

## Persuasive Language in Advertising and Televangelism

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Although 'persuasion' has been given a variety of definitions over the years, a composite of the most common meanings for the term would define 'persuasion' as the process of inducing a voluntary change in someone's attitudes, beliefs or behaviour through the transmission of a message (Bettinghaus, 1968; Anderson, 1978). The pre-eminent means for transmitting a persuasive message is language, and in the modern world the mass media offer the largest and most accessible audiences. Television, in particular, provides a well-developed example of the use of spoken language for persuasive ends. There is, however, a tendency to consider persuasion as primarily an instrument of such obviously contrived ventures as commercial advertising or classical oratory. Such a naive conceptualization overlooks the fact that persuasion is also a normal part of other media presentations which also employ persuasive means to achieve well-defined goals. This paper is an attempt to refine our understanding of the wider role of language in the persuasion process by examining the broadcasts of television evangelists. More specifically, this study consists of an examination of the promotional segments of these broadcasts to determine if the linguistic features already established for television advertising (see Lakoff, 1981, and Geis, 1982) can also be found in another form of language used to persuade, namely, televangelism.

Unfortunately, there is currently no generally accepted theory which deals with the process of persuasion (see Himmelfarb & Eagly, 1974, and Reardon, 1981, for an overview). The complexity of the persuasion process is attested to in both the variety and number of process models put forth, none of which has yet been able to account for even a major portion of the experimental results of persuasion research. Some experimental work has been conducted specifically to determine whether certain linguistic devices or stylistic features might have an impact on persuasion. Unfortunately, this research

has generally suffered from a lack of comparability between operational definitions of the variables studied, resulting in findings which have tended to be mixed and difficult to interpret in relation to one another (Reardon, 1981). For example, while there is some evidence to indicate that metaphor and simile enhance the persuasive impact of a message (Reinsch, 1977), a series of experiments conducted to test the effects of other stylistic features failed to uncover any consistent effects of message style on persuasion (Sandell, 1977). One consistent result of research on the effect of linguistic style, however, has been to show that the persuasive impact of a message is affected by style insofar as the style of the message is perceived by the recipient to be similar to his own (Giles and Powesland, 1975; Sandell, 1977). Thus, it has been found, for example, that even though speakers with a standard or prestige accent are generally accorded more credibility and their arguments are judged to be more sound, a recipient with a non-standard accent will nevertheless be more persuaded by a message delivered in the register which most closely resembles his own (Giles & Powesland, 1975).

Looking specifically at the language of television advertising to date, three major studies have been conducted which focus specifically on the language used in this advertising type. The first of these (Leech, 1966) was published almost two decades ago and used data taken from various types of advertising found in Great Britain. The second (Lakoff, 1981) notes that an essential identifying feature of persuasive communication in this genre is its quest for novelty of expression, and offers the following evidence from examples of television advertising (see Lakoff, 1981, p.37):

1. lexical novelty or neologism (e.g., devilicious)
2. morphological or syntactic novelty (e.g., the soup that eats like a meal)
3. syntactic innovation
  - a) absence of subjects and verbal auxiliaries (e.g., Tastes good! And nutritious too!)
  - b) odd uses of the definite article (e.g., Next time I'll buy the Tylenol. Diaper keeps moisture away from baby's skin)

4. semantic anomaly (e.g., Cleans better than another leading oven cleaner)
5. pragmatic novelty (e.g., conversation in mini-dramas: "Fill it to the rim""With Brim")

Lakoff accounts for this extensive use of linguistic novelty as follows. First, anything neologistic, because it violates Grice's fourth conversational maxim, the Maxim of Manner, draws attention to itself, thus increasing the impact of the message (see Grice, 1975). Second, through this violation of the Cooperative Principle, neologism forces the hearer to interpret, and therefore, to participate in **the discourse**. According to Lakoff, this active role played by the hearer, in turn, enhances learning and retention, and consequently also persuasion.

