viewer Position
- Modality
- Composition.

2.3.1 Representation

Representation, as categorized by Kress and van Leeuwen (2006), is divided into two types: narrative representation and conceptual representation. The authors argue that images, like language, can depict processes, entities participating in processes, and contexts in which entities and processes are represented. Since words and images are two different semiotic modes, the systems for expressing their metafunctions are distinct. Kress and van Leeuwen (1996) and O'Toole (1994) suggest that, fundamentally, the three metafunctions of the systemic functional grammar proposed by Halliday can be identified in images, providing a framework for the analysis of visual signals. The authors identify systems of experiential meaning in images, mapping the potential meanings of images into two types: narrative meaning and conceptual meaning, distributed as follows:
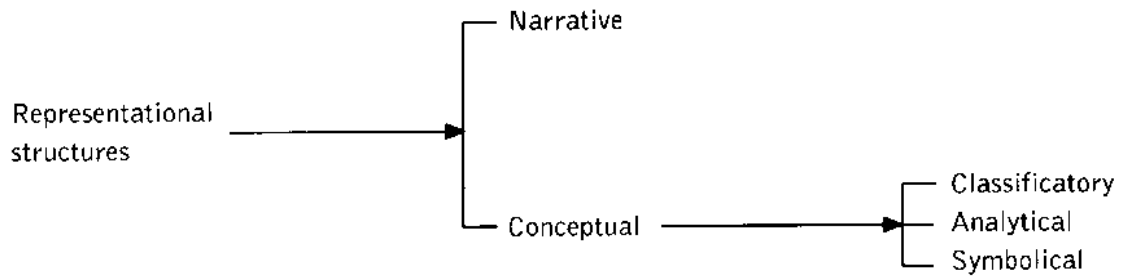
2.3.2 Viewer position

The interpersonal meaning system is a system of meaning through which the image creator influences the viewer, such as the choice between subjective images (where the viewer is considered a part of the image) and objective images (where the image design 'neutralizes' all contexts). More specific choices in subjective image selection include the viewer's involvement or detachment, as illustrated in the model below.
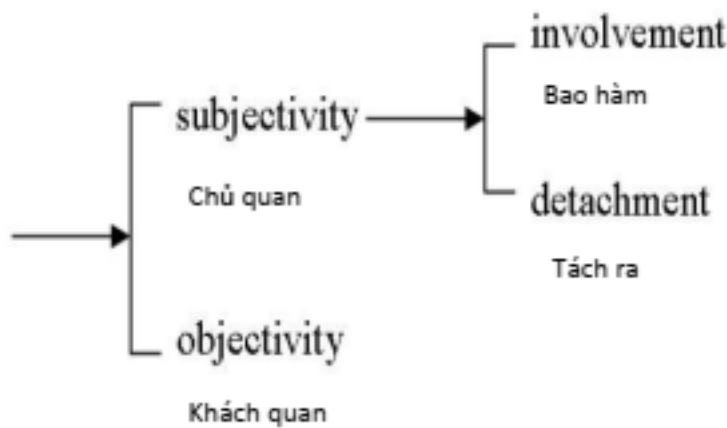
The communication of images also has resources to establish and maintain a different type of interaction, an interaction between the image producer and the viewer. This creates three relationships: (1) the relationship among represented participants; (2) the relationship between interacting participants and the represented participants (the attitude of interacting participants toward the represented participants); and (3) the relationship among interacting participants (what interacting participants do with each other or communicate to each other through images).

The position of the viewer in relation to the participants influences the potential meaning of the image discourse. These influencing factors can be summarized in the following diagram.
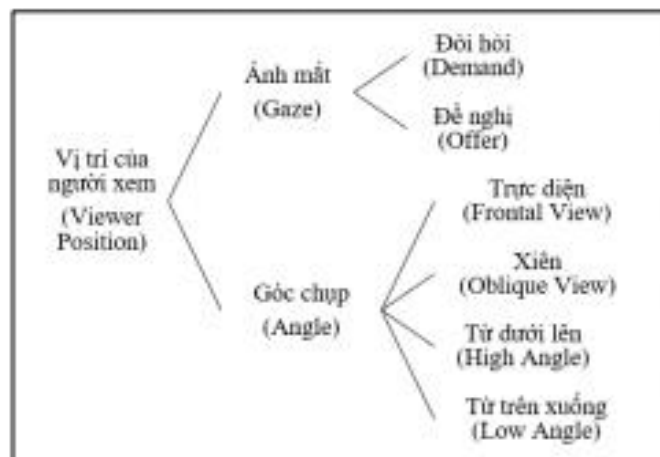
2.3.3 Modality

The term "modality" originates from linguistics and refers to the real value or reliability of statements (expressed through language) about the world. Modal markers are established by groups of people with whom we interact, indicating the reliability regarding the truth or practicality of the developed message, rooted in the core values, beliefs, and social needs of that group.

