Intertextual voices and engagement in TV advertisements

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ABSTRACT

By analysing multimodal TV advertisements, this study aims to show how intertextual voices are exploited in advertising discourse to enhance persuasive power. Taking as their point of departure the assumption that all discourses are intertextual recontextualizations of social practice that draw on external voices from both specific discourses and discursive conventions, the authors identify two types of intertextual voice in TV advertisements: character and discursive voice. This article illustrates the multimodal construction of voices and demonstrates that the choice of voices is closely related to the 'domain' of the product. It is argued that the intertexual voices contribute to the advertising discourse through multimodal engagement strategies. Character voice endorses the advertised product through such resources as lexico-grammar, intonation, facial expression and staged narrative, while discursive voice endorses the advertised product through contextualization and intertextual discourse structure. It is hoped that the study will shed light on the understanding of the heteroglossic nature of advertisements, the interaction between intertextual voices and the advertised message, and multimodal construction of voices and engagement.

KEY WORDS

engagement • intertexual voice • multimodal analysis • TV advertisements

INTRODUCTION

Advertising discourse has attracted much attention from semioticians because it 'tends to use a wide range of semiotic resources' (Van Leeuwen, 2005: 8). It is acknowledged that direct propaganda is less and less used in advertisements and advertisers deploy various strategies to enhance their persuasive power while trying to reduce the appearance of their commercial nature. As a result,
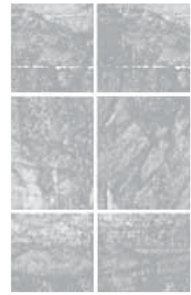
advertisements have become a 'parasite discourse' (Cook, 1992), or a 'hybridized discourse' (Rahm, 2006), drawing on styles from all kinds of discourse types (e.g. science, education, fine art) and voices from all walks of life (e.g. experts, celebrities, children). This article examines the various voices adopted in advertisements, and investigates how they engage with the product in the context of the advertisement. The discussion is underpinned by Systemic Functional Multimodal Discourse Analysis by extending the engagement System developed as part of Appraisal Theory (Martin and White, 2005) to include non-linguistic resources. Recent research in Appraisal Theory has gone beyond language to include other semiotic modes (Chen and Qin, 2007; Economou, 2006; Martin, 2001). However, most studies of voice limit their scope to voices from specific sources. For example, Iedema et al. (1994) and Martin and White (2005) study multiple voicing in media discourse, identifying 'reporter voice', 'correspondent voice' and 'commentator voice' in different media genres; Coffin's (2000) work reveals the voice options of 'recorder', 'interpreter' and 'adjudicator' in history discourse; Chen (2010) identifies character voice, editor voice and reader voice in EFL teaching materials. Martin and White (2005) use the terms *voice* and *key* interchangeably but, in line with the studies just mentioned, as well as the original use of the term in Bakhtin (1981), *voice* is used to refer to the resources of dialogic engagement. We address the same issue of intertextual voices, but with new frameworks to better account for the features of advertising discourse.

Our approach adapts existing studies in three ways. First, it departs from the perspective of recontextualization and argues that every discourse is the intertexual recontextualization of social practices and further points out that the process is ideologically motivated to manipulate readers' attitude and behaviour. Second, it extends the 'voice' system to include the *discursive voice* of the styles and social practices typically associated with other discourse types, thus complementing the engagement system in Appraisal Theory with *discursive engagement*. Third, unlike the investigation of interdiscursivity, which mainly concerns linguistic text (Fairclough, 1992; Rahm, 2006), the current approach is explicitly multimodal, taking visual resources into consideration.

To account for the complex relations between the source and target discourse, the engagement system proposed by Martin and White (2005) is adopted. To account for the multimodal construction of engagement, the social semiotic theory of multimodality (Kress and Van Leeuwen, 1996, 2001) is drawn upon. These theoretical foundations will be explicated in the framework of intertextual voices in the second section. The engagement strategies of character voice and discursive voice are then investigated in the third and fourth sections, respectively. The study concludes that TV advertisements are filled with intertextual voices and that they interact with the advertised message in complex ways to enhance the advertisements' persuasive power.

DATA AND ANALYTICAL APPROACH

Data collection and transcription

The data set consists of 21 different advertisements produced in China for Colgate toothpaste. Colgate is one of the most well-known toothpaste brands used in China, and is also the most extensively advertised one. The 21 advertisements on Chinese television are all for Colgate toothpaste at present and some of them have been running for one or two years.

