The sound of one hand clapping: The management of interaction in written discourse

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Abstract

Interaction in written discourse can be carried out in a number of ways which are essentially the same as in spoken discourse but which have a different effect because of the medium. This paper gives an overview of the main grammatical systems which can be exploited in interaction, and then examines their use in written texts, focussing particularly on enacted and projected roles. Written advertisements are used to exemplify features of this use. A distinction is drawn between writer and reader on the one hand and writer-in-the-text and reader-in-the-text. It is argued that one function of the interaction is to project a reader-in-the-text with whom the reader is invited to identify, or converge. This is especially evident in advertisements, and has a clearly manipulative purpose there; but other written genres can be viewed as exploiting similar linguistic options for their own purposes, and can be defined partly by their use of these options.

Keywords: *discourse analysis; written text; functional grammar; interaction; advertising.*

1. Introduction

Although research into the interactive function of language has, for obvious reasons, tended to focus on spoken rather than written discourse, there has been increasing interest in recent years in exploring written text in terms of interaction. Nystrand (1986), for example, sees a major feature of interaction as communicative exchange between two participants through speech or writing. For him, the association of interaction with spoken discourse simply because of turn taking is misleading. He argues that:

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turn taking is not interaction *per se* but merely the way conversants accomplish interaction. The interaction of interest is what the turn taking accomplishes, namely an exchange of meaning or a transfusion of shared knowledge. In this sense, writers and readers interact every time the readers understand a written text. Conversely, the failure to comprehend means an absence of interaction. (Nystrand, 1986: 40)

There appear to be two main complementary approaches to the investigation of the interactive aspects of written text. One (see, e.g., Hoey, 1983, 1988; Widdowson, 1984), is information-oriented. It concentrates on the ways in which writers take the (imagined) readers' expectations, knowledge and interests into account in constructing their text and in signalling the relationships between parts of the text. The flow of information in a text — including the selection of what information to include or exclude — can to a large extent be explained by seeing written monologue as 'a specialised form of dialogue between the writer...and the reader' (Hoey, 1983: 27):

writing can only be properly understood if we recognize the ways in which the text has adapted to the needs of the reader. Good writers adjust to the needs of their readers by accentuating the interactive properties of writing so that the reader who wishes to read carefully, for example for the purposes of clarifying his or her understanding on some point, can see where the writer is taking him or her. (Hoey, 1988: 70)

This approach thus lays emphasis on the 'reader-friendly' aspects of written text: the primary direction of the interaction is from reader to writer, in that it is the reader's needs (as predicted by the writer) which are seen as influencing the writer's behavior.

The other approach is broadly function oriented. It concentrates on the ways in which writers more or less overtly conduct interaction with their readers, particularly by assuming for themselves and assigning to the readers roles in the interaction (e.g., questioner and answerer), and by intruding in the message to comment on and evaluate it. It would be too alarmist to say that this approach emphasizes the 'reader-unfriendly' aspects of written text, but certainly the aspects focussed on can frequently be characterized as manipulative: the primary direction of the interaction here is from writer to reader, with the writer attempting to influence the reader's reactions and behavior. This approach derives largely from systemic-functional grammar (Halliday, 1985) and particularly from its interest in the interpersonal function of language, which

is concerned with the social, expressive and conative functions of language, with expressing the speaker's 'angle': his attitudes and judgements, his encoding of the

role relationships in the situation, and his motive in saying anything at all. (Halliday and Hasan, 1976: 26–27)

For Halliday, the grammar of any language includes an interpersonal component which serves to realize these functions. Within this component, it is above all the grammatical systems of mood and modality which signal interaction. The former is defined as the system which establishes role relationships between the speaker/writer and hearer/reader, whereas the latter system carries the speaker/writer's assessment of the truth of his/her message (Berry, 1975: 66).

Many of the studies of interaction within this function-oriented approach have dealt with spoken discourse, either explicitly (e.g., Coates, 1990; He, 1993) or taking speech as basic without examining whether any differences arise when the interaction is conducted through writing (e.g., Halliday, 1985; Zhang, 1991). There have been a number of analyses of the functions of modality in written text (e.g., Cherry, 1988; Myers, 1989; Simpson, 1990, 1992), and a few of mood (e.g., Frank, 1989; May, 1989; McCarthy, 1992). However, most of these studies have focussed on particular kinds or signals of interaction, and relatively little attention has been paid to the provision of systematic guidelines on the range of ways in which interaction may be signalled in written text.

What we propose to do in this paper is to set out a systematic set of choices for examining interaction. The choices themselves are available for both spoken and written discourse; but the way in which the choices work, and therefore the speaker/writer's reasons for making those choices, will vary according to the medium. In order to exemplify and explore the model presented here, we will use it to analyse the management of interaction in written advertisements.

The advantage of this kind of discourse for our purposes is that it typically aims to construct a stylized imitation of speech in written text — in McCarthy's (1993) terms, it exploits aspects of the spoken mode in the written medium. Frank (1989), in a perceptive study of questions in direct sales letters whose approach informs our own analysis of questions below, shows that aspects of the discourse in her data 'are related to conversational phenomenon conditioned by the general rules which govern everyday conversation' (1989: 236–237). This means that the interactional management tends to be relatively attention seeking and thus easy to identify. Nevertheless, it should not be thought that advertising is idiosyncratic in its handling of interaction. Some writers such as Chafe (1986: 37) see 'freedom from...interactional constraints' as a fundamental characteristic of writing. However, Frank emphasizes that:

strategies associated with both oral and literate forms of discourse are found in both spoken and written forms of discourse, so that any text type will fall

somewhere on an oral/literate continuum rather than being characterizable as either oral or literate. (Frank, 1989: 235)

Research (e.g., May, 1989; Thetela, 1991; McCarthy, 1993) indicates clearly that other written genres involve the same kinds of choices as in advertising, but that they may simply be less obvious, particularly if the choices are consistently directed towards avoiding overt interaction. The degree to which discourse types tend towards monologic or dialogic patterns of interaction is, in this view, independent of whether they are spoken or written; but the effect of, and reasons for, choosing one or other as the dominant pattern at any point in the discourse *is* dependent on the medium.

