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IMPERATIVE AS A SYNTAX TOOL FOR THE REALISATION OF A CONATIVE FUNCTION OF A TEXT ON THE CASE OF A GERMAN TRAVEL CATALOGUE

Abstract

Language is not only a cognitive tool for exchanging thoughts and emotional communication but it is also a mirror of the society and has the function of communicating social and cultural experience and values. A travel catalogue, as a form of professional communication and advertising, uses language means in order to persuade potential buyers or to realise the conative (positive) function of the text. This use of advertising language aims at efficient and productive marketing of tourist products and services and to affect the customer so that the offered service or product becomes so attractive that it is better in comparison with other competitive offers. The applied verbal tools play an important role in the realisation of that. This paper aims at presenting the application of the imperative as a syntax tool of realising the appealing function in a corpus, made of texts in the German travel catalogue. The use of imperative as a language tool in those types of texts, which have the information and advertising function, is not a tool to express orders or prohibitions but to recommend.

Keywords: imperative; persuasive function; conative function; travel catalogue; advertising language

Introduction

Language is a communication tool, “conditional upon society” and “based on cognitive processes” and “serves for the exchange of thoughts, perceptions, findings and information”... and “a tool for fixing and exchanging experience and knowledge” (Bußmann, 2002, 616). Language has to meet the “communication needs of the society” (Fischer and Uerpmann, 1987, 22).

Advertising language, as a communication tool is a concentrated expression of life trends and a tool for representing social guidelines. A travel catalogue, as a form of professional communication and advertising, uses language means in order to persuade potential buyers or to realise the conative (positive) function of the text.

1. Research of travel catalogue textual types from the linguistic aspect

A review of research conducted up-to-date shows that travel catalogues are rarely subject of linguistic analysis.¹ Flinz (2011), Baldauf-Quilliatre (2010, 2013), Kuzler (2007), Gansel (2008a, 2008b), Stoll (2001) focused on travel catalogues or travel brochures from the communication and linguistic perspective. Baldauf-Quilliatre (2009) focused on the description of travel brochures and their advertising role. She was particularly interested in the picture information in travel brochures. Flinz (2011) documented two stages of a wider study of text characteristics of German and Italian travel catalogues from the linguistic comparative aspect. She was researching micro and macro structures of those types of texts. Gansel (2008a) analysed a travel brochure as a type of text also from the communication aspect. She found out that double contingency is typical of this type of texts (Gansel, 2008b, 14).

The review of linguistic research of travel brochures shows that the delimitation between the terms travel catalogue and travel brochure is not consistent. Kuzler (2007), referring to Rudolph (1976) emphasises

¹ Researchers who focused on other types of advertising catalogues or brochures, such as Vesalainen (2001), are not dealt with in this paper.

that a strict delimitation between a travel catalogue and travel brochure is not always clear. Flinz (2011) is also of the opinion that the differences between the mentioned types of advertising – catalogue and brochure – are minor. Kuzler (2007) and Flinz (2011) quote Rudolph (1976) who is of the opinion that the number of pages or the scope of information are the criteria for differentiating catalogues from brochures.

2. Text type – travel catalogue as a form of advertising

From the economic point of view Kroeber-Riel and Esch define advertising as trying to affect the behaviour with the help of special communication tools (Kroeber-Riel and Esch, 2004). Schweiger and Schrattenecker understand an advertisement as intentional influencing on market significant opinions and types of behaviour without formal force, only by using advertising tools and paid media (Schweiger and Schrattenecker, 2005). Behrens (1975) says that advertising is an intentional form of influencing without the use of force, aimed at meeting the advertising objective. According to Tietz and Zentes (1980) all forms of conscious influence on people can be considered advertising. Hoffmann (1981) supplemented those two definitions with a new dimension of various types of advertising. He says that advertising is planned public provision of information provided this is done by the producer or advertiser of products and that the information affects the receiver's judgements and acts. The advertiser or sender of an advertising message has to know the wishes, needs and expectations of the recipient of the message² as well as the recipient's knowledge about the world and the perception thereof. Customers' perceptions, triggered by advertising texts, are essential for understanding advertising texts.

According to Kroeber-Riel and Esch (2004) tactical advertising objectives are actualisation, emotionalisation and information. Actualisation does not involve comprehensive information on the product offered or emotional dimension. Emotionalisation is focused on sending and triggering emotions or on linking the offered product with a certain

² consumer

emotional experience. Provision of information about the product plays a subordinate role here. For example: advertisement for travels does not include detailed data on the longitude and latitude, gross domestic product but a lot of hints about consumers' (recipients of the advertising message) wishes and notions such as the joy of life, experience, rest, prestige, image, wealth. Information as a tactical advertising objective is limited to stating the data and clear information about the offered product.

