

## The Realization of Mood through Syntactic Patterns in English Public Service Advertising Texts

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**Abstract.** Public service advertisement can indicate the relationship between the advertiser and the audience as well as the interaction and negotiation between them. Based on the systemic functional grammar, this research aims to investigate the interpersonal meaning of mood system through syntactic patterns. It finds out that declaratives are the overwhelming majority, followed by imperatives and interrogatives. There are more positive imperatives than negative imperatives, which mean that when advertisers give commands, they tend to specify what is expected to do. Most of the interrogatives used are wh- interrogatives, demanding information on a specific issue. Only three are yes-no interrogatives, which require confirmation or rejection.

### Introduction

Advertisements can mainly be classified into two types: commercial advertisement and non-commercial advertisement. Public service advertisements aim to inform the public of those important social issues and problems, to attract people's attention on these things and stimulate their positive action to take part in the campaign to solve these significant issues. Public service advertisement is the medium between the advertiser and the audience; it can indicate the relationship between the advertiser and the audience as well as the interaction and negotiation between them. Therefore, it is meaningful to do research on how the advertiser builds relationship with the audience and how the advertiser persuades the audience to take positive action through a variety of linguistic strategies. The American public service advertising originated from the year 1941. In consideration of the fact, that the United States is the pioneer in the development of public service advertising. The research chooses the English public service advertising texts issued by the United States as the target research discourses.

Halliday is the initiator of Systemic Functional Grammar (SFG), and SFG plays a very important role in various discourse analyses. Halliday's interpersonal function is the function of interaction of people. Mood system as a way of realizing interpersonal meaning is a great tool to analyze discourses. Based on the systemic functional grammar, this thesis aims to investigate the interpersonal meaning of mood system through syntactic patterns in English public service advertising texts. The research randomly selects 35 samples from the English public service advertisements issued by the American government on the internet. It may help the advertisers or students in China to learn some valuable insights and help them to create better public service advertisements. It may also enrich the studies of advertising discourse and attract more scholars to do researches on this kind of discourse through different perspectives. Moreover, this research may help understand why and how different mood systems are used for particular purpose. This will help the student to learn more about the relationship between communicative purposes and linguistic features.

## Literature Review

### Studies on Mood System in Various Discourse Types

Halliday [3] studies the development of dialogue and the mood system in young children's language. Thompson and Thetela [9] summarize three grammatical systems (mood, modality and evaluation) in realizing interpersonal meaning. Many Chinese scholars have also done researches on the theory of mood. Li Zhanzi [6] exploits the realization of interpersonal meaning in academic discourses and autobiographies. Meanwhile, the realization of interpersonal functions of mood is also widely used in the analysis of advertisement discourse in China. Zhu Hongtao [10] analyzes the person and mood system in English advertising discourse and concludes that the person and mood system in English advertising discourse are means of manipulation of the reader. Scholars have done a lot of researches on mood system in different discourses, including some advertisements, but rarely for public service advertisements. However, the language study of public service advertisement is popular.

### Studies on Public Service Advertisement Texts

Many scholars have explored advertising discourse, such as Cook [1] and Huang Guowen [5]. However, they pay comparatively less attention to the public service advertising texts, so there is wide space for the research on the characteristics of public service advertising texts. Moreover, researches on public service advertising texts in China are mainly from the perspectives of sociology and aesthetics. Sun Ran [7] tentatively analyzes an English public service advertising text published on Fortune. Chen Linlin [2] studies the interpersonal meanings in the discourse of public service advertising. As it is shown on the above researches, the authors seldom pay special attention to the mood system and its interpersonal meanings in public service advertising texts. Thus, the present research attempts to explore the interpersonal meaning of public service advertising texts through syntactic patterns and hopefully it may enrich studies on this particular area. While, before we carry out this analysis, it is necessary to introduce the theoretical framework of this study. In what follows, theoretical framework of the present research is surveyed.