2. Aspects of interpersonal management

As noted above, in discussing the interpersonal function of language, Halliday (1985) focusses on mood and modality as the main grammatical systems which realize that function, although he does in passing mention other realization elements (e.g., interpersonal or 'attitudinal' epithets, 1985: 163–164). He presents mood and modality as linked structurally in that the congruent expression of modality is through modal verbs, or modal adjuncts such as 'often', which form part of the mood element in a clause. They are also linked semantically in that the finite (the part of mood which carries the primary tense or modality) 'relates the proposition to its context in the speech event' in one of two ways: 'one is by reference to the time of speaking; the other is by reference to the judgement of the speaker' (Halliday, 1985: 75).

However, other writers (e.g., Lemke, 1992: 86) note that this approach tends to blur together interactional functions and personal 'intruder' functions. Modal and attitudinal expressions normally convey the speaker's own view of events without directly setting up interactional expectations in the way that mood choices — particularly the presence and ordering of subject and finite within mood — do (e.g., an interrogative normally expects a declarative as answer from the other person). In addition, it is possible to view modality, even if carried by modal verbs, as overlaying rather than replacing primary tense, since modal verbs are normally inherently present tense (they start from the speaker's view at the time of speaking).[1]

It therefore seems more appropriate to make a distinction within the interpersonal function, and to see it as comprising two related but relatively independent functions: the personal and the interactional. The term 'interactional' is preferred for this second option, so that 'interactive' can

be reserved to refer to the information-oriented aspects of written text which are explored in the first approach described above. Both personal and interactional functions work together — often reinforcing each other, as our analysis of advertisements below shows — to realize the interpersonal function; but for practical analytical purposes it seems more useful to take them separately. Once we have accepted this step, we can assign the main kinds of interpersonal meanings to the two functions, as in Figure 1.

The model shown in Figure 1 is based on our experience of analyzing the way in which interpersonal management is conducted in a wide range of texts of different genres.[2] It does not include all possible choices — the question of which participant is chosen as subject, for example, should probably be dealt with under the personal function, but we have not yet found a way of linking this in usefully with our analyses (though Gosden, 1993, indicates some possible lines of approach). The same is true of primary tense choices in the finite. The four aspects listed (modality, evaluation, enacted roles and projected roles) are those which we have found it most rewarding to explore. Of these, the first two are reasonably self-explanatory; and modality, at least, is well mapped, notably by Halliday himself (e.g., 1970, 1985), while writers such as Lemke (1992) and Hunston (1994) have begun exploring the functions of evaluation in discourse.

It is with the two interactional aspects that we are chiefly concerned in this paper. Enacted roles are those which are performed by the act of

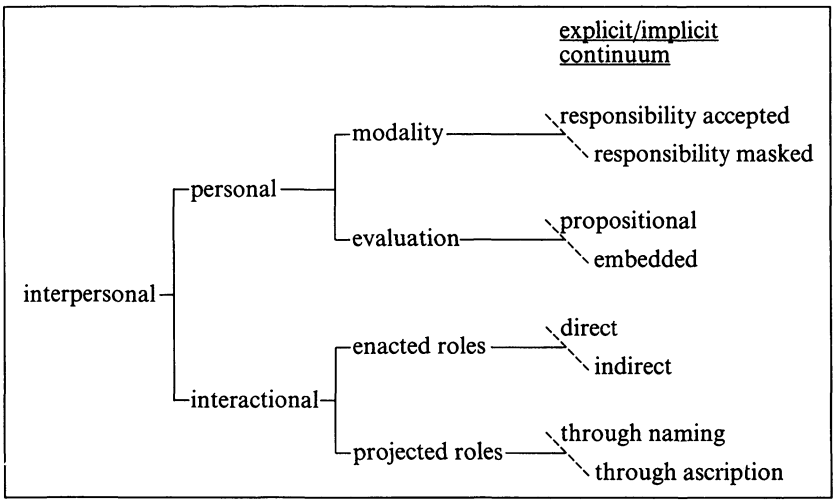

Figure 1. *Interpersonal systems*

speaking/writing itself: they are essentially Halliday's 'speech roles' (1985: 68). Choices chiefly (though not exclusively) within the mood element of the clause act to assign certain roles to the two people directly involved in the language event: the speaker/writer, by choosing declarative or interrogative for example, acts out the role of giver or demander of information with the listener/reader in the complementary role of (potential) accepter or provider. In analysing enacted roles in text, it is necessary to determine who is assigned which role in each interaction, how this is done and what the implications are for the kind of interaction that is taking place. When the text in question is spoken, the enactment will normally be instantaneous and relatively straightforwardly performed. When, on the other hand, it is written, the enactment may well have to be mimicked rather than performed. This is particularly so when the reader is assigned a responsive or initiating role such as provider or demander of information or goods and services rather than a nonresponsive (though not, of course, passive) role as accepter of information. An important part of the analysis below will be concerned with the ways in which reader initiations and responses can be accommodated in written text.

Projected roles are those which are assigned by the speaker/writer by means of the overt labelling of the two participants involved in the language event. The labelling is done by the choice of terms used to address or name the two participants and by the roles ascribed to them in the processes referred to in the clause. Projected roles depend on explicit reference in the text to the two participants: the speaker/writer can therefore choose not to project roles (whereas she cannot choose not to enact roles).