The third study (Geis, 1982) examined approximately 800 American television commercials collected between 1978 and 1981 to determine not only what linguistic features might characterize this form of persuasive communication but also what the viewer might be expected to understand from what is said. Among Geis' findings was the recognition of two general approaches taken by advertisers in their language use. The first was considered by Geis to be a manipulative use of language in that the impact of the message does not depend on the recipient's conscious evaluation of its content. A common technique cited involves the frequent repetition of the product name with little or no supporting argumentation given as to the merits of the product itself. In the second type of persuasive language, the viewer is presented with a message whose impact derives from his evaluation of the arguments or claims which it contains.

Results of Geis' subsequent analyses of the commercials studied indicate that a number of linguistic techniques are common to a large proportion of television advertising. Included among these are the following (see Geis, 1982, p. 139):

1. The use of imperative structures to make suggestions (e.g., Try Ex-Lax pills, the overnight wonder)

2. The use of adjectivalization processes (e.g., buttery, creamy, crispy)
3. Rhetorical questions (e.g., Why hasn't someone invented a better tooth-brush?)
4. Elliptical comparatives (e.g., the new Chevette has more head room, more seat and legroom, more trunk room)
5. The use of count nouns as mass nouns (e.g., a lot more Chevette for a lot less money)
6. The terms introducing and announcing to attract viewer attention (e.g., Introducing the first roast beef sandwich big and tasty enough for Burger King)
7. Product names which constitute mini-advertisements for the product (e.g., Soft & Dri deodorant)

Probably the major finding of this research, however, was that advertisers favour indirect means of making claims for their products. That is, rather than making explicit assertions as to the value or effectiveness of their product, they invite the reader to infer this information through a process of conversational or conventional implicature. Conventional implications derive from the actual semantics of a sentence in terms of lexical meaning and the semantic component inherent in structures such as questions and imperatives. For example, the question Who ate the cantaloupe? conventionally implies, among other things, that someone ate the cantaloupe. In Geis' analysis, conventional implicatures also include logical entailment relations, since they have in common the fact that if the entailed or implied proposition of a sentence is cancelled, the result is a semantically anomalous sentence. For example, consider the following sentences and the result of cancelling the implied and entailed propositions, respectively.

Who ate the cantaloupe?

\*I know that no one ate the cantaloupe, but who ate the cantaloupe?

John read a book and Mary went home.

\*John didn't read a book, but John read a book and Mary went home.

Geis has explained the use of conversational and conventional implicature

in advertising on two grounds. First, by adhering to a literal interpretation of what is said, advertisers protect themselves from prosecution for what might be indefensible claims. Second, the viewers' cognitive defenses are much less likely to be stimulated by that which is not asserted directly. However, since the claims made in this way are strongly implied through the same techniques of conversational implicature that are regularly used in ordinary discourse to facilitate conversation, viewers will generally derive the intended interpretation, but with less counterargumentation. Thus, it is hypothesized that this approach to making claims could actually make the message more persuasive in effect than direct claims stated explicitly.

Through a close examination of the actual claims made, Geis discovered that the literal strength of these claims is often severely mitigated through the use of modal verbs such as can, might, may, could and help. However, Miller and Johnson-Laird (1976) found that people often do not attend to certain modal elements in states of idle listening. Since television viewing is generally a passive state, many of the claims used in television advertising thus actually appear to the majority of viewers to be much stronger than they actually are.

Generally, then, Geis concluded that people untutored in logic do not tend to evaluate arguments on the basis of their logical validity. Rather, they apply the regular rules of conversational implicature in the interpretation and evaluation of arguments presented to them. This fact, combined with both the relatively inattentive state which characterizes television viewing and the real-time limitations on the messages presented in television advertising, serves to make viewers much less sensitive to the detection of faulty argumentation or weak claims.

Our research attempted to determine whether the kinds of linguistic devices said to characterize effective persuasion in television advertising could also be found in another type of language use intended to persuade. The data used for purposes of comparison were taken from the broadcasts of television evangelists, also known in the popular media literature as the 'electronic church'.