## Theoretical Framework of Mood System

### Mood System

People use language to exchange meanings, to express ideas, and influence others' attitude, behavior, to establish and maintain relationship with them. The function of language is called the interpersonal function. As one of the three metafunctions, Halliday [4] points out that the interpersonal function can be realized by lexico-grammatical system and phonological system: mood, modality and key. Mood represents interpersonal functions through the following ways: the interaction between the speaker and reader in discourse and the speaker's attitude to what he speaks or writes.

### The Realization of Mood through Different Syntactic Patterns

Halliday [4] has characterized the grammatical system of mood in English. In dialogue, three basic types of interaction are used to express meaning. And according to Thibault [8], mood system can be described through two basic subsystems: indicative and imperative. This is shown as follows:

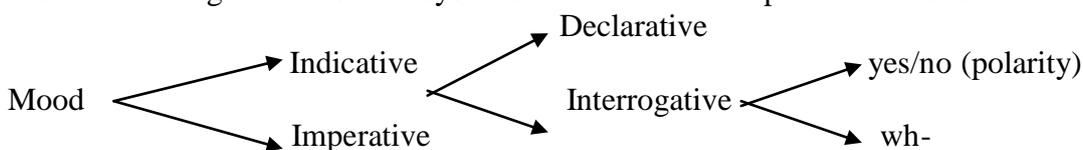


Figure 1. Subsystems of Mood.

The mood of a clause is affected by the Mood structure, which consists of the Subject, the Finite as well as the Modal Adjuncts. Different orders of subject and finite in a clause can express different mood of the clause. Different orders of subject and finite can form different syntactic patterns as illustrated in Table 1

Table 1. Different Syntactic Patterns of Mood.

Declarative	Assertive	Subject ^ Finite
	Exclamative	What-object / complement ^ Subject ^ Finite How-complement / Adjunct ^ Subject ^ Finite
Interrogative	Yes-no	Finite ^ Subject
	Wh-	Wh- / Subject ^ Finite (wh- as subject) Wh- ^ Finite ^ Subject (wh- not as subject)
Imperative		(Subject) predicator (lack mood element)

The speech role of declaratives is to give information. And the speech function is realized by statement--either an assertive or an exclamative. Through this, the speaker can indicate the degree of validity of claims he or she is going to make in the clause. The exclamations also have the Subject ^ Finite order and the speech role is to give information as well.

The yes/no interrogatives show that the speaker wants the listener to specify the polarity of the message. The function of wh- interrogatives is to specify the entity that the questioner wishes to have supplied. The WH- element is a distinct element in the interpersonal structure of the clause.

The imperative is the mood for exchanging good-&-services, especially demanding good-&-services, and the speech function is command. However, imperative has a different system of person from the indicative. Its subject is “you” or “me” or “you and me”.

As mentioned above, the type of the clause is determined by the order of subject and finite. However, not all the clauses follow this rule; the grammatical structure of a particular clause may diverse in different situations. For instance, an offer can be expressed by a modulated interrogative mood, while an imperative or a declarative may also be interpreted as an offer. Therefore, the choice of the mood structures in a text depends on the meaning that the speaker wants to express.

## Research Methodology

**Data Collection:** The present research is carried out basing on a corpus of 35 public service advertising texts collected from the internet. These texts are published by the influential organizations, such as the American Red Cross, American Cancer Society, My Wonderful World Organization and Common Sense for Drug Policy, etc. The data can be characterized by the following features. First, it represents contemporary American advertising language. All samples are randomly selected from the internet. Second, all texts included in our data are complete advertisements and unmodified. Third, the texts identify a wide range of significant public issues, ranging from natural disaster to language study to the protection of wildlife.

**Research Methods:** Quantitative analyses are made in the course of exploration of interpersonal function in terms of mood system. In the research, the author tries to make statistical analyses to explore the interpersonal functions of mood system in public service advertising.

## The Realization of Mood through Different Syntactic Patterns in PSA

In order to achieve the goal of public service advertising, the advertiser has to establish certain relationship with the audience through various strategies. In this process, the choice of mood plays an important role. Therefore, in this part, declarative mood, interrogative mood and imperative mood will be studied to reveal the relationship between advertiser and audience.