Due to the interpretation and understanding, the role of the recipient of the advertisement is extremely important. Therefore it is necessary to provide the recipient sufficient properly formulated instructions in order to prevent any wrong interpretation of the advertisement. The recipient's wishes and needs are therefore relevant for the sender of the advertisement. In spite of that the recipient is able to assess the credibility of the advertisement and, in accordance with the wishes and expectations, decide whether they will take part in the presented event or how much they will be involved in the situation, shown in the advertisement. The recipient's high or low involvement is distinguished here. Kroeber-Riel and Esch (2000, 2004), Kroeber-Riel and Weinberg (2003), Trommsdorff (2004), Schweiger and Schrattenecker, (2005) use English terms "high and low involvement".

According to Flinz (2011), referring to Janich (2005, 25) travel catalogues belong to "high involvement advertising", as they are intended for the recipient "with subjective interest in the service offered". It should be pointed out that according to Schweiger and Schrattenecker³, (2005) low involvement advertising is characterised by a high level of persuasion while high involvement by a low level of persuasion. Typically, travel catalogues as a form of advertising use verbal and non-verbal tools, persuasively directed to influencing opinions or acts. It can be concluded that travel catalogues do not belong exclusively to high involvement advertising but they are a form of advertising aimed at recipients with high and low involvement.

³ Schweiger and Schrattenecker (2005) refer to Trommsdorff (2004).

Baldauf-Quilliatre (2010) notices that travel brochures as a form of advertising, are unusually long. Descriptions of individual travels are usually two pages long, there are several pages on booking and insurance. There is a question whether such texts, which are a part of the travel catalogue, and include exclusively general travel information, could be regarded as advertising texts. It can be concluded that the travel catalogue consists of texts of various types, which was concluded also by Baldauf-Quilliatre. She points out that travel catalogues are very complex hybrid type of text, consisting of several different parts and samples, divided into several parts. The texts consist of pictures and texts (Baldauf-Quilliatre, 2010, 2013).

2.1. Advertising language in travel catalogues

The purpose of advertising language is to attract the recipient's attention and trigger their needs and wishes. In order to come closer to the recipient and fulfil their persuasive function, the advertiser applies different language and non-language tools (Premrov, 2016).

Like in most tourist advertising texts, advertising language is used in the travel catalogues considered. The fundamental tasks of such language are as follows:

- to attract the recipient's attention,
- to present a tourist product in a trustworthy, colourful and memorable way,
- to present a tourist product in a brief but informative way,
- to trigger and increase the recipient's demands and wishes for the offered tourist product,
- to use the space economically and take language economy into account,
- finally, trigger the purchase of the tourist product.

The following has to be taken into account:

- the recipient's needs, wishes and expectations,

- recipient's knowledge about the world and their perceptions thereof,
- matching communication message and actual receiver's beliefs, opinions and experiential fields.

2.1.1. Imperative as an advertising language tool

According to Spang (1987, 63) advertising is "persuasive information", the aim of which is to persuade the recipient to "buy the offered goods or service". According to Cicero persuasion is the listener's objective of speaking. This persuasive use of rhetoric means in advertising texts has attracted the interest of researchers and it is evident in the works by Spang (1987), McQuarrie and Mick (1996), Baumgart (1992) in the field of slogans, Bödeker (1972), Sahihi and Baumann (1987). Imperative as a rhetoric figure represents a way of realising the persuasive strategy of the advertising text.

The research conducted up to date show the use of imperative in advertising texts while the research of the occurrence of this language element in the type of text - travel catalogue, are rare. Barthes (1963, 1988), who focused on the semantics of the advertising text, emphasised the importance of language tools, applied to the creation of a denotative message. He was of the opinion that denotative messages are often subtle and therefore the imperative is rarely used. Möckelmann and Zander's (1975) research of advertising language is a comprehensive analysis of German advertising slogans and most common rhetoric means used. In addition to double and triple divisibility, omission, figures of repetition, ambiguity, superlative, hyperbola, metaphor, simile, antithesis, climax, reference to sayings, proverbs and quotations; they include also imperative as a rhetoric means used in advertising. Siever and Runkehl (2002) focused on language and non-language characteristics of German advertisements on the Internet. They have found out that the imperative and ellipsis are used a lot in such advertisements. Kaeppel (1985) focused on the use of the imperative in a French advertising text. She found out that the connection between the advertising

text as an appealing and persuasive type of text and the imperative is rather complex.