Televangelism differs from the kinds of religious programming produced by mainline churches such as the Lutheran, Catholic or Anglican denominations in several important ways. While televangelists share with mainline churches the fact that it is a stated purpose of all religious broadcasting to recruit converts, they differ in the degree to which this goal is pursued. For televangelists the use of television is a matter of 'fulfilling the great commission' of ensuring that every person on earth has the opportunity to hear the gospel (Hadden & Swann, 1981, p.90). In keeping with their view of God as a very active participant in world events, television and the other mass media are seen as God's provision of the means by which to carry out His will. Televangelists must also pay for their broadcast time, while television stations have traditionally donated the time used by the mainline denominations. Furthermore, because the televangelists' ministries are not supported by an established network of churches, these ministries depend upon the financial support of their audiences for their very existence (Hadden & Swann, 1981). Hence, televangelists must secure not only regular viewers but also sufficient contributions from them to carry the costs of their television broadcasts. Donations, however, are not always solicited directly. Instead, the ultimate goal of securing financial contributions is very often pursued by first simply getting the viewer to respond to the program. Various inducements such as gift offers, prayer requests and telephone counselling are commonly offered as reasons for the viewer to respond, and if he responds, his name will automatically be placed on a computerized mailing list through which subsequent appeals for contributions are sent. It is through these computerized mailing lists that a great deal of the actual fund-raising for televangelists is done (Hadden & Swann, 1981).

The programs themselves are generally fast-paced and highly entertaining. They are characteristically divided into a series of short segments which include songs, a variety of speakers, interviews, film clips, and typically a sermon. The five programs used for this study had in common the use of several of these segments specifically for purposes of promoting the ministry, the program itself, or the items or services offered. It was during these segments that viewers were also asked either to write or to telephone the

ministry in order to receive the aforementioned goods and services or to make a contribution to the ministry. Thus, in addition to the religious issue of attempting to gain converts, the programs of televangelists also contain persuasive attempts of a more secular nature. That is, televangelists seek to persuade their audience to become regular or frequent viewers of the program and/or to respond to the program. Furthermore, although every segment of the broadcast could be considered to contribute to an overall persuasive effect within the programs used for this study, certain segments were identifiably persuasive in intent since they were devoted specifically to the promotion of the program, the ministry or the various items or services offered.

The data for this study were taken from the promotional sections of five of the most popular televangelistic programs. Popularity ratings were determined through audience statistics for 1980 provided by Arbitron (see Hadden & Swann, 1981), and the five programs selected on this basis were, in rank order, Oral Roberts and You, You Are Loved (evangelist, Rex Humbard), The Hour of Power (evangelist, Robert Schuller), Jimmy Swaggart, and The Old Time Gospel Hour (evangelist, Jerry Falwell). The particular broadcasts used for this study were taped on one of two consecutive Sundays, January 17 and 24, 1982.

The promotional segments isolated for analysis were defined as those parts of the program which contained appeals for viewer response or promotion of the ministry or the program itself. The data taken from these segments were restricted to include only those speech samples that were directed specifically toward the viewing audience. That is, conversations and interviews were not included in the analysis since these could not be assumed with confidence to be intended to persuade. The data were further restricted to include only the audio portions of the programs studied, thereby eliminating the non-verbal component of communication from analysis.

The data from each of the programs were searched for occurrences of the linguistic features discussed by Lakoff and Geis as characteristic of persuasive

language in television advertising, as well as for other features described in the introductory pages of this paper. Any given feature had to occur in at least two of the programs to be considered worthy of note. Specific examples found in the data were then compared with those of television advertising to determine the degree of similarity or the types of differences that occurred within the general categories set up either by Lakoff or Geis.

As mentioned earlier, an essential identifying feature in Lakoff's analysis of persuasive television advertising was the extensive use of novel terms and expressions. While the use of such terms and expressions did not occur frequently in the data, every broadcast surveyed did contain at least one example of a novel use of language.