As we mentioned above, in English, mood of a clause is determined by Mood, which includes the Subject and the Finite. Different order of the Subject and Finite demonstrates different mood structure of a clause. There are three types of mood in English: declarative (assertive/exclamation), interrogative (yes-no/wh-), and imperative mood.

In the PSA discourse, the advertiser either gives information or demands information and action, so the declarative, interrogative and imperative moods all appear in the discourse chosen. This research aims to reveal characteristics in mood choices and their functions in the exchange between advertiser and audience.

Table 2. Realization of Mood through Syntactic Patterns.

Mood In PSA	Declarative	Interrogative		Imperative	Total
		(wh-)	(yes-no)		
Frequency	301	30	3	94	428
Percentage	70.3%	7%	0.7%	22%	100%

The texts of the English public service advertising are composed of 428 clauses. As is shown in Table 2, declarative clauses account for a very large proportion of all the clauses used in English public service advertising, followed by imperative clauses and interrogative clauses. Among the total 428 clauses, 301 are declaratives occupying 70.3%. 94 are imperatives accounting for 22%. And 33 interrogatives occupying 7.7% which consists of wh- interrogatives occupying 7% and yes-no interrogatives occupying 0.7%. In the following sections, the thesis will explore the speech functions that they fulfill. Moreover, it will find out how these choices influence the relationship between advertiser and audience.

### Declarative

Declarative mood is used frequently in public service advertisements. Declaratives can be seen in almost every advertisement. The main function of declaratives is to give information to the audience. The statistics show that it makes an overwhelming percentage of all the moods used in our corpus.

Example (1) THEIR HOME WAS ITS FOUNDATION. A FAMILY.

In 1992, Hurricane Andrew entered the Maldonados' house from all sides. Lieutenant Maldonado recounts, "Our house laterally imploded." The category four hurricanes that left over 250,000 South Floridian's homeless had completely destroyed this family's life in a matter of minutes. Margarita Maldonado recalls the terrifying sounds of the wind and rain but her son Miguel does not, because the thirteen-year-old lost his hearing aid in the storm. As the couple struggled to pull their family together, the American Red Cross was there—to provide food, shelter, clothing and basic needs throughout the weeks and months of recovery. The Red Cross was even able to find a new hearing aid for Miguel through a partner agency. Margarita was moved. "I never knew the Red Cross was there for every single person."

The Red Cross was there for them. The Red Cross is here for you. (NO.15)

This advertisement is published by the American Red Cross. The advertiser aims to arouse the public awareness of the natural disaster like hurricane and also inform the people in trouble that the Red Cross is always ready to help them. Five declarative clauses are used to transmit the information about how Maldonados' family suffered from the Hurricane Andrew. And the other five declarative clauses are used to give the information about how the Red Cross went there and gave hands to the poor Maldonados' family. As an information-supplier, the advertiser is giving information like a nice friend because there is an invitation to ask the audience to call for help—"The Red Cross is here for you".

## Interrogative

Interrogatives are less frequently used mood in public service advertising. Interrogatives are more interactive in nature than declaratives. As every question expects an answer as a response, when the advertiser arouses different kinds of question, the audience will naturally begin to find the answer and provide an answer to the question raised in the PSA, thus unconsciously interacting with the advertiser in the advertisement. The use of interrogatives can involve the audience into the advertisement, encouraging dialogue between the advertiser and the public. Thus, the audience will concentrate more on the information delivered in the advertisement and remember the content of the advertisement easily. This can help to shorten the distance between the advertiser and the audience. Therefore, the audience will be more likely to take actions as is expected.

As it is mentioned on the above, there are mainly two types of interrogatives in English: WH-interrogatives and yes-no interrogatives. Moreover, both the two types are used in public advertising texts.

These two types of interrogatives, as they are mentioned above, do not account for the same percentage in the public service advertisement corpus. See Table 3:

Table 3. Interrogative mood.

	Frequency	Percentage
Wh- interrogative	30	90.9%
Yes-no interrogative	3	9.1%
Total	33	100%

As can be seen in Table 3, wh-interrogatives make up more than 90% percent of the interrogative mood structure, nearly ten times as large as the proposition of yes-no interrogatives.