Modality in images concerns what is called the "level of representation" (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2006, p. 220). This gives rise to two extremes that Kress and van Leeuwen refer to as low modality and high modality. Analyzing the modality in images from this perspective aims to determine the truth value or "degree of reality" of the images constructed and designed by the poster production team in various ways. The frames of these values include: Sensory modality - emphasizing the ability to be perceived by the senses, abstract modality - highlighting the surreal elements of the image, allowing producers to incorporate seemingly unfamiliar lines into the picture, technological modality - enabling the construction of images through elements related to form, naturalistic modality, contributing to the creation of high modality, as it allows images to closely resemble reality.

2.3.4 Composition

When examining the correspondence with Halliday's systemic functional theory, the internal structure of the image is linked to the textual function. The textual nature allows the elements and participants in the visual discourse to be closely interconnected: the position and arrangement of the elements influence the potential meaning of the discourse, and conversely, the semantic content of the discourse also dictates the arrangement and composition of the participating elements. Inherited from the visual analysis perspective of Martin and Rose (2003), Kress and van Leeuwen also constructed a diagram illustrating the meaning of the arrangement of visual space (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2006, p. 197).
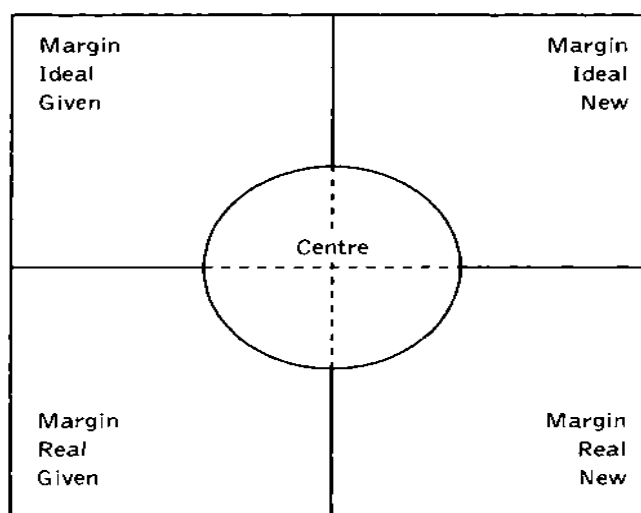
(Kress & Van Leeuwen, 2006:197)

The left-right parameter corresponds to information about the given and the new. Kress and van Leeuwen argue that this is reasonable because the Western tradition of reading images is from left to right by self-recognition, meaning there are no signs or vectors directing us to do so. In images, the left area often encompasses familiar, old information, while the right area contains new information with an element of surprise. The authors suggest that this structure is also familiar in English. The internal structure parameters are used to analyze the meaning and textual structure, aiming to realize the distinctive features of discourse.

3. The interconection between systematic functional language and the grammar of visual design

Kress and Van Leeuwen (2006) with their research work 'Reading Images: The Grammar of Visual Design' marked a turning point in the study of multimodal discourse. The authors utilized a social semiotic foundation to systematically discuss the approach to multimodal discourse. This was one of the first works to theorize and model the direction of multimodal discourse using the systemic functional grammar framework of Halliday. The grammar model of Kress & Van Leeuwen is related to PTDN in two aspects:

- The approach to image grammar is based on the SFG system of Halliday's research.

- The theory of image grammar has provided an approach to images and the direction of approaching image combinations, including language systems

From Kress and van Leeuwen's perspective (2006, p.19), the common ground between language and image communication is the "realization of basic meaning systems that constitute our culture, but both perform this task in separate and independent forms." This relates to the relationship between language-thought and image-thought: Phenomena or images from the outside world do not necessarily remain unchanged when reflected through language or image communication. The world exists as potential meaning to form the reflective object of language or image. On the other hand, this process is influenced by many other unconstrained factors in thinking, such as context, cultural resources, or emotional feelings.