This is the point at which the interpersonal component overlaps with the ideational in Halliday's model, since, if the speaker/writer does project roles, the person on whom the role is projected is simultaneously a participant in the language event and a participant in the clause. This happens most clearly with the personal pronouns *I*, *you* and *we*. In the following extract from our data, *you* is the reader, to whom the statement is addressed, and also the Actor in the process of 'using the cheque card'.

(1) *You can use it to guarantee cheques up to £100.* [A24]

In the following example, the labelling is less self-evident, but it is still possible to distinguish between 'all chairmen' as the addressee (the second sentence makes it clear that this is the addressee) and as the Senser in the process of 'loving something' (the choice of a third-person label for the addressee is, of course, significant and will be discussed below):

(2) *All Chairmen love being in the driving seat. So you'll relish Saab's.* [A17]

The addressing may also be done by a vocative, which is outside the propositional content of the clause:

(3) *Reader, I married him.*

This particular form of labelling does not actually occur in our data, which is in itself worth noting, given the frequency with which direct address is mimicked in advertisements.

The reason why it is important to distinguish the two types of participant roles (participant in the interaction of the speech event and participant in the transitivity of the clause) is that it is not only the choice of label (first, second or third person forms) which is important; the speaker/writer can also manage the interaction partly by projecting different transitivity roles onto herself and her audience. In example (2), the reader is not only being labelled a 'Chairman' but is also having ascribed to him participation in a process of 'loving being in the driving seat'. Of course, the reader can reject the projection; but this does not alter the fact that the projection is made and serves an interpersonal function (in the same way, a listener may reject the role of answerer, but the role has still been constructed by the asking of a question).

The following analysis of how these various aspects of interpersonal management operate in text will, we hope, help to clarify the concepts; and it will also indicate how the aspects interact to support each other. Before moving on to the data, however, we should mention the rightmost categories in Figure 1. It appears to be a general feature of interpersonal systems that it is possible to identify a continuum from most to least explicit forms of realization: that is, the speaker/writer may appear in the text, for personal or interactional purposes, with greater or lesser degrees of visibility.

For modality, the continuum depends on how visibly the speaker/writer accepts responsibility for the expression of personal viewpoint: it ranges, in Halliday's terms (1985: 336), from explicit subjective modality (e.g., '*I think* he's wrong') to explicit objective modality (e.g., '*There's a possibility* that he's wrong'). For evaluation, the continuum is in terms of whether the proposition itself is evaluative (e.g., 'These findings *are highly significant*') or whether the evaluation is embedded within clause constituents (especially Given constituents: e.g., 'These *significant* findings provided the basis of our own research'). In both modality and evaluation, it is possible to move away from the visible end of the cline by fusing

personal with ideational functions (e.g., *point out* is *say* plus high certainty modality, *screech* is *say* (loudly) plus negative evaluation).

For enacted roles, the continuum is based on the well-established phenomenon of direct and indirect speech acts (see e.g., Levinson, 1983). It appears most clearly in the case of commands (*Sit down!* as opposed to *Why don't you take the weight off your feet for a while?*), but the resources of interpersonal metaphor (in this case of mood — see Halliday, 1985: 342–345) allow almost any matching of structure and function. For projected roles, it is essentially the overtness of the labelling that is in question. At the most overt end, the speaker/writer can project roles by the way in which she names herself or the other person, most clearly through vocatives (e.g., *Sir*). At the other end of the cline is the projection of roles through transitivity choices — especially when third-person labelling is used (e.g., '*Course participants choose* four of these options' in a handbook for students, where the addressee is projected as Senser in a mental process of choosing).

3. Analysis[3]

3.1. *Participants*

Since we are interested in interaction, it is important to start by establishing who the interacting participants are and what the framework of their relationship is.

In looking at the writer of the advertisements, we will not examine the roles of the different people actually involved in the production of the text along the lines suggested by Goffman (1981). Instead, we will focus on the 'writer-in-the-text': the participant who is represented as responsible for the text. In many cases, this is the company itself as a whole:

(4) We *are the first Japanese company to do it.* [A66]

However, variations on this are possible. For example, in advertisements which highlight the technical ingenuity of the product (so advanced that only experts can — and need to — fully understand it), the writer-in-the-text may differentiate himself from the product designers within the company, perhaps in this way creating common ground with the nonspecialist reader:

(5) Our engineers *have totally redesigned it to incorporate a multi-link suspension.*[4] [A87]

In other cases, the writer does not explicitly appear in the text. The presence or absence of a writer-in-the-text, his/her identity, and the way

in which s/he is referred to will clearly have an effect on the way the interaction is managed. The second participant is the set of potential clients in their manifestation as readers-in-the-text; and, again, the same questions of presence, identity and manner of reference arise.

A further important factor is the relative distribution of power in the interaction, which leads us towards the purpose of the advertisements. An over-simple but powerful way of viewing the relationship is to see the typical relationship between the writer-in-the-text and the reader-in-the-text as almost the reverse of the real relationship between the advertiser and the reader. That is, in reality the advertiser is in the inferior position of entreating the more powerful reader for help (by buying the product, etc.). However, apart from certain advertisements for charities which do adopt an overt textual stance of entreaty, the writer-in-the-text almost invariably interacts with the reader-in-the-text as an equal or even from a position of superiority. Many of the interactional features of advertisements can be explained at least partly as attempts to disguise the real relationship and to construct an alternative which the reader is invited to accept as valid, if only for the duration of the text. The hoped-for outcome is that the reader should accept 'convergence' with the reader-in-the-text.