### Wh-Interrogative

Wh-interrogative has the function of specifying the entity that the questioner wishes to have supplied. In the public service advertising corpus collected in this research, wh-interrogative is much widely used as compared to the yes-no interrogative. The function of wh-interrogatives is shown through the following example.

#### Example (2)

The look on his face when he proposed. His world-famous Saturday morning pancakes. His ability to whistle anything.

How his socks never seem to match his pants?

How his hair starts to curl when he goes too long between trims?

The way he wraps your birthday presents with more tape than paper.

How he always sends the flowers to the office so everyone can see?

His canny ability to show up with Chinese whenever you've had a bad day.

How he helps your mom with the dishes and your dad with his golf swing?

How he always thinks he can fix anything. With duct tape.

The night you celebrated his big promotion.

What would you miss most? (NO.14)

This advertisement is published by the American Cancer Society for the Breast Cancer Awareness project. It is published in full color magazine print ads and promotional posters. The advertisement consists of ten clauses, and six of them are wh-interrogatives, which account for more than half of the total clauses. Although breast cancer usually happens in women group, men sometimes suffer from this disease. This advertisement shows the life of a husband who has breast cancer, the advertiser uses five wh-interrogatives to show the daily life of this man, his wearing, and his appearance, his love for his wife and for his parents-in-law. These interrogatives make the audience think about the answer and thus have the image of all the daily life scenery. In this way, the

advertiser builds a close relationship with the audience, then comes the last question: “What would you miss most?” to arouse the audience to take good care of their husband or their family members before they lose their health.

### **Yes-no Interrogative**

Yes-no interrogatives expect a confirmation or rejection. As for yes-no interrogatives, in the public service advertising corpus collected; there are only three among all the clauses.

Example (3 )

(Do) (you) like pesticides?... (NO.5)

This is a public service advertisement published by the Defenders of Wildlife to show their negative attitude to Rep. Pombo's bill, which exempts all pesticide decisions from compliance with the Endangered Species Act. At the right beginning of the advertisement, the advertiser uses the yes-no interrogative in Example (3). This interrogative quickly arouses the audience's interest. Then the advertiser points out the bad effect of this bill and this helps the audience find their answer to the question at the beginning of the text. Thus, the advertiser builds the close relationship with the audience and encourages them to have the right answer and action.

Example (4)

Would you know what to Do in a Fire?... (NO.19)

The function of this yes-no interrogative advertisement is somewhat similar to the above Example 3. This is a public service advertisement published by the American Red Cross about the preventive of fire. At the beginning, the advertiser uses this yes-no interrogative to tell the main idea of this advertisement in a vivid way. Then the advertiser tells the way to prevent fire, which further attracts the audience's attention. Thus, the relationship between the advertiser and the audience is built.

Example (5)

My name is Heidi Klum and I'm an American Red Cross volunteer. Will you join me?... (NO.23)

As compared to the above Example 3 and 4, Example 5 is a bit different, the yes-no interrogative is the second sentence of the text rather than the first one. Nevertheless, the function of this yes-no interrogative is a bit similar to the other two. This public service advertisement is also published by the American Red Cross, it aims to attract the audience's attention to the volunteers. At the beginning of this advertisement, a volunteer makes a self-introduction “My name is Heidi Klum and I'm an American Red Cross volunteer.” However, so far the audience does not know the meaning of this advertisement. The next yes-no interrogative: “Will you join me?” clearly shows the purpose of this text and makes the audience eager to see why he or she should join the Red Cross. At this time, the relationship between the advertiser and the audience is strengthened.

In general, the reason why advertisers raise these yes-no questions is that they want the audience to stop and pay attention to the issue concerned. Yes-no questions have three functions. One function is to inspire the audience to examine their behavior and thought, making them realize problems they did not notice before (Example 4 <No.19>, for example). The second function is to lead the audience to read on for more information. The question itself and the answer to it are not so important as why the question is raised. People may take more interest in what follows (Example 3<NO.5> & 5 <NO.23>, for example). Another function is for emphasis. The advertiser raises questions to emphasize his opinion instead of demanding information or action.

