

CONTEXT IN ENGLISH AND VIETNAMESE ADVERTISEMENTS

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SUMMARY

All approaches to discourse analysis attach much importance to context. What is context? It is the object which has a relationship to language use: language-communication-context. Also, context is focused on in many researches, and has a close correlation to communication or to the model of communication. This article presents an overview about context in English and Vietnamese advertisements.

Keywords: *context, English advertisement, Vietnamese advertisement*

Introduction

It was 1973 that discourse analysis was dealt with in detail in M.A.K Halliday's functional approach to language. Halliday's linguistic model stresses the social function of language as an important factor to obtain the success in communication. His approach has great influence on British discourse analysis which has connections with the Prague School of linguistics. Halliday's linguistic model emphasizes the social function of language, i.e. the ideational which consists of the experiential and the logical, the interpersonal and the textual, and the thematic and information structure of speech and writing.

Discourse analysis has an important role in understanding what has/ have been conveyed in a text. Because, in fact, when grammatical and phonological forms are examined separately, they are unreliable indicators of functions: when they are spoken, and looked at in context.

So far there have been many different ways of defining a discourse. According to Crystal (1992), *discourse is a continuous stretch of language larger than a sentence, often constituting a coherent unit such as sermon, argument, joke or narrative*. On the other hand, Widdowson (1977) considered that *discourse is a use of sentences to perform acts of communication which cohere into large communicative units*. Halliday and Hassan (1989) define discourse (text) as follows: *We*

can define text (discourse) in the simplest ways perhaps by saying that it is language that is functional.

It is clear that context is an important factor to be considered in the process of discourse analysis. For convenience, we should break it down in three categories of Field, Tenor and Mode.

Field

English and Vietnamese tourist advertisements share the same purpose of supplying the most interesting and attractive information about a landscape in a sufficient way (hotel, sight, entertainment, people, food etc...) to encourage readers to go and enjoy it. This purpose also implies some competition among different advertisers to draw the attention and inspire for the reader-traveler. Therefore, the information must be selective, unique, identical and suitable with the reader's psychology.

However, it is notable that there are some differences between the scope of lands mentioned in the two kinds of advertisement. While the place described in Vietnamese is in the territory of Vietnam only, the one in English can be any place in the world, in any country. This different feature can control the writing style and language used in Vietnamese and English tourist advertisements.

Tenor

Tenor of discourse refers to who is taking part, to the nature of the participants, their status and roles. When considering English

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and Vietnamese tourist advertisements, we can recognize that the two discourses are written by tourist agency who deeply understand the landscapes. The readers are unknown and unseen and unlimited in any requirements. They can be anyone who gets information on purpose or by chance provided that they find it interesting and eager to travel to the place referred.

But here, a difference can be found. The tourist agency and audience of Vietnamese tourist advertisements are almost Vietnamese. They share the same culture, life style, moral standard, common concern etc. However, what the write and the reader of English tourist advertisements have in common is language (here English) only. They can be from different countries, different cultures, different psychological features and even different lifestyles. Therefore, it could be a great effort of the writer to produce a good advertisement to readers without any offence.

Mode

In contextualization, mode refers to what part the language is playing, the role of language in situation. In case of tourist advertisements, the outstanding characteristics of language are simplicity, informality. The written discourses still contain the spoken language and communicative style so, they sound like a guide, an instruction or a speech to persuade you (the reader) to start your journey of exploration and discovery as well as entertainment. Through the language the writer wishes the readers to convey an idea that this is an ideal place for them. It seems to be a relaxing atmosphere in the whole discourse without requiring any great brainstorming and efforts from readers. This is merely a pleasant moment for imagination, and joy through beautiful, persuasive language.

For the goal of conveying ideas to the reader by the means of English, English advertisement writers would create an interesting atmosphere for the reader of different English levels (from primary to advanced levels). So the language used here must be simple, easy to remember and

understand, and the structures are also simple and down to earth to convey and transfer the idea and information to the reader with the channel of English without causing any misunderstanding or violating any communicative maxims as well as cultural identity and thinking way. It means that the acceptability of language is the most important factor in English tourist advertisements.

In brief, we can see that culture is the main influence to the organization, structure, writing style of any discourse of tourist advertisements. When we put the difference into consideration, we can find how different it is to create a successful advertisement, which results in the increasing number of travelers to the place for the last goal of benefit.

One more similarity of language found in English and Vietnamese tourist advertisements is the use of addressing words. We all know that advertisement is a kind of communication, so the establishment of relationship is very important (here between advertisers and audience). It is necessary to choose the correct addressing way to create initial warm and formal atmosphere. In Vietnamese, there is a great amount of pronouns of address in different social contexts for different positions, so choosing the suitable one for the communication through advertisement is a big problem. From all statistics conducted, we can note that the popular neutral pronoun of address used is “*bạn*” in Vietnamese tourist advertisement and its equivalent “*you*” in English, less frequent one is for “*quý khách*” and its equivalent “*visitor*”, they are substitutions for “*bạn*” and “*you*”. By using this way of addressing, advertisers still keep the formal but close relationship with audience.

Additionally, the word “*du khách*” or “*quý khách*” in Vietnamese tourist advertisements is also used when giving a warming to visitor as in:

Quý khách hãy đến thăm quan và có trách nhiệm cùng giữ gìn nó.

(Advertisement about Ba Be)

Conclusion

From what is mentioned before, it is noticeable that the communication in tourism is conversation in the form of written text. This means that the contact between the speaker and the listener is indirect and the information is prepared carefully and on purpose of the speaker himself without any interference and reaction from the listener (audience). Therefore, in comparison with normal communication maxims, language used in tourist advertisement is better prepared, more normal with more rhetorical devices to emphasize and draw the reader's attention. This is the reason why language in advertisement in general and in tourist advertisements in particular is close to life but still formal. This is shared by English and Vietnamese tourist advertisements.

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TÓM TẮT

NGỮ CẢNH TRONG DIỄN NGÔN QUẢNG CÁO DU LỊCH BẰNG TIẾNG ANH VÀ TIẾNG VIỆT

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Tất cả các đường hướng phân tích diễn ngôn đều coi trọng ngữ cảnh. Vậy ngữ cảnh là gì? Ngữ cảnh là đối tượng có liên quan đến giao tiếp ngôn ngữ trong một tam giác: ngôn ngữ-giao tiếp-ngữ cảnh. Chính vì vậy ngữ cảnh được nhắc đến nhiều trong các công trình nghiên cứu về diễn ngôn và có liên quan chặt chẽ với giao tiếp hay nói đúng hơn là các mô hình giao tiếp. Bài báo đưa ra một cái nhìn tổng quan về ngữ cảnh trong diễn ngôn quảng cáo du lịch bằng tiếng Anh và tiếng Việt.

Từ khóa: ngữ cảnh, quảng cáo tiếng Anh, quảng cáo tiếng Việt

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