It could be argued that this is a particular feature of advertisements and thus not relevant to other, less overtly manipulative, genres. Our counterargument is that the manipulation is merely more obvious in advertisements (hence their attraction for illustrative purposes). The distinction between writer/reader and writer-in-the-text/reader-in-the-text — already, of course, familiar in literary studies — is useful for the analysis of a wide range of genres (in academic text, for example, the conventional and quite possibly counterfeit humility of the writer-in-the-text in relation to her peer group readers is well documented: see Myers, 1989).

3.2. *Enacted roles*

As indicated above, the kind of enacted roles which are of particular interest in written text are those which imply or demand a response — or even an initiation in some cases — on the part of the reader. Table 1, slightly adapted from Halliday (1985: 69), shows the general pattern of complementary functions that participants in a language event are expected to perform. The last column from the original, which Halliday calls the 'discretionary alternative' (similar to 'dispreferred seconds' in conversational analysis terms — see Pomerantz, 1984) has been left out, since in written text the writer has to assume a particular response from

Table 1. *Language functions and responses*[a]

	Initiation	Expected response
Give goods and services	offer	acceptance
Demand goods and services	command	undertaking (*or action*)
Give information	statement	acknowledgement
Demand information	question	answer

Note: [a]Based on Halliday (1985: 69).

the reader-in-the-text in order for the interaction to progress — even though the real reader may, of course, respond very differently.

However, the table is, in a sense, misleading, in that it overemphasizes the need for an overt response to a statement. In many cases, particularly in monologue (written or spoken), the expected response to a statement is best expressed in negative terms: allowing the speaker/writer to continue without contradiction, challenge or loss of attention is in itself sufficient acknowledgement by the reader/listener for the interaction to progress. The other functions, on the other hand, do normally expect an overt response; and their appearance in written text raises the question of how that response is incorporated into the language event. Because they expect an overt response, they also in themselves highlight the fact that interaction is taking place in a way that statements do not; and they thus raise the question of what roles are being enacted and who is filling each role.

Any enacted role constructs a complementary role; and both roles must be filled, and are assumed to be filled by different participants. In written discourse, the performance of both roles is normally carried out by the writer, but even in these cases the original two-participant model underlies the enactment. A close parallel can be drawn with grammatical metaphor (Halliday, 1985). In metaphorical, or noncongruent, forms of expression the meaning derives simultaneously from the congruent and noncongruent readings. For example, in this extract from one of the advertisements:

(6) *Of course, you're unlikely to be attracted to nursing because of the money.* [A72]

we have syntactically a statement about one of the addressee's attributes ('unlikely to be attracted to nursing because of the money') which in fact encodes the writer's own modality ('*Probably* you are not attracted to nursing...'). Both of these readings need to be combined in order to understand the meaning (i.e., the writer's reason for choosing this

particular encoding and the effect on the reader). The same is true of what may be called 'interactional metaphors' in written discourse: when a text includes both a question and its answer, for example, the meaning arises from the combination of having two roles which essentially belong to different participants in the interaction and of having both roles performed by the writer.

3.2.1. *Questions.* In speech, it is usually clear who is demanding information and who is expected to give it. In writing, the position is typically less clear. In many cases, the questioner is the writer, but the identity of the expected responder and, often, the type of response expected must be inferred from the way that the discourse continues. At other times, the writer is clearly in the role of answerer, and the identity of the questioner (and even the nature of the question — see Frank, 1989: 252–253) is left to inference.

One very frequent type of question in advertisements is addressed directly to the reader but demands only a minimal response. Many of these are *yes/no* or tag questions:[5]

(7) *Would we be right in thinking, you're left with a tidy sum?* [A28]

(8) *Not as bad as you thought, is it?* [A72]

The next part of the text in each case indicates that the reader-in-the-text is assumed to have given the expected response (to have agreed with the proposition). For example, the second question above, example (8), comes after information about the financial rewards of nursing. The question itself projects a reader who (justifiably) thought that nurses are underpaid, but who has now been persuaded that they are not. The writer continues:

(6) *Of course, you're unlikely to be attracted to nursing because of the money.* [A72]

This concern for the reader's moral values only makes sense if it is assumed that s/he has agreed that a nurse's salary is potentially attractive.

Other questions — typically *wh*-questions — expect a fuller response from the reader. In these cases, the writer has to ensure that the response is of broadly the right kind although the details are unpredictable. Frequently the question is framed in a way which controls the response so closely that it hardly needs to occur for the interaction to continue. It would need a perversely uncooperative reader to answer anything but 'Never' or 'Not often' to the following question:

(9) *Looking back, how often have you been made the offer of a lifetime for the price of an icecream?* [A46]

Other advertisements adopt a slightly riskier strategy. For example, an advertisement publicizing cut-price hotel tariffs at the same time as the January sales in the large London stores begins:

(10) *While the bargain-hunters are camping out in the streets of the West End, what will you be doing?* [A79]

Here the reader is given the opportunity to continue or break off the interaction. If s/he replies 'Camping out in the streets with the bargain-hunters', s/he is clearly not going to be interested in the alternative offered by the advertisement and there is no point in continuing the interaction. The text can thus be seen as selecting its own readers: those who do not give the 'wrong' answer. By reading on, the reader is accepting (however provisionally) the role assigned to the reader-in-the-text, and thus accepting the interaction. Although an overt response may well not have been given, both writer and reader proceed as if it had.

A slightly different use of questions addressed to the reader occurs fairly frequently at the end of advertisements.