Gärtner (2014) is very critical about the use of the imperative in advertising texts. He emphasises that due to its function of ordering it is not an appropriate language means in the communication of equal partners. When imperatives are used in an advertising text, the recipient is in a subordinate position as the sender is ordering. He is even of the opinion that the imperative in advertising situations, which cannot come true, is “grotesque” (Gärtner, 2014, 36).

2.1.2. Imperative as a syntax tool for the realisation of a positive function

Research of language functions is evident already in a very famous Organon model, formulated by Bühler who deals with both, language and its communication function. Jakobson (1971, 142-178) extended this model by adding a phatic and metalanguage dimension defining six language functions: emotive, positive, referential, poetical, phatic and metalanguage. Positive (conative) function is oriented to the recipient and aimed at triggering certain behavioural and emotional reactions by the recipient. This function of the advertising text can be realised by various language and non-language tools. The imperative is one of them.

Römer (1971) believes that the imperative is one of the three most important rhetoric means of advertising. Baumgart (1992) thinks that Römer's belief that the imperative is one of the three most important rhetoric means of advertising is questionable. Baumgart (1992) believes that encouragement is more efficient if the recipient thinks that it is theirs and independent. According to Sowinski direct calls for purchase are rare and advertising in the 1990s is characterised by indirect appeals (Sowinski, 1998). Nowadays, the imperative is getting more and more common, particularly in the commercials on TV. “For example: ‘Schärfen Sie Ihren Blick’ (n-tv) – [Sharpen your view] (n-tv); ‘Testen Sie den Testsieger’ (head & shoulders) – [Test the winner] (head & shoulders).

‘Abbonieren Sie RTL crime!’ (RTL) – [Subscribe to RTL crime!] (RTL)” (Premrov, 2016, 8).

3. Purpose and method of the analysis

The purpose of this paper is to highlight the imperative as a semantic tool for the realisation of a positive function of a text in the travel catalogue. In order to meet this function, the semantic meaning of the imperatives has to comply with the current social trends, characteristics of the tourist product or service offered, language laws, and the recipient’s beliefs, views and experience.

In order to establish the above functionality and application purpose of the imperative and its frequency, a corpus, made from the texts in German travel catalogue of tour operator Tui Länderkatalog Asien 2017/2018 was analysed.

3.1. Analysis results

The analysis is focused on establishing the imperative frequency, its functionality and the purpose of applying the imperative. All 520 pages of the catalogue were analysed. The following limitation was taken into account:

The following grammatical forms for expressing a call were not included in the analysis:

- Indicative
- Infinitive
- Past participle
- Passive construction
- Gerund

Table 1 and Graph 1, which show the results of the analysis, show the following:

- imperative “Genießen Sie” [Enjoy!] was the most common in the corpus concerned⁴ (42 % or 21%),
- imperatives “Erleben Sie” [Experience!], “Entspannen Sie” [Relax!], “Entdecken Sie” [Discover!] are also quite common (28 % or 14%, 23 % or 12%, 22 % or 11%),
- one or two occurrences of numerous imperatives (“Lernen Sie ... kennen” [Get to know!], „Entscheiden Sie“ [Decide!], „Übernachten Sie“ [Stay overnight!], „Feilschen Sie“ [Haggle!], „Verbringen Sie“ [Spend!], „Bummeln Sie“ [Take a stroll!], „Kombinieren Sie“ [Combine!], „Planen Sie“ [Plan!], „Erkunden Sie“ [Explore!], „Seien Sie“ [Be!], „Erhalten Sie“ [Get!], „Buchen Sie“ [Book!], „Feiern Sie“ [Celebrate!], „Sammeln Sie“ [Collect!], „Schnorcheln Sie“ [Snorkel!], „Machen Sie“ [Do it!], „Kommen Sie“ [Come!], „Begeben Sie sich“ [Set off!], „Baden Sie“ [Bathe!], „Bereiten Sie sich ... vor“ [Prepare yourself!], „Mischen Sie sich“ [Mingle!], „Schicken Sie“ [Send!])

