

Deviation in Advertising Language:
A Functional Analysis

从功能角度谈

广告英语中的偏离现象

白红爱 著



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Abstract

The strong force of advertising language, in most (but not all) cases, derives from the deviant use of language. The initial research on deviation was restricted within the scope of linguistic description and generalization under the influence of stylistics. However, the constant change of advertising language and more and more creative devices of deviation prove that this methodology is infeasible. Later on, the research was oriented to sociology to investigate the social and cultural causes of deviation, which is also unsuccessful because of the complexity and indefiniteness of social factors. It is proved that the studies purely from a linguistic perspective or from a sociological perspective fail to provide a comprehensive explanation for the phenomenon of deviation in advertising language. On the basis of previous study of advertising English and deviation, the present paper adopts a functional approach to explore the mechanism of linguistic deviation, taking into account both the linguistic and contextual interactions, as well as the cognitive factors necessary in the production of deviation in advertising discourse. It is one of the few of its kind to apply cognitive linguistic and systemic-functional linguistic theories to the research of deviation production in advertising.

After the introduction of present situation, objectives, research methodology and the structure of the dissertation, a historical review of deviation study in Chapter 1 introduces some major theories

concerning deviation that have been put forward since the beginning of this century, such as Russian Formalists' defamiliarization, the Prague School's foregrounding, Jakobson's poetic function, and Halliday's motivated prominence. All these ingenious theories, though having developed a number of important concepts, have their limitations and can only provide a partial explanation for deviation. Russian Formalists rightly took the notion of defamiliarization as a variable that cannot be separated from the psychology of the reader or from the social and historical context which conditions it. However, their studies in this direction were suspended by the abrupt dissolution of the group. The following Prague School linguists like Mukaróvsky and Havránek took up their theory and further developed it with the concept of foregrounding. But their application of the concept to literature narrowed the scope of their research down to the deviation of poetic language from the norms of standard language. And Jakobson's theory of poetic function further isolated language both from its context and from the psychology of its users. It is Halliday's theory of motivated prominence that connects deviation with its function and clarifies that how to look at foregrounding, or prominence as he calls, depends on the standpoint of the observer. The deficiency of theoretical foundation causes the confusion in practical studies on deviation. The divergent opinions about the definition and classification of deviation provide ample evidence in this respect. It requires a comprehensive theory on deviation by taking all the psychological, situational and functional factors into consideration.

Having evaluating the previous theoretical and practical achievements on deviation, we concentrate in Chapter 2 on advertising language, a genre which has the most occurrence of deviation. Based on a brief review of the previous studies on

advertising English, it is held that studying deviation in advertising English requires a combination of both semiotic and linguistic approaches because advertising is the mixture of three modes, images, sound and language. Taking a purely semiotic approach or linguistic approach runs a danger of simplification and partial analysis. A description of the deviant features found at each level of advertising English shows that deviation may be produced through all three modes. This general introduction of the variety of deviation proves that it is impossible to describe and analyze all deviant features, which paves the way for presenting the cognitive and systemic-functional theories to explain the production of deviation in Chapter 3.

Chapter 3 begins with the definition of deviation in this paper, based on the cognitive possibility people possess for the choice of deviant linguistic features and their functional motivations. Schema theory of cognitive linguistics provides an explanation of the cognitive mechanism of human being in forming expectation of the regular features and in destroying schematic expectations when meeting deviation. The disruption of schemata of the world, generic structures or language structure profiles or foregrounds the deviant part(s) against the regular features which can still be activated through people's activation ability like priming. Then the profiled meaning is added to the meaning of the base through another human cognitive faculty, i. e. semantic mapping. After laying a cognitive basis for people to produce and comprehend deviation, we draw on Halliday's systemic-functional linguistics to explicate why and how people choose deviation instead of those well-formed conventions of language. Halliday proposes that the speaker of a language can be regarded as carrying out simultaneously and successively a number of distinct choices in meaning potential as well as linguistic features. A

systematic correspondence exists between the semiotic structure of situation type and the functional organization of semantic system, and between the functional organization of semantic system and the linguistic potentials (both generic structure potential and linguistic structures). Therefore, communicative function in context of situation is the determinant of deviant choices in linguistic realization.