(11) *How is your appetite for flying Air Canada?* [A44]

(12) *What more could you want?* [A34]

(13) *But should that be the case, wouldn't two pensions provide an even happier and more comfortable retirement anyway?* [A83]

For most of the text, the responsibility for maintaining the interaction has lain primarily with the writer. These text-final questions serve to pass the responsibility back to the reader, who is left to complete the interaction. There is discoursal pressure on the reader to supply a response, but the writer is no longer at fault if the response does not occur.

As well as questions addressed by the writer to the reader, there are questions which function in the interaction on the assumption that they are asked by the reader, seeking information from the writer. Occasionally, this distribution of roles is explicitly signalled in the text:

(14) *After all, are not all these things exactly what makes a car worth driving?* To which we answer: yes, *but would you enjoy it quite so much if your children had to pay for it?* [A15]

More often, however, the distribution of roles can be inferred from the fact that a full answer to the question appears in the text itself, sometimes with a 'response-word' such as *yes* or *certainly*.

(15) *Talking about rewards, what about pay? A Registered General Nurse in an orthopaedic ward with three years experience could expect to earn £9,815 a year...* [A50]

(16) *Can you speak well in 3½ weeks? Yes, the record so far was 31 hours of study (for an O-level distinction!)* [A1]

In these cases, the assumption of the answering role by the writer leaves the questioning role to be assigned to the other person in the interaction — the reader-in-the-text. The manipulative intention of this technique is fairly clear: the reader is being encouraged to accept the writer as able to speak on his/her behalf. To the sceptical, the intended interaction perhaps resembles that between a ventriloquist and his dummy.

3.2.2. *Commands.* Any advertisement can be seen as in essence a command: a linguistic attempt to influence the behavior of the other participant. However, since the other participant is, as noted above, in reality as powerful, if not more so, the underlying command has to be disguised and mitigated in a variety of ways. Nevertheless, we do find overt imperative mood choices fairly frequently in the text of advertisements. We also find suggestions, which are related to commands in that they seek to influence the reader's future behavior.

The majority of commands in our data are mitigated by setting out the benefits for the reader of carrying out the action, or by making the command conditional[6] and thus explicitly handing over responsibility for following the command to the reader:

(17) To test drive one of our models, or for further information, *complete the coupon.* [A64]

(18) *Add a Linguaphone course*, and that potential can become a reality quickly and easily. [A18]

(19) If you've had enough of cards that say how little your bank appreciates you, *open a Girobank Keyway account.*

The expected response to these commands is usually connected directly with what the advertisement is trying to persuade the reader to do, although often it is an intermediate step — sending off a coupon rather than buying the product, for example:

(20) *To find out more about how Kodak can suit your business, call Ron Young on 0442 61122 and arrange for a fitting.* [A22]

Further mitigation is often added in these cases by adding a 'minimizer' emphasizing the smallness of the imposition:

(21) *For more details of Wedgwood tableware and giftware* simply *visit your local stockist.* [A88]

A different kind of mitigation is represented by encoding the commands indirectly as suggestions, most often of the 'why not?' kind:

(22) *So why not give them [Super Noodles] a whirl?* [A9]

(23) *Why not find out how you can become one of those 'talented' people who can speak another language?* [A18]

Mitigation of commands by the use of *please* is rare and appears chiefly in advertisements for charity (as Leech [1966] noted).

(24) *Please send a donation.* [A5]

(25) *Please answer and return the survey to us.* [A5]

In this context, *please* indicates a position of inferiority vis-a-vis the addressee, since it underlines the fact that the advertiser wants something from the reader. For charities, which normally offer nothing tangible in return, this is an acceptable stance. Most advertisers, on the other hand, seek to present the situation in terms of their having a product or service which the reader wants from them.

If we look at how response-demanding commands are accommodated within the interaction, we note that most of the mitigated commands appear at or near the end of advertisements. This means that the response does not need to happen within the interaction (compare text-final questions). They also exploit the future-oriented nature of commands (a command is not 'felicitous', to adapt Austin's (1962) term, if the action demanded has already been carried out). The response to them — essentially to do with carrying out the underlying command ('Buy this/send money/use our services/etc.') as noted above — is treated as held over until the present interaction is finished.

Another type of command also appears in advertisements. These are normally unmitigated and typically occur in the body of the advertisement. Rather than relating to the underlying command, they project the reader into the role either of someone examining the product before buying it or of someone who already owns the product — it is noticeable that the crucial action of buying is invariably missing. Examples (26) to (28) below relate to the pre-buying stage while examples (29) to (31) relate to the post-buying stage.

(26) *Be curious and take a look under each bonnet.* [A10]

(27) *Try it yourself FREE for fifteen days.* [A1]

(28) *Don't take the usual cruise around the suburbs...Instead ask to make a beeline for the kind of roads most car dealers avoid.* [A34]

(29) *Turn the heat down, and they form a 'vapour seal' around the rim.* [A14]

(30) *Take your seats as we soar high above the dramatic dunes of the Namibian desert.* [A4]

(31) *Treat your carpets to VAX this weekend.* [A80]

These imperatives again use the fact that commands expect future actions rather than (or as well as) words as a response. They are different from the mitigated commands, however, in that they project the reader-in-the-text into situations which are as yet unreal but which are treated as real (whereas the mitigated commands relate to the present reality of the reader considering the possibility of buying the product). One clear aim of this technique (as with all projection — see the following section) is to encourage the readers to accept the projection as valid for themselves.

3.3. *Projected roles*

3.3.1. *Naming.* Advertisements very frequently employ direct reference to the two participants in the interaction — indeed, the choice not to do so (which normally involves a focus on the product itself) appears to be the marked choice in our data.

The most common ways in which the writers refer to themselves are as *we* and by using the company name.