Two instances of lexical novelty were found in the data. In both cases existent lexical items were used to construct terms for concepts unique to the ministry in which they were used. One of these, possibility thinking, was coined by Robert Schuller to refer to the positive outlook espoused by his ministry as a way of life to be followed in conjunction with the teachings of Christianity. The meaning of the term is relatively easy to derive from the lexical meanings of the items within the compound and the context of the program. This may be contrasted with the term seed faith, used by Oral Roberts to refer, essentially, to donations to his ministry (Hadden & Swann, 1981). Here the referent of the term is not transparent, given the meanings of the lexical items which comprise it. Furthermore, references to seed faith during the course of the program serve to disambiguate its meaning only in very oblique ways. Nevertheless, given the fact that seed faith is discussed exclusively as a means by which someone can obtain miracles from God, it would appear from the data that the use of this term actually constitutes an attempt to re-frame the concept of donation as something which benefits the giver, while obscuring any potential gains to be derived by the recipient of the donation.

Several instances of morphological or syntactic novelty also occurred in the speech of televangelists. Here existent terms were either used as



belonging to a different part of speech class or they were set out in unusual syntactic environments. Some examples of morphological or syntactic novelty found include the following (each of the numbered quotations in the examples is taken from the broadcast of the evangelist whose name follows it):

1. God wants to bless and prosper you. (Oral Roberts)
2. We're going to believe God for those letters that have come to us saying Rex, at prayer time, pray for me. (Rex Humbard)

In examples (1) and (2) above, the novel use of prosper and believe results in a functional condensation, since the more conventional way of saying (1) would be God wants to bless (you) and make you prosper. Similarly, the actual meaning of (2) might be expressed grammatically in a sentence such as We're going to believe that God will answer the requests contained in those letters that have come to us. In this case, the condensation also involves a change in the semantic component, since the most likely interpretation of this sentence is not completely expressed in the actual terms used.

Syntactic innovation in the form of an absence of subjects and verbal auxiliaries was also found in the speech of televangelists.

3. Well, a real good song - "Cast Your Bread Upon the Waters." (Oral Roberts)
4. Talks about a better place, a better land. Entitled "Heaven For Me." (Jimmy Swaggart)
5. Thousands of people together here for one of America's most positive and inspirational programs. (Robert Schuller)

The environments in which these instances of syntactic innovation occurred are similar in that they were all introductions. In (3) the name of a song was introduced immediately after it had been sung, while (4) and (5) preceded the items introduced, a song and the program, respectively.

Aside from the metaphorical use of language, two of the programs surveyed also contained instances of semantic anomaly.

6. As president of my corporation I am faced with many problems. Some of them are positive, some are negative. (Robert Schuller)
7. To provoke a soul-winning conversation. (Jerry Falwell)

Both these examples contain violations of the semantic selectional restrictions on nouns. In (6) the attributive adjective positive is used to describe problems, while in (7) the verb provoke is used with the direct object conversation. In both cases it is the conventional meaning of the noun which contributes to the anomaly. Problems are conventionally considered to be undesirable and therefore negative. Making a distinction between positive and negative problems involves an elimination of the negative connotation on the noun itself, making it affectively neutral. Similarly, the conventional meaning of conversation is that it is a cooperative exchange between speakers, while the verb provoke implies a level of confrontation or aggression on the part of the agent. The use of the modifier soul-winning in this case may soften the impact of the anomaly by suggesting that there is a class of conversation which can or must be provoked. Nevertheless, the use of conversation in this context remains anomalous, unless one redefines its meaning to include such talk exchanges as arguments or disputes.

Generally, then, it would appear from the data that televangelists, like television advertisers, utilize various types of linguistic novelty in their persuasive speech. In some of the cases found, (e.g., seed faith, to believe God for ... letters semantic anomaly), the linguistic novelty also contributed to a change in the conventional or connotative meaning of the terms used or the items referred to in this way. The only types of novelty identified by Lakoff which were not found in the data were odd uses of the definite article and pragmatic anomaly, a type of novelty found to occur in the somewhat stilted conversation of mini-dramas in advertising. Since the data used did not contain interviews or conversations, the absence of pragmatic anomaly is to be expected. The fact that the definite article was not used in odd ways by televangelists points to a difference between the two types of persuasion. Since the speech of televangelists tends to be less scripted and therefore more natural than that of advertising, it is not unexpected that this type of syntactic innovation is a feature which characterizes advertising language specifically.