Considering the decisive role of communicative function in the choice of language, an investigation into the purpose of advertising as a genre is conducted in Chapter 4 in order to elucidate that communicative function of deviation meets the purpose of advertising. If restricted to commercial advertising, ads are supposed to move the targeted consumers from their present state to a higher state of readiness-to-buy through the steps of catching attention, arousing interest, keeping in memory and taking the action of purchasing. At all these steps deviation plays an active role. On the other hand, the media that advertising adopts provide the advertisers with enough freedom to establish a virtual context of situation with the support of images and sound, which partially ensures the production and comprehension of deviation.

Chapter 5 and 6 are the climax of the dissertation, containing two major contributions to deviation study: Chapter 5 gives a new categorization of deviation and Chapter 6 puts forward an analytical theory on the production process of deviation. The previous research on deviation has provided a disputable classification of deviation and a rough elaboration of the contents of different types of deviation. On the basis of such consideration, we categorize deviation into external deviation and internal deviation according to the conditions whether it deviates from the norms outside or within a discourse. And in the category of external deviation, qualitative deviation from the norms of language as a whole is distinguished from quantitative deviation

from the norms of genres and registers, while internal deviation is held to mainly refer to quantitative deviation from the patterns formed within a discourse. A more systematic generalization is devoted to qualitative deviation from the norms of language as a whole, which most books and articles have attempted to exhaust, such as metaphor, pun, and other deviant features concerning language meaning, and nonce word, ellipsis, alliteration, parallelism and other deviant features concerning language structure.

After a fairly thorough discussion is made in the previous chapters about the communicative function of advertising the establishment of virtual context of situation to support the deviant verbal discourse, and the different types of deviant features to choose, we proceed to look into the production process of deviation. This process starts with the establishment of virtual context of situation by bringing changes to some or all of the contextual variables. The variation of field, tenor and mode contributes to the deviant choices of the textual structure (e.g. borrowing from the GSP of other genres), and the changes of ideational, interpersonal and textual meanings of the discourse, which finally determines the deviant choice in linguistic realization. It is tentatively concluded that different kinds of deviation are not produced at the same level of discourse, but at different steps of discourse construction, motivated by different functions. As illustrations, we examine in detail two advertising discourses before concluding the whole dissertation.

Key words: deviation, advertising language, function, context

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论 文 摘 要

广告语言对人们产生的强大影响力在许多（但不是全部）情况下来源于对语言的偏离使用。最初对广告语言的这种特征的研究，由于受到文体学的影响，只在语言学范围内对语言现象进行描述和总结，但是广告语言的不断变化和偏离形式的层出不穷证明这种描述性方法显然是不可行的。后来的研究转向造成这种偏离现象的社会文化因素，但是这些社会因素更是错综复杂，难以作出科学、客观的界定。多年来的实践证明，单纯从语言学的角度或从社会学的角度都无法全面地揭示广告语言中的偏离现象，必须将语言及其产生的语境联系起来进行研究。本文在前人对广告语言和语言中偏离现象的研究基础上，从功能的角度考察广告语言中偏离现象的起因、生成过程以及产生的效果。它将是第一个将认知语言学和系统功能语言学的理论及研究方法集中用于偏离研究以及广告语篇中的语言偏离现象的论文。

全文共分为七章，外加引言部分。第一章回顾了自本世纪初以来出现的有关偏离的几种主要理论，如俄国形式主义学派提出的“陌生化”理论、布拉格学派提出的“背景”理论、Jakobson 提出的“诗学功能”，以及 Halliday 提出的“有动因的突出”。这些理论虽然提出了一些重要的概念，但同时又各有其不同的局限性。俄国形式主义学派正确地认识到对“陌生化”的研究不应将其同读者的心理以及它的社会或历史环境割裂开来，但是遗憾的是他们的研究由于学派的突然解体而搁浅了。布拉格学派在他们的基础上提出并发展“背景”理论。由于局限在文学语篇的范围内，背景理论以及 Jakobson 的“诗学功能”主要体现的是诗歌语言的偏离现象，使偏离脱离了它的语境及语言使用者的心理。直到 Halliday 提出“有动因的突出”才将偏