Because of building on the SFG foundation of Halliday, the image grammar theory of Kress and van Leeuwen addressed the practicality of language. The elements of the image must be recognized for its functional aspect in the meaning-making process. Thus, Kress and Van Leeuwen developed a theoretical framework for reading images based on Halliday's well-known metafunctions: ideational metafunction, interpersonal metafunction, and textual metafunction.

This approach is manifested through relationships such as: the relationship between the image and the creator, between the image and the receiver, between the image and the natural-social world, and between the image and itself. The projection of image grammar onto the three basic metafunctions in Halliday's SFG system is illustrated in the diagram below:

(b) visual images

LANGUAGE		VISUAL IMAGES
Experiential Meaning	**Logical Meaning**	**Representational Meaning**
DISCOURSE		**VISUAL DISCOURSE/GRAMMAR**
IDEATION (Activity Sequences)	CONJUNCTION & CONTINUITY (Logical Relations)	SCENE Movement-Action-Event-Being Sequence (Figures, Objects, Setting) Narrative/Descriptive/Explanative Relations Interplay of Episodes Spatial/Temporal/Causal
GRAMMAR		
TRANSITIVITY (Processes, participants and circumstance) ERGATIVITY (Agency)	LOGICO-SEMANTIC RELATIONS & INTER-DEPENDENCY	SUB-SCENES (Episodes) Movement-Action-Event-Being (Figures, Objects, Setting) Narrative/Descriptive/Explanative Relations Spatial/Temporal/Causal Relations COMPONENTS Figures, Objects, Setting
EXPRESSION (Cross-Functional Systems) According to Medium Materiality (e.g. print, drawing, painted, electronic) e.g. Font (Type, Format, Case, Typeface, Size and Colour) Layout (Spacing, Justification, Visual Effects and so forth)		**EXPRESSION** (Cross-Functional Systems) According to Medium and Materiality of Visual Image (e.g. print, drawing, painting, electronic) e.g. Colour (Shading, Brightness, Hue) Perspective, Framing and so forth

(O'Halloran 2008: 456-457)

In Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL), the three metafunctions—ideational, interpersonal, and textual—form the theoretical framework for analyzing and understanding language use. These metafunctions are closely connected to the four characteristics of the Grammar of Visual Design proposed by Kress and van Leeuwen. The ideational metafunction, concerned with representing experiences and construing the world, aligns with the visual grammar's focus on representation, encompassing narrative and conceptual representations in images. The interpersonal metafunction, emphasizing the relationship between the producer and receiver of the message, correlates with the visual grammar's consideration of viewer position, reflecting how the image addresses and involves the audience. Lastly, the textual metafunction, concerned with the organization of the message, aligns with the visual grammar's exploration of modality, encompassing aspects like the expression of mood and tone in visual communication. The integration of SFL metafunctions and the Grammar of Visual Design provides a comprehensive framework for analyzing the multimodal aspects of communication, bridging linguistic and visual elements.

4. CONCLUSION

In the context of advertising language, the interconnection between Systemic Functional Language (SFL) and the Grammar of Visual Design offers a robust framework for understanding the intricacies of multimodal communication. The synergy between SFL's three metafunctions—ideational, interpersonal, and textual—and the four characteristics of the Grammar of Visual Design, as articulated by Kress and van Leeuwen, provides a comprehensive lens through which to analyze the language of advertisements. The ideational metafunction aligns with visual representation strategies, enabling the conveyance of narratives and conceptual meanings. The interpersonal metafunction finds expression in viewer positioning, acknowledging the dynamic relationship between the audience and the visual message. Meanwhile, the textual metafunction correlates with the exploration of modality, contributing to the overall organization and impact of the advertisement. This interconnected approach facilitates a deeper understanding of how linguistic and visual elements collaborate to construct meaning, influence consumer perceptions, and achieve communicative goals in the realm of advertising. Ultimately, the integration of SFL and the Grammar of Visual Design enriches the analysis of advertising language, recognizing it as a multimodal and dynamic form of communication that extends beyond linguistic boundaries.

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