Television advertising sees the frequent repetition of product names as one common manipulative use of language which seems to function mostly in getting the hearer to remember the name (see Geis, 1982). For example, the morpheme yum is mentioned 24 times in one 30-second commercial for the product Bubble Yum. The fact that the promotional segments in the programs used in this study varied in length from 4.7 (Oral Roberts) to 17.4 (Jerry Falwell) minutes, however, made it virtually impossible that any name could be repeated at an average rate of 48 times per minute throughout these segments and still maintain some semblance of normal language use. Bearing in mind the duration of the segments contained in the current data and the conversational nature of the language used, a 'high rate of repetition' was operationally defined as any name which was mentioned an average of at least twice per minute, during the course of these segments. Results of a subsequent search of the data are set out in Table 1 below.

TABLE 1

## Frequency and Rate per Minute of Highly Repeated Names by Evangelist

<u>Evangelist</u>	<u>Name</u>	<u>Frequency</u>	<u>Rate</u>
Oral Roberts	Oral	15	3.2
Rex Humbard	Rex	20	2.1
	God	19	2.0
Robert Schuller	Schuller	25	3.1
Jimmy Swaggart	Swaggart	15	2.5
Jerry Falwell	Faith Partners	34	2.1

In three of the programs studied, only one name was repeated more than twice per minute, and that was the name of the evangelist. In Rex Humbard's program the evangelist's name was still the most frequently mentioned, but God was also mentioned an average of twice per minute. One exception to the trend of mentioning the evangelist's name more frequently than any other was found in Jerry Falwell's Old Time Gospel Hour. Here it was the name of the regular contributors to the ministry, the Faith Partners, which was repeated most frequently, at a rate of 2.1 times per minute. In many cases, the name was not mentioned in isolation, but rather as a part of a larger name for a product,

group or institution belonging to the ministry.

Unlike most television advertising, televangelists' programs involve the promotion of more than a single identifiable 'product'. Included among these are the program itself, the group comprised of regular financial contributors, and the various items or services offered during the program. An examination of the names given to these various 'products' showed that, as with the names used in television advertising, many of them do, indeed, convey information which could function in helping to promote them. Perhaps the most interesting of these are the names given to the groups comprising regular financial contributors to the ministry.

8. The Faith Partners (Jerry Falwell)
9. The World Outreach Partners (Jimmy Swaggart)
10. The Prayer Key Family (Rex Humbard)
11. The Possibility Thinkers' Club (Robert Schuller)

All of these names have been constructed from noun compounds which function as prenominal modifiers + a head noun. By referring to the contexts of the programs, the particular choice of lexical items used as modifiers in describing the group can be seen as a type of assertion as to its nature or value. Secondly, all of these head nouns have in common the semantic feature < +belonging >. Two of the names describe the group as partners, one is called a family, while the other is a club. That is, these lexical items could be said to contribute to the impression that the regular contributors to a ministry are all part of a close or even exclusive group. The impression of belonging is supported by an assertion made by Jerry Falwell that one of the items sent to the Faith Partners in return for their monthly contribution would make them 'a part of the inner circle'. Similarly, the term club tends to connote not only belonging but also exclusive access to those who are members. In the case of Robert Schuller's Possibility Thinker's Club, the implication of exclusivity is reinforced by the fact that members receive I.D. cards identifying them as such, even though membership in this club is an automatic result of simply pledging one's monthly support.

Another characteristic feature of television advertising is the use of claims whose literal strength has been mitigated through the insertion of modal verbs such as may, can and help. In the case of televangelists' speech, however, it was found that although claims were also used extensively, this type of mitigation was not. In fact, only two instances of mitigation were found, neither of which used modal verbs.

12. (Through the people just mentioned) probably we're getting in more Bibles than anyone else (to China). (Jimmy Swaggart)
13. When you consider the fact that we're on nearly 400 television stations, 500 radio stations, reaching literally the potential every household in North America, and throughout Australia, the Phillipines, the islands of the sea - many parts of the world. (Jerry Falwell)

In (12) the claim is mitigated through the use of the adverb probably while (13) contains two types of mitigation. The adjective nearly definitely applies to the phrase which immediately follows it, but its scope may also include the number of radio stations mentioned. In either case the literal strength of the claim is severely reduced, since it is the speaker's judgment that the actual number is close to 400; it could conceivably vary between 250 and 399 and still make the claim literally true. The second type of mitigation is found in the awkward construction literally the potential every household where the insertion of the modifying phrase the potential significantly weakens what would otherwise be a very strong claim indeed.