The transcription of the data is informed by Baldry (2004), Iedema (2001) and Thibault (2000). For our specific purpose, a second-to-second transcription and metafunctional account would be both unnecessary and self-defeating, since 'the aim of transcription should be to note down with a fair degree of parsimony only those features which are strictly relevant to the purpose of subsequent analysis' (Thibault, 2000: 337). *Shot* is seen as the basic unit of transcription and analysis, as with most previous studies (e.g. Iedema, 2001). This choice is also supported by the argument that 'Mise-en-scene (the decision of what to film and how to arrange what is being filmed) forms the basic unit for analysis' (O'Halloran, 2004: 117). Shots combine to form *Scenes*, which refers to the shots of different people or objects participating in one and the same interaction (Metz, 1974: 103). A scene makes up a complete semantic unit of a single time–space 'culturally recognized activity type' (Levinson, 1992: 69), such as talking at dinner, doctor examining patient and so forth. Scenes combine to make a *generic stage* (Iedema, 2001: 189), which refers to the beginning, middle and end of a text. Each genre has a specific set of stages (see, for example, Labov and Waletzky, 1967, on the stages in narrative). The advertisements in our data sets can be tri-sectioned into narrative stage (telling a story and making it relevant to the product), propaganda stage (introducing the product) and logo stage (cf. the tabulation of initial, main and end blocks by Baldry, 2004). Our concern is with the narrative stage, but it should be noted that the first two stages may be merged. That is, the propaganda/announcement is uttered by a character, instead of the mouthpiece (see Table 1). Meanwhile, the order of the stages varies and the latter two stages may be inserted within the narrative (see Table 4).

The transcription of advertisements is much easier than films, because there are normally only three or four scenes in a 20-second advertisement and many are single-shot scenes. Moreover, most shots can be represented by a single frame, as there is little panning, tracking, zooming and so on, and normally the character speaks one or two sentences with the visual frame unchanged. The shots, represented by selected frames, are accompanied by visual description and sound transcription in two parallel columns. The scenes are numbered in Arabic numerals and the shots in Roman letters and they will be called shot 1a, shot 2b, etc.

Recontextualization, intertextuality and engagement–theoretical foundations

The concept of *recontextualization* was originally proposed by Bernstein (1990). He argues that 'semantic representations selectively appropriate, relocate, refocus and relate to other discourses to constitute their own order and orderings' (p. 184). Van Leeuwen (2008) broadens this concept and proposes that all discourses are recontextualizations of social practice and other discourses. This is in line with Foucault's sense of discourse as 'socially constructed knowledge of (some aspects of) social practice (Van Leeuwen, 2008: 6; Kress and Van Leeuwen, 2001). Each discourse type is associated with a specific 'domain of knowledge' or 'subject matter' (Fairclough, 1992: 128). In this sense, advertising discourse represents the social practice of promoting products and services and through time the representation of this practice is conventionalized as the genre of advertising. The relation between genre and discourse will not be discussed here (for discussions, see Fairclough, 1992; Kress and Threadgold, 1988). The point relevant to our discussion of intertextual voices is that genre is the site where various intertextual resources interact in the process of recontextualization (Kress and Threadgold, 1988: 216). So in our study, the genre of advertising (identified by its goal of persuasion) is the site where various types of discourse[1] interact and contribute to the general goal of advertising, hence giving rise to interdiscursivity (Fairclough, 1992).

Specifically, intertextuality arises from the process of recontextualization in two ways, resulting in two types of intertextual resources. First, the current discourses quote from other existing discourses; second, the current discourses recontextualize social practices that are typically associated with other discourses and hence adopt the styles or conventions of other discourses. According to Maingueneau (1987), the first type is called 'manifest intertextuality' and the second type 'constitute intertextuality' (quoted in Fairclough, 1992: 104). The quotes and conventions from external sources are termed *voices* in dialogism. Specific to TV advertisements, we will term the first type *character voice* and the second type *discursive voice*, as shown in Figure 1.[2] The system is a unified, cross-strata representation of the dimensions of intertextual voices which serves as the framework of the text. It represents a multimodal interpretation of the engagement system of appraisal in the register of advertising, akin to Chen's (2010) interpretation of voices in EFL teaching material in China.