### **Imperative**

In English public service advertising, another frequently used mood is the imperative mood. The well-known main function of imperative is to urge the audience to do actions. Imperative is the mood for exchanging goods-&-services. In daily interactions, the facts are conveyed in most cases while sometimes control the behavior of the participants, in which case imperative mood is used. This mood is usually employed to command, request, urge and persuade the listener's and sometimes the speaker's action. Therefore, the character of imperative corresponds to the purpose of the advertisement. Imperatives can fully transmit the interpersonal meaning of the advertisement.

Imperative mood in Public Service Advertising can be divided into two basic categories: positive imperative (asking people to do something) and negative imperative (asking people not to do something). The following Table 4 illustrates the distribution of different types of imperatives in the public service advertisement chosen.

Table 4. Different Types of Imperative Mood.

	Frequency	Percentage
Positive imperative	91	96.8%
Negative imperative	3	3.2%
Total	94	100%

As is shown on Table 4, of the 94 imperative clauses, 91 are positive imperatives, making up 96.8% of all the imperatives used in the discourse. While only 3 out of 94 are negative imperatives which accounting for 3.2%. In the following section, the research will illustrate how positive and negative imperatives fulfill their functions in public service advertisements.

Example (6)

Celebrating more than 125 years of generosity.

Share a gift of caring with your loved ones.

Give blood

Give the gift of life. Just one donation can help save up to three lives.

1-800-GIVE LIFE Volunteer

Share your skills and talents with others in your community through your Red Cross chapter.

Make a donation

Ensure that the Red Cross will be there whenever and wherever disaster strikes. Support the Disaster Relief Fund, which helps thousands of disaster victims across the country [redcross.org](http://redcross.org) every year. (NO. 26)

This advertisement is published to celebrate the 125<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the American Red Cross. Out of the 11 clauses of this advertisement, seven clauses are imperatives. Imperatives are usually used to give commands. But in this advertisement, the function of the seven imperatives seem to indicate what have the Red Cross and the volunteers been doing—share gift, give blood, make a donation, share skills and talents, support the Disaster Relief Fund, etc. On the other hand, these imperatives also transfer commands to the audience and tell them to do all the things. These imperatives kill two birds with one stone in this advertisement.

In the public service advertising corpus collected in this research, there are 94 imperatives. Only three are negative imperatives. Generally speaking, imperatives always give command in a direct way. Therefore, it can urge the audience to do something or to accept a certain concept in a direct and effective way. In English public service advertising, imperatives are the most direct way of persuasion as well as the realization of the purpose of the advertisement. In a word, imperative mood can clearly and directly express the interpersonal meaning of the public service advertising.

## Summary

This research deals with how interpersonal meanings are realized in mood system through the syntactic patterns in the public service advertising discourse. That is the three mood choices--declarative, interrogative and imperative. Among the total 428 clauses, declaratives (301 clauses) are the overwhelming majority, followed by imperatives (94 clauses) and interrogatives (33 clauses). The main function of declaratives is to give information to the audience. Imperatives and interrogatives make texts more interactive, involving the audience and attracting their attention. There are more positive imperatives than negative imperatives, which mean that when advertisers give commands, they tend to specify what is expected to do. Most of the interrogatives used are wh-

interrogatives, demanding information on a specific issue. Only three are yes-no interrogatives, which require confirmation or rejection.

There are three purposes for this research. The present research may help the advertisers or students in China to learn some valuable insights and help them to create better public service advertisements. And it may enrich the studies of advertising discourse. What's more, this may help the students understand how and why these linguistic skills are used for the particular purpose.

However, there's limitation of the present research: the range and the number of the data collection is not big enough; the present study only analyzes the realization of interpersonal meaning through linguistic resources. Other perspectives of advertising, such as images and layouts, are not observed. In the future researches, a multi-modal discourse analysis can be applied to analyze the texts.

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