Many of the claims made by the televangelists contained no attempt to mitigate their literal strength.

14. (Andre Crouch, the guest singer is) Loved by thousands, yes by millions. (Oral Roberts)

Some of the claims made by televangelists could be classed by subject into types. One such type contained an assertion as to the personal participation of God in furthering the work of the ministry.

15. God has called Rex and given him a vision of a world-wide outreach to searching and starving souls. (Rex Humbard)
16. God had made it possible for us through a network of effort that I can't describe to you (to get Bibles into China). (Jimmy Swaggart)

Another type of claim mentioned the number of people actually converted or 'reached' by the ministry in its outreach efforts.

17. Thousands get saved on a regular basis. Watching, listening to our television, radio programs. (Jerry Falwell)
18. As Rex led them in prayer, literally hundreds of thousands acknowledged Jesus Christ in their hearts and minds. (Rex Humbard)

One common feature of television advertising is the prevalence of speech forms which convey information that must be interpreted through processes of conventional or conversational implicature. Conventional implicature derives from the conventional meaning of the words in an utterance and the semantic component entailed in its structure. Conversational implicature, on the other hand, also utilizes such information as is provided by the context, shared background knowledge and beliefs, as well as the Cooperative Principle and conversational maxims set out by Grice (1975). In the language of televangelists, many instances of claims and assertions were found which required some measure of conventional or conversational inference in their interpretation.

19. Father, help each one here and millions watching by television to prepare to meet God. (Jerry Falwell)
20. Our way of saying thanks for helping to proclaim God's word to millions of needy people. (Jerry Falwell)

Sentence (19) conventionally implies the proposition millions are watching by television. This can be demonstrated by the test for conventional implicature, cancellation, which results in the anomalous sentence \*Millions are not watching by television, but help each one here and millions watching by television. Similarly, (20) conventionally implies that we proclaim God's

word to millions of needy people. This sentence also contains the conversational implication -- by the Maxim of Relation -- that the needy people referred to are in need of God's word, not food or money or shelter. This demonstrates a feature also found in television advertising, namely, that conventional and conversational implicature often occur together in the same utterance or string of utterances which form an argument. This interaction of the two types of implicature is further exemplified in the following set of utterances from Oral Roberts' program.

21. What we've built here in the City of Faith is a medical centre with the most advanced design and technology of any medical centre in the world. But more important, we've brought together people from all over the country who believe in medicine AND believe in prayer. And THAT is really what makes the difference.

The final sentence in this set conventionally implies that there is a difference between the City of Faith and other medical centres in the world, and further, that this difference can be attributed to something already referred to. By referring to the linguistic context of the preceding utterance (including the stress on and and the Maxim of Relation), it can be shown that this sentence further implies through conversational implicature that the difference referred to can be attributed to the additional feature of belief in prayer. For many people, this might conclude the inferences that they would draw from these utterances. For those who are familiar with Oral Roberts' ministry, however, there is another proposition implied in these utterances which depends on shared background knowledge and beliefs. The necessary background information is the fact that Oral Roberts himself is a known faith healer. He not only began his television ministry as a faith healer, but continues to conduct healing services in his untelevised meetings throughout the country (Hadden & Swann, 1981). A listener who is aware of these facts and who shares Oral Roberts' belief in faith healing might also infer that the way in which a belief in prayer 'makes the difference' in the City of Faith is through invoking God's help in healing, or more succinctly, through faith healing. Most of the cases of conversational implicature found in the speech of televangelists are similar to those of television advertising in that they require that inferences be drawn on the Maxim of

## Relation.

Another indirect speech form employed by television advertisers favours vague language in the statement of propositions which might otherwise be subject to empirical verification. Television advertising can thus make assertions or claims about their product which sound good, but which are literally so weak as to have virtually no empirical consequences. This was also found to apply to the speech of televangelists where the use of vague speech forms often results in sentences which give the hearer latitude in interpretation of referents used. Certainly it would be difficult to dispute any of the claims or assertions listed below.