离与其功能结合起来。理论方面的不足直接导致对偏离的定义和分类的混乱。这一现状要求我们针对语言中的偏离现象应建立一个综合考虑其心理因素、语境因素以及功能因素的理论框架。

考虑到第一章中提出的由于研究范围的局限性而导致的理论片面性,第二章将研究拓展到另一个偏离现象比较突出的语类—广告语言。本章在总结前人对广告语言研究的基础上提出,由于广告是一种将画面、声音和语言结合于一体的语类,而偏离既可能通过听觉形式(如语音偏离),又可能通过视觉形式(如书写偏离)体现,因此在方法论上,对广告语言中的偏离现象的研究应是符号学方法和语言学方法相结合。本章还总结了到目前为止在有关广告语言的论著和文章中所提出的偏离的具体形式。这些形式的多样化证实了对偏离特征运用描写性分析方法是不可行的。同时这也为在第三章中本文提出从功能的角度,利用认知语言学和系统功能语言学的理论分析广告语言中的偏离现象的原理奠定了基础。

第三章首先在人们的认知特征和选择偏离的功能起因的基础上界定了偏离的定义。认知语言学中的图式理论揭示了人们所具有的一些认知机制,如人们对反复出现的世界知识、语类结构、语言结构会形成图式期待,偏离将打破人们头脑中的这些期待,使偏离部分得到突出或前景化。被突显的偏离特征的意义通过语义映射追加到被激活的背景意义上,使偏离能够表达更丰富的意义。Halliday 的系统功能语言学则强调偏离的语言形式的生成是一个从语境因素到语义功能再到语言表达式(包括语篇结构和语言结构)的一层层的选择过程,其决定因素是语篇在某一语境中所实现的交际功能。

由于交际功能在选择偏离的语言形式过程中起着决定性作用,第四章集中讨论了广告语类的交际目的,并阐明广告语篇中大量使用偏离正是因为偏离可以通过吸引注意力,诱发兴趣,延长记忆周期等交际功能实现广告的促销目的。而广告所利用的媒介(如报纸、广播、电视、网络等)也为广告人提供了充分的空间,利用图、声、文建立一个虚拟语境,为偏离的生成和正确理解提供保证。

第五章和第六章是本文的核心。鉴于过去对偏离的分类方式各不

相同,第五章对偏离进行了新的分类。首先提出对偏离的研究应以语篇为单位,如果打破的是某个语篇的内部形成的常规,那么就是内部偏离;如果偏离的是所有语言所共有的常规特征,或者是语篇所属的语类或语域的常规特征,那么就是外部偏离。在外部偏离的范畴中,又区分质量偏离和数量偏离。前者即对所有语言所共有的常规特征的偏离是质量偏离,而后者即对语篇所属的语类或语域的常规特征的偏离是数量偏离。而内部偏离则都是数量偏离。这种将偏离分成不同层次的分类方式是为了在第六章中证明不同种类的偏离是在语篇构建过程的不同步骤中生成的。在论述质量偏离的小节中,本文对许多论著和文章都涉及的有关广告英语的语义偏离(如隐喻、双关等)和语言形式的偏离(如新造词、头韵、省略、排比等)进行了较为系统的总结和划分。

在前五章对广告语篇的交际功能、虚拟语境的建立、偏离的具体方式等方面进行了充分论述的基础上,第六章详细地分析了广告语言中偏离的生成过程。第一个步骤是改变真实语境的某些或全部语境因素,建立一个虚拟语境(如虚拟的物理环境、虚拟的人物及人物间关系、虚拟的话题或故事情节等等);第二个步骤是变化了的语境因素范围、基调、方式造成对语篇结构的偏离选择,同时也引起语篇的概念意义、人际意义和语篇意义的改变;第三步是意义的变化最终导致对分别表现概念意义、人际意义和语篇意义的语言表达式的偏离选择。从而生成了各种质量偏离和数量偏离。本章得出的初步结论是不同类型的偏离在语篇中并不是在同一层次同时生成的,而是在语篇生成的不同步骤,由不同的交际功能引发形成的。最后,作为例证,本章提供了两篇真实的广告语篇,对它们以及其中偏离的可能生成过程作了大胆的假设性分析。

关键词: 偏离, 广告语言, 功能, 语境

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