(32) *To help you find the right adviser for you,* we*'ve put together a booklet about the benefits of advice that's independent.* [A7]

(33) *And that's exactly why* Lufthansa *will never abandon its uncompromising commitment to the very highest standards of quality and service.* [A6]

In many cases, we find the phenomenon of referential switch: the writer switches between the two forms of labelling within the advertisement. Example (33) continues:

(34) *That's why, for instance,* we *are constantly expanding* our *network.* [A6]

Sometimes the referential switch occurs within the same sentence:

(35) *You see* Bosch *believe not just in building a better machine technically speaking,* we *insist it's easy on the eye too.* [A33]

Referential switch, incidentally, confirms that the third-person forms, the company names, are to be taken as having first-person reference.

The use of referential switch in this way is permitted to people who are authorized to present themselves as not only speaking on behalf of, but actually representative of, an organization. To take an example for comparison from a different context, here is part of the Vice-Chancellor's foreword to a University Annual Report:

(36) *At the same time,* the University *is determined that growth and diversification should not be at the expense of high academic standards, and* we *are placing great emphasis on quality assurance and on excellence in teaching.*

In talking to students about university matters, mere lecturers may use similar referential switch; but they are less likely to do so in talking to the Vice-Chancellor who outranks them in 'representativeness'. If only third-person forms referring to the organization are used with no switch to first-person forms, this suggests that the writer is writing on behalf of an impersonal and thus authoritative organization which is inherently third-person and exists above and beyond any individuals in it. This may be appropriate for certain advertisers — for example, the RAC (Royal Automobile Club) can clearly benefit from being seen as an authoritative, semigovernmental organisation (indeed, its rival, the AA, has had a campaign explicitly promoting itself as 'the fourth emergency service' — the other three being the police, ambulance and fire services):

(37) *For instance, once a stolen car has been found* the RAC *will help recover it for you no matter where the thief left it. All you have to do is telephone with the location of the car. And depending on your membership* they'll *take it to the nearest garage.* [A89]

The majority of advertisers, however, exploit referential switch to carry out the two functions of projecting overt interaction and thus intimacy with the reader, and yet ensuring that the reader cannot lose sight of the identity of the addresser.[7]

The normal form of reference to the reader is *you.*

(38) *That's why* you *need to know about Solutions.* [A16]

(39) *Why? Because only by making it our business to understand* your *business are we able to offer a service that's tailor-made to* your *copying (and cost) requirements.* [A22]

This almost exclusive use of the most obvious form is possible because, unlike the writer who needs referential switch to perform the dual function noted above, the reader basically needs no identification. Or rather,

identification would either be too impersonal ('the buyer', 'the reader') or might be too restrictive ('anyone who wants to buy our product').

However, referential switch to third-person forms does occur at times. One of the clearest examples of this is example (2), repeated here for convenience:

(2) All chairmen *love being in the driving seat. So* you'll *relish Saab's.* [A17]

This technique can be used when the writer wishes to project explicitly the type of reader-in-the-text that the advertisement is aimed at (compare reader self-selection through readiness not to give the 'wrong' answer as discussed earlier). Typically, of course, the reader does not need to fill the projected role in reality — the advertisement would be deemed a failure if in fact only chairmen bought Saab cars. All that is needed is that he should be willing not to reject the projection, if only provisionally. No doubt the advertisers hope that at some level readers may be ready to believe that fulfilling one part of the projection (owning a Saab) will somehow entail the other (being a chairman, or chairman-like) — although Thompson (1990: 211) argues strongly that readers are unlikely to take such a simple-minded view.

The reader may also be referred to as *I*, but only in very limited contexts. The most usual place is in the coupons which the reader is asked to fill in and send to the advertiser.

(40) *YES! Please send me the three great books I've chosen for 10 days' free trial.* [A20]

The use of *I* here reflects the fact that this interaction, if it occurs, will be initiated by the reader and addressed to the advertiser: the change to a new interaction is visually signalled by the line separating the coupon from the page around it. At the same time, however, the coupon has been written by the advertisement writer, who thus appears to take on the right to put words into the reader's mouth (or pen). This represents the final step along the hoped-for convergence of reader and reader-in-the-text, and it is noticeable that it only appears at the point where the reader accepts this convergence: by completing the form, the reader is actively responding to the underlying command of the text.

One advertisement in our corpus, an appeal for people to consider nursing as a career, shows an extremely complex interplay of enacted roles and roles projected through naming which indicates how the choices outlined above can be orchestrated to great effect. A large part of the text consists of a series of questions from the reader-in-the-text about salary scales in nursing which are answered by the writer. What is

interesting is that the pronoun system referring to the reader appears to be 'shifted': rather than *I* in the reader's questions and *you* in the writer's answers, we have *you* and *nurses*.

(41) *And what's the money like if* you *go on to become a Ward Sister or (the male equivalent) a Charge Nurse?* They *can earn as much as £14,860 or £16,864 in Inner London.* [A72]

Part of the effect here is to encourage the reader to accept both the enactment of an interaction in which s/he is interested enough in the topic to ask detailed questions and the projection of him/herself as someone potentially going on to become a Ward Sister or Charge Nurse. It would be conceivable for the writer to use *I* in the questions on behalf of the reader: 'What's the money like if I go on to become a Ward Sister?' However, this might impose a role in the interaction on the reader too obtrusively too early, before the reader has accepted convergence with the reader-in-the-text. The use of *you* in the questions, along with its other functions, serves as a reminder that the writer is still accepting at least partial responsibility for the reader-in-the-text. The advertisement ends with a sudden switch back to the 'normal' use of *you* in the text-final question from the writer:

(42) WHAT DID YOU DO AT WORK TODAY? [A72]

This relates to the idea, established earlier, that the emotional rewards of nursing are greater than those of ordinary jobs such as that of the reader. Its effectiveness arises from the contrast with the pattern established so far: it is as if the ventriloquist had suddenly abandoned the dummy and turned to address the audience directly, with a question that he cannot answer on their behalf.