22. When Oral Roberts founded a university in 1968 he was looking for a special kind of student. A person who wanted to make a difference. Since that time, Oral Roberts University students HAVE made a difference. O.R.U. competes with the best. Write the Director of Admissions ... And find out just how special YOUR life can be. (Oral Roberts)
23. Something good is going to happen to you. (Oral Roberts)
24. This devotional guide can be the key to your new year. Last year's guide was a life support to possibility thinkers around the world. The new guide will be equally helpful. (Robert Schuller)

Another linguistic feature found to be common in television advertising was the process of constructing adjectives from other parts of speech. The language of televangelists was found to be similar to that of television advertising as these processes were also used extensively, though the kinds of adjectives formed differed considerably. First, unlike television advertisers, televangelists did not generally employ -y suffixation, except in such common terms as daily, weekly, and monthly. Second, although nouns were frequently used as adjectives in prenominal position, the compounds constructed this way did not generally function as similes. Rather, there was a marked tendency in all five programs to use various types of adjective formation in constructing noun phrases which consisted of a long series of modifiers



followed by a head noun.

25. this brand new for 1982 daily devotional guide (Robert Schuller)
26. my fiftieth anniversary that I've been in God's work golden medallion  
(Rex Humbard)
27. soul-stirring Bible preaching (Jimmy Swaggart)
28. an old-fashioned spirit-filled revival service (Jimmy Swaggart)
29. the television radio ministry Old Time Gospel Hour (Jerry Falwell)

From these examples it can be seen that various parts of speech were used as prenominal modifiers, including a phrase in (25) and a clause in (26).

Adjectivalization processes in television advertising have been discussed (see Geis, 1982) as a means by which a literally subjective description gives the appearance of being stronger than it actually is. This interpretation is supported by other findings (Fowler & Kress, 1979; Bolinger, 1980) that adjectives placed in prenominal position give the appearance of classification to descriptions which may in fact be the speaker's evaluation. The use of prenominal modification to make subjective attributions seems to apply to some but not all of the cases above. For example, one might question the attribution of soul-stirring to the preaching referred to in (27). However, as can be seen in (29), the use of such prenominal modification and adjectivalization processes does not necessarily contain a subjective component. There are two things which all of these instances of adjectivalization have in common. First, the noun phrases constructed in this way all form a complex of descriptive assertions about the noun. Second, the fact that these descriptive terms all precede the noun means that a hearer must process and retain a series of attributes before he is informed of their referent.

Another feature of television advertising is the use of imperative structures to carry the force of suggestions. Although advertisers do not have the necessary authority over their audience to actually command them, they still utilize the sentence structure of commands to direct their audience

to the desired course of action. This was also found to be the case for televangelists, for in every program studied, direct command structures were used extensively. Consider the following examples.

30. So call the toll-free number now, and say "I'll give a gift of fifty dollars or ten dollars a month for five months", let me send you this gold medallion. (Rex Humbard)
31. So join that Faith Partner team. (Jerry Falwell)

In the literature of speech act analysis, all speech acts which essentially constitute an attempt by the speaker to get the hearer to do something are called directives (Searle, 1975a). Some directives, such as commands, require that the speaker have authority over the hearer for their successful performance of that act. If the condition of relevant authority does not hold, however, then any directive a speaker might issue, regardless of surface form, can only be interpreted as carrying a force weaker than that of commanding. Since a system of constitutive rules for distinguishing between such weaker directives as requests, suggestions, pleas and entreaties has not yet been developed, however, the ascription of actual force remains largely a matter of interpretation.

Both televangelists and television advertisers use structures normally associated with direct commands to issue directives whose force is weaker than that of commanding. In the case of televangelists, however, the force of a directive was also found to be conveyed through a variety of other surface structures. It was possible to identify a total of nine distinct surface structure types used by televangelists to direct their audience to some course of action. All of these had in common the fact that they predicated a future act of the audience, but they differed considerably in the actual structures used. Six of the types isolated were, in fact, indirect directives.