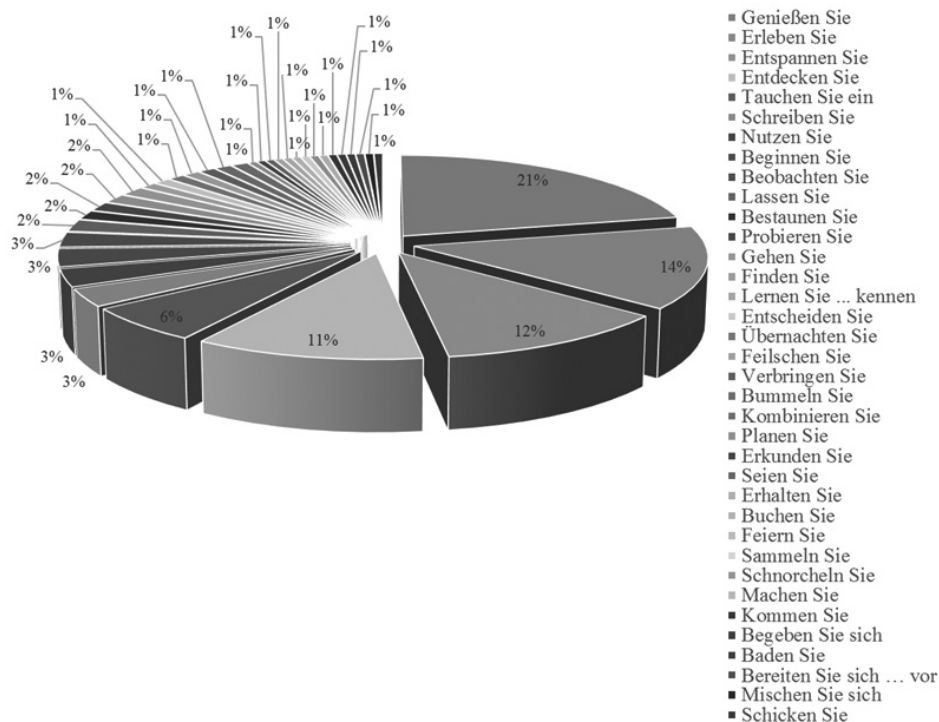
Table 1: Number of imperatives in the corpus concerned.

| <i>Imperatives</i> ⁵ | <i>number</i> |
|-------------------------------------|---------------|
| <i>Genießen Sie [Enjoy!]</i> | 42 |
| <i>Erleben Sie [Experience!]</i> | 28 |
| <i>Entspannen Sie [Relax!]</i> | 23 |
| <i>Entdecken Sie [Discover!]</i> | 22 |
| <i>Tauchen Sie ein [Dive into!]</i> | 12 |
| <i>Schreiben Sie [Write!]</i> | 6 |
| <i>Nutzen Sie [Use!]</i> | 6 |
| <i>Beginnen Sie [Start!]</i> | 5 |
| <i>Beobachten Sie [Observe!]</i> | 4 |
| <i>Lassen Sie [Let!]</i> | 3 |
| <i>Bestaunen Sie [Marvel!]</i> | 3 |
| <i>Probieren Sie [Try!]</i> | 3 |
| <i>Gehen Sie [Go!]</i> | 3 |

⁴ % or number of all imperatives in the corpus concerned

⁵ English translations of the imperatives in German are stated in brackets.

| <i>Imperatives⁵</i> | <i>number</i> |
|--|---------------|
| <i>Finden Sie [Find!]</i> | <i>2</i> |
| <i>Lernen Sie... kennen [Get to know!]</i> | <i>2</i> |
| <i>Entscheiden Sie [Decide!]</i> | <i>2</i> |
| <i>Übernachten Sie [Stay overnight!]</i> | <i>2</i> |
| <i>Feilschen Sie [Haggle!]</i> | <i>2</i> |
| <i>Verbringen Sie [Spend!]</i> | <i>2</i> |
| <i>Bummeln Sie [Take a stroll!]</i> | <i>2</i> |
| <i>Kombinieren Sie [Combine!]</i> | <i>1</i> |
| <i>Planen Sie [Plan!]</i> | <i>1</i> |
| <i>Erkunden Sie [Explore!]</i> | <i>1</i> |
| <i>Seien Sie [Be!]</i> | <i>1</i> |
| <i>Erhalten Sie [Get!]</i> | <i>1</i> |
| <i>Buchen Sie [Book!]</i> | <i>1</i> |
| <i>Feiern Sie [Celebrate!]</i> | <i>1</i> |
| <i>Sammeln Sie [Collect!]</i> | <i>1</i> |
| <i>Schnorcheln Sie [Snorkel!]</i> | <i>1</i> |
| <i>Machen Sie [Do it!]</i> | <i>1</i> |
| <i>Kommen Sie [Come!]</i> | <i>1</i> |
| <i>Begeben Sie sich [Set off!]</i> | <i>1</i> |
| <i>Baden Sie [Bathe!]</i> | <i>1</i> |
| <i>Bereiten Sie sich ... vor [Prepare yourself!]</i> | <i>1</i> |
| <i>Mischen Sie sich [Mingle!]</i> | <i>1</i> |
| <i>Schicken Sie [Send!]</i> | <i>1</i> |



Graph 1: Percentage of imperatives in the corpus concerned⁶.