3.3.2. *Ascribed roles.* The preceding section has surveyed some of the main ways in which the participants in the interaction are referred to and the implications for the kinds of roles projected. A further step leads us to look at the roles which are ascribed to the participants in the transitivity system (for a full description of transitivity as used here, see Halliday, 1985: 101–144). Only a brief overview is possible here, since this is an area in which there is a great deal of variation among different advertisements. The analysis will concentrate on a particular configuration of roles which seems to recur relatively frequently.

One of the roles projected on to the reader-in-the-text is reasonably predictable: that of Beneficiary ('the one to or for whom the process is said to take place' — Halliday, 1985: 132).

(43) *We offer* you *the complete works.* [A11]

(44) *We'll send* you *a FREE booklet.* [A5]

(45) You'*ll be assigned your own Customer Support Representative.* [A22]

It is worth recalling that, as noted above, the company equally aims to be the beneficiary of the reader's actions in reality; but advertisements typically construct an interaction which does not include this role for the company.

The reader-in-the-text is also frequently the Carrier in a relational process (that is, s/he is described as possessing some attribute). The attribute ascribed to him/her is often that of possession of the benefits bestowed by the product:

(46) *From day one, you'll have a business partnership with Kodak.* [A22]

(47) *You and your partner can each have the ideal choice of comfort and support in the same double bed.* [A71]

This role may be embedded in a nominal group as a possessive determiner:

(48) Your Mercedes-Benz *becomes an even more responsive car.* [A45]

This type of Carrier role is in a sense complementary to the role of Beneficiary, in that when a process takes place to or for someone, that person typically undergoes a change of state ('We will send you a free booklet' implies 'You will have a free booklet/Your free booklet').

A different kind of attribute refers to the reader's feelings:

(49) *You'll be equally impressed with the 518i.* [A17]

(50) *So you might be relieved to get your hands on a revolutionary oven door that never gets hotter than warm.* [A91]

Again, this can appear embedded as a possessive determiner:

(51) *Our spacious and stylish on-board facilities and Duty-Free shops stacked high with bargains add to* your pleasure. [A74]

This is closely related to the most frequent transitivity role projected on to the reader-in-the-text: that of Senser in a mental process (the sentient being involved in thinking, feeling or perceiving).

(52) *That's why you need to know about Solutions.* [A16]

(53) *So you'll enjoy a more exhilarating and challenging workout.* [A77]

(54) *Stylish elegance and luxurious details are the first things you'll notice about the new Galant.* [A8]

One thing that is noticeable about these projections is that the majority

are modalized (most frequently with *will*, although *can* is also used). This has two main functions. The first is an acknowledgement that the roles — normally associated with the stages of considering or possessing the product — are as yet unrealized: the writer occasionally projects the role as already realized, as in example (48) above, but this relies on a more cooperative attitude on the reader's part. This aspect of modality links with the other signals of unrealized roles mentioned earlier, commands and suggestions. In some genres, the roles projected on to the reader-in-the-text are essentially concerned with the present, with projecting or defining who the writer thinks or hopes the reader is. In advertising (and other openly exhortatory genres), the projected roles are essentially future-oriented: the writer may not know exactly what kind of person the reader is, but he knows very precisely what kind of person he hopes the reader will be. The roles are projected as, once more, an invitation to the reader to converge with the projected reader-in-the-text.

At the same time, the modality acts as a personal intrusion by the writer, expressing a high degree of predictive certainty with, as is often the case, implied conditionality (Palmer, 1990: 138) — the condition, of course, being that the reader obeys the underlying command of the advertisement. This is the writer in the role of reassurer. The modality thus relates the advertisement to the speech act of promising: again, real roles are mirrored in reverse, since the function of the advertisement is in fact to induce the reader to undertake to give money.

As a complement to the roles ascribed to the reader, one very common role ascribed to the writer is that of Actor in a material process (the person carrying out a process of 'doing'). The processes typically involve the related activities of producing the product and providing it for the reader.

(55) *We've designed a range of toys to stimulate the imagination and satisfy inquiring minds.* [A57]

(56) *Linguaphone will provide you with everything you need to learn at your own pace.* [A18]

The overall effect of the combination of the various ascribed roles mentioned above is to reinforce an impression which the enacted roles also set out to create: many advertisements essentially base themselves on a mimicking of face-to-face selling encounters. The seller/writer actively exerts himself showing off the product, promising satisfaction, instructing the customer/reader how to use or operate it, answering questions about it; meanwhile the customer/reader, without becoming involved in unseemly exertion, asks questions, examines the product,

reacts to it, and finally possesses it (it is noticeable that, in both enacted and projected roles, the central but unpleasant action of *buying*, of the reader handing over money, is glossed over: the reader-in-the-text passes painlessly into the state of possession). This mimicry is frequently reinforced also by other features of the text not examined here — for example, the regular use of full stops and even paragraph breaks to separate a subordinate clause from its main clause (a feature noted by Toolan, 1988), in a way which imitates the afterthoughts typical of unplanned, conversational discourse:

(57) *Unfortunately, little of what he sent to the island has survived. Although a few selected pieces are to be found in the Wedgwood Museum at Barlaston.* [A88]

The face-to-face encounter is by no means the only model on which written advertisements draw; but it is an extremely common model, and one which exploits the range of interactional techniques available in a consistent way. Underlying the use of this model is perhaps the fact that someone reading a written advertisement may well have no thought as yet of buying the product whereas someone who is in the shop or showroom has already taken the first active step towards buying. Therefore, to interact with the reader as if s/he had taken that step is an invitation to converge at least to that first, small, harmless degree: the language treats the reader as someone who already wants the product.