According to Searle (1975b), the successful communication of the intended force of an indirect directive involves an understanding of not only the felicity conditions mentioned above, but also the context of the utterance

and the basic principles of conversation. The types of indirect directive found in the data all shared the fact that they predicated a future act of the audience, but they differed in the degree to which contextual factors were required for their interpretation. The following is a listing of the types of directives found in the speech of televangelists, with examples from the programs surveyed.

#### DIRECTIVES SET IN THE FORM OF COMMANDS

##### I. Simple command structures

32. Tell them that you'd like to pledge your support each month. (Robert Schuller)

##### II. Command structures whose predicate contains a statement which the audience is directed to repeat.

33. Call ... and say "Jerry, I want to be a Faith Partner. I want to pray regular (sic) for this ministry. I want to give monthly". (Jerry Falwell)

##### III. Command structures embedded in a conditional structure.

34. If you haven't got the first and second week incoming, do it quickly and then get the third week in. (Oral Roberts)

#### INDIRECT DIRECTIVES

##### IV. Indirect directives embedded in a conditional structure.

35. If you ... are thinking about Liberty, then you need to write to Liberty Baptist College. (Jerry Falwell)

##### V. Directives set in the form of a yes/no question.

36. Will you pay? (Jimmy Swaggart)

##### VI. Directives set in the form of "Why not" questions.

37. Why not join me and be a member of Dr. Schuller's Possibility Thinkers' Club? (Robert Schuller)

##### VII. Embedded directives set in the surface form of an assertion about the speaker.

38. We're asking our Faith Partners everywhere ... to double your (sic) monthly committment. (Jerry Falwell)

##### VIII. Embedded directives, as above, directed at God.

39. And then we're asking God to give us new Faith Partners. (Jerry

Falwell)

IX. Directives whose stated source is God or the Bible.

40. God has called us to complete this task together. (Rex Humbard)

In general, results of the research here reported lend support to most of the categories set out by Lakoff and Geis as characteristic of the persuasive use of language with reference to television advertising. In particular, the use of indirect speech forms and vague language were found to occur not only in the presentation of claims and arguments, but also in other kinds of speech acts, such as assurances and predictions (e.g., And believe me, these messages really help. Something good is going to happen to you), as well as in the issuing of directives. There was also strong support for Geis' finding that product names often have more than a referring function and can themselves carry information that might aid in their promotion.

With reference to the use of linguistic novelty, however, the findings were less unequivocal. Lakoff considered the use of novel terms and expressions to be an essential identifying feature of persuasive discourse. Although some examples of most types of linguistic novelty isolated by Lakoff were also found in the televangelist data, the fact that this type of device was not used as extensively in these messages as some of the other categories discussed would suggest that these findings should be considered to lend only weak support to Lakoff's interpretation of the importance of novelty to persuasive discourse.

Several categories isolated by Geis or Lakoff, however, did not occur in the data used for this study. These were as follows: 1. the terms introducing or announcing used to attract viewer attention; 2. the use of count nouns as mass nouns; 3. rhetorical questions; 4. elliptical comparatives; 5. odd uses of the definite article; 6. pragmatic anomaly. The absence of these features from the data indicates that these particular types of language use do not necessarily characterize language intended to persuade and, furthermore, may in fact be artifacts of one particular style of persuasive language use, that of television advertising.

The findings of this research seem to confirm the importance of implicit information in the language used to persuade, particularly in a context where recipients of the message are predominantly passive. However, the fact that only persuasive messages from one context were examined leaves open several questions which might be addressed in future research. For example, are recipients of a message actually more likely to accept presupposed or implied information without counterargumentation than that which is explicitly stated? Further, how do the present findings apply to conversational persuasion? That is, would the information conveyed using the linguistic devices found to be common among these two types of televised persuasive messages be less likely to be questioned or counterargued against in a setting in which the recipient can participate more overtly? Finally, how does the use of language for persuasion compare with other types of language use, such as, for example, expository discourse in which the intention is less to persuade and more to inform? It is through answers to questions such as these that we may come to understand more fully the impact that language can have in the persuasion process and, by implication, the structure and function of the persuasive mode of communicative interaction.

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