It follows from the analysis of the corpus concerned that the advertiser used exclusively polite forms of the imperative. The analysis also showed that the function of the imperative in the text concerned has changed as it is not used to express orders or prohibitions but recommendations⁷. At the same time, the imperative enhances the effect of verbal expressions and intensifies the recipient’s attention. This leads and contributes to better communication effect, aiming at the sale of the offered tourist product.

By using the imperative, the advertiser wants to get closer to the recipient, develop a personal relationship and thus persuade the recipient that he knows their needs, e.g.: “Erkunden Sie Ihr Traumziel” [Explore

⁶ Percentage of all imperatives in the corpus concerned

⁷ Imperatives without the exclamation mark were used in the corpus concerned.

your dream destination!]. At the same time, the advertiser suggests that it is the offered product that will contribute to the fulfilment of the recipient's wishes. The advertiser wants to achieve the following at the recipient:

- wake up their adventurous spirit, e.g.:
“Erleben Sie eine abenteuerliche Bahnfahrt“ [Experience an adventurous train journey!],
- trigger their curiosity and wish for travelling, e.g.:
“Entdecken Sie Highlights fremder Länder“ [Discover highlights of foreign countries!],
“Tauchen Sie in das Nachtleben ein“ [Dive into the nightlife!],
„Erleben Sie eine zauberhafte und exotische Welt“ [Experience a magical and exotic world!].

At the same time, pluralisation of hedonistic values is noticed, e.g.: „Genießen Sie“ ... „die Ruhe der großzügigen Anlage“ [Enjoy ... the peace of the spacious facility!], „Genießen Sie traditionelles Design und das Flair ‘der guten alten Zeit.’“ [Enjoy the traditional design and the flair of ‘the good old times!’].

The imperative takes over the stimulus of happiness and the joy of life, which is transferred to the offered tourist product, e.g. “Feiern Sie mit bei den berühmten Full Moon Parties.” [Enjoy the famous Full Moon Parties!]. The recipient is thus identified with advertising contents and at the same time the offered tourist product ensures their happiness and satisfaction, e.g. “Genießen Sie ... zu Zweit” [Enjoy ... in couples!].

By the use of the imperative as a rhetorical means of direct addressing, the sender of the advertising message wants to come closer to the recipient and to establish a personal, even genuine relationship and thus persuade the recipient that he knows their wishes and needs. By applying such strategy, the sender wants to increase the credibility of the advertisement or advertising message.

With the use of the imperative the sender wants to direct the recipient's attention to the offered service or product. With the imperative „Feiern Sie mit bei den berühmten Full Moon Parties.“ [Enjoy the famous Full Moon Parties!] the sender managed to attract the recipient's

attention which is even increased in the second part of the sentence “Full Moon Parties”.

The analysed corpus is characterised by short and brief expressing, and memorable and well-founded presentation of a product or service. As a short expression, the imperative is a suitable verbal tool for the realisation of the conative function of the advertising text. It should be pointed out that all the mentioned findings and conclusions refer only to the corpus concerned. In order to increase the meaning of the data, the research should be extended by other texts or other types of texts.

Conclusion

By using the imperative, the advertiser stepped over the threshold of the recipient’s wishes and longing, entering their personal space and thus triggered trust in the credibility of the advertising message. On the other hand, the imperative is not a complex language tool which would require very demanding mental capacity to be perceived. In spite of that, its persuasive capacity is rather substantial.

In addition to vocative, the imperative is “one of the clearest forms of expressing” a conative (positive) language function. Children learn those forms in the early stages of learning (Friedrich, 1999, 88). The aim of the conative function of the advertising text oriented to the recipient is to influence the recipient and trigger certain behavioural and emotional reactions. The imperative wants to trigger the feeling that the offered product is of high quality and persuade the recipient to buy it without hesitation (Rochowsky, 1997, 48). Mental images, triggered at the recipients, are of key importance for correct understanding of the advertising text and the imperative as its calling element. Interpretative research focused not only on the advertising language but also on the recipient and their cognitive and emotional perception of the advertisement would be required for deeper understanding of advertising elements, advertising language functions and tools for the realisation thereof.

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