4. Conclusion

The description of how interaction is managed in advertisements given above is obviously not the complete picture: for one thing, many advertisements work by deliberately going counter to expectations (although that simultaneously affirms the fact that those expectations exist). Even the aspects investigated merit further discussion. For example, a feature of some advertisements is the empty role slot where, by a variety of grammatical means, a process is left with certain participant roles unexpressed and the reader is encouraged to project him/herself into the slot. In example (58), the empty slot (the participant who nurses) is marked with an asterisk:

(58) *Imagine how rewarding it is * to nurse a stroke victim towards independence.* [A72]

This technique clearly parallels the use of empty interactional slots described above where, for example, not only answers but even, as Frank

(1989) shows, questions are missing, in the hope that the reader will accept the task of supplying them.

Beyond an analysis of the discourse of advertising in particular, however, what we have argued in this paper is that the analysis of any written discourse needs to include consideration of overtly interactional features (or, in some cases, of their absence), and that the categories which we outlined in Figure 1 provide a useful and reasonably systematic basis for investigating these features. As with all linguistic choices, contextual conventions place constraints, of differing degrees of severity, on the ways available to the writer to manage interaction. Different genres will show different typical configurations of interactional functions. To take one example, questions in academic articles sometimes enact an interaction between the writer as she was at the start of her research (the questioner) and the writer in her present state of knowledge as she writes the article (the answerer), with the reader in the nonresponsive role of 'auditor' (Bell, 1991: 91). A paper by Leech (1991: 8) begins:

(59) *When did modern corpus linguistics begin? Should we trace it back to the era of post-Bloomfieldian structural linguistics in the USA?*

The rest of the introduction to the paper then works through to the answer. This is not an interactional technique which appears in our advertisements data; and the reasons for the appearance or nonappearance of the technique can be traced back to the generic purpose of the texts. There seem to be certain genres — especially, as Leech (1966) and Geis (1982) suggest, those of an exhortatory or persuasive nature — which encourage or even demand the presence in the text of either or both of the participants in the language event, whereas in other genres their presence is not conventionally approved. The sociocultural factors which bring about differences along this dimension are as yet only partially mapped.

It is also clear that interactional features — particularly those related to role enactment — take on a different character when they appear in written rather than spoken discourse. The traditional blanket label 'rhetorical question', for example, simply obscures the complexity of what may be happening when a question appears in written text. Part of the complexity arises from the fact that the question is then a form of interactional metaphor which works on at least two levels simultaneously: as one-participant production and as two-participant interaction. Our analysis has indicated that interaction in written advertisements is modelled on, but by no means identical to, a related kind of spoken interaction; and similarly Thetela (1991), for example, shows that interaction in school textbooks can, unsurprisingly, be linked with face-to-face

teacher-pupil interaction. The identification of the underlying spoken model for a written interaction can help elucidate both, particularly, for our purposes, by highlighting the ways in which the written discourse manages the interaction differently. This leads us away from quantitative studies (e.g., Biber, 1988) of hypothesized differences between spoken and written language in the direction of qualitative studies (e.g., Macaulay, 1990) of the effects of the same linguistic features in different mediums.

In addition, to return to the distinction with which we began this study, one area that has not yet been explored is the way in which interactive, reader-friendly choices work together with interactional, reader-managing choices. Both sets of choices are beginning to be better understood separately; and it will be interesting to attempt to construct an overview of how they mesh in the realization of interpersonal functions in communication.

Notes

1. The exceptions are chiefly when other people's modality is reported. In such cases, the modality relates to the original time of speaking, which is often in the past at the time of reporting; and the 'remote' modal forms (*would, could, might*) tend to be used as genuine past tenses — which again suggests that modality and primary tense should be treated as separate.
2. These include school textbooks, theses, academic papers, advertisements, newspaper reports and leader articles, short stories and novels, instruction leaflets, tourist guides, and business and academic oral presentations.
3. The analysis is based on a corpus of 93 written advertisements taken from a range of magazines and newspapers published in Britain and the USA between March and August 1991 and January and June 1993. The only important criterion for selection was that the advertisements should contain a reasonable amount of text (more than *c.* 50 words). For a study which includes advertisement types with less or no text, see Cook (1992).
4. This distancing of the writer from the expert designers is frequently accompanied by local outbreaks of technical jargon (e.g., 'multi-link suspension' in example [5]) which is probably not meant to be understood by the majority of readers. Not surprisingly, an informal survey of advertisements in magazines aimed at a specialist audience, such as *Computer World*, suggests that this technique is not employed in those contexts: instead, the advertisements project the image of a specialist speaking to specialists.
5. Leech (1966) found more *yes/no* than *wh*-interrogatives in advertisements. In our data, on the other hand, there are three times as many *wh*-questions as *yes/no* questions. Frank (1989: 239) also found more *wh*-interrogatives overall than *yes/no* questions in her direct sales letters; but she shows that the type of interrogative varies according to whether the question is asked by the writer or reader.
6. Certain advertisements mitigate commands by using the fact that *yes/no* questions can function as interactively constructed conditionals — the command only needs to be

carried out by those who give the appropriate answer and who thereby signal their readiness to accept the command:

(i) *You want a piece of Paradise? Join the Club.* [A61]

7. In many contexts, the speaker/writer may use referential switch to invest him/herself with the authority of the organization which they represent. In advertisements, on the other hand, the motive seems to be rather the need to identify explicitly who *we* refers to — since this may otherwise not be self-evident in written text — and, even more, to introduce the company name as frequently as possible.

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