Character voice refers to the utterances and nonverbal behaviour of participants who play the role of characters in the advertisement. The voices directly uttered by the advertisers and voice-overs are not considered, as our focus is on *intertextual* voices, i.e. voices external to the *seller* voice. We do not intend to exhaust all possible voices because it is a potentially infinite list that defies a system. In our small data set of 21 advertisements, the characters include celebrities, doctors, reporters, teachers, beauticians and so on. Nevertheless, the distribution of the characters and the way they engage with
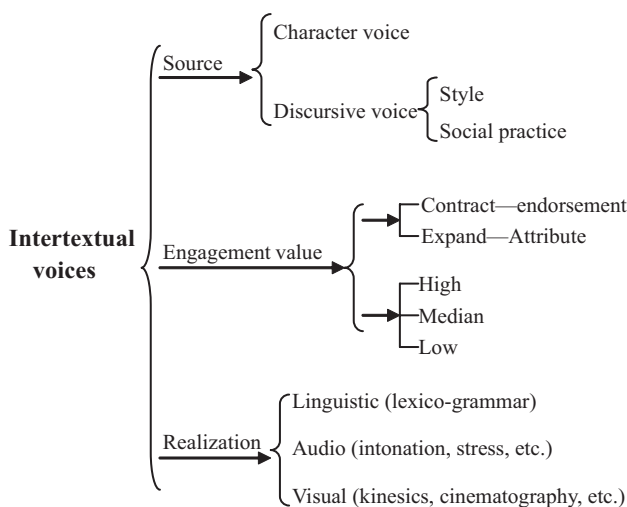
Figure 1 Intertextual voices in advertising discourse.

the products do exhibit some patterns and these patterns will be explored in the next section.

Discursive voice refers to the conventional features of certain discourse type, including both the styles/structures it typically uses and the social practices it typically represents. For the former, these discursive features occur at different levels of language (and other semiotic resources). For example, in terms of discourse structure, classroom exchange involves initiation, response and feedback (Sinclair and Coulthard, 1975); in terms of lexico-grammar, scientific discourse is characterized by grammatical metaphors (Halliday, 1998). For the latter, when a discourse type recontextualizes social practices that do not typically belong to its realm, it borrows the 'voice' from other situations. For example, the social practice of 'seeing a doctor' often appears in advertising discourse. The recontextualization of discursive voice will be discussed in the fourth section.

Based on Bahktin's theory of dialogism, Martin and White (2005) propose an engagement system for investigating the stance of external voices. The heteroglossic resources are divided into two broad categories according to whether they are dialogically expansive or dialogically contractive in their intersubjective functionality. The distinction turns on the degree to which an utterance actively makes allowance for dialogically alternative voices (expansion), or acts to restrict the scope of such (contraction) (p. 102). The engagement framework is represented as Figure 2.

As far as TV advertisements are concerned, both expansion and contraction are used to engage with the advertised message, predominantly in forms of *attribution* and *endorsement* respectively (see Figure 1). Engagement is also examined in terms of Graduation (Martin and White, 2005) – that is,
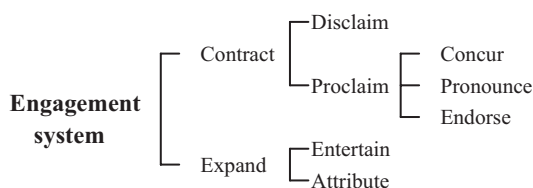
Figure 2 The engagement system.

the degree of the engagement value, which can be high, median and low. In TV advertisements, character voice constructs two general propositions: (a) the character *believes* that the product is effective (attribution); and (b) this belief, together with other evidence, *demonstrates* to the viewer that the product is effective (endorsement). This dual process of engagement is represented in Figure 3. So our task is to examine how the characters express their belief and pro attitude with multimodal resources. In dealing with the engagement value of discursive voice, we will focus on the degree of engagement (see Figure 5) and mechanisms of discursive endorsement (see Figures 6 and Figure 7).

Our framework also addresses the realization of the source and engagement of intertextual voices from the perspective of multimodality (Kress and Van Leeuwen, 1996, 2001). In this perspective, meaning making is seen as a multimodal activity, involving not only language, but also resources such as facial expression, gesture and visual image. This is undoubtedly the case in TV advertisements where audio, visual and linguistic resources are all employed to construct both source and engagement of the intertextual voices.

For character voice, the source refers to the identity of the characters, which is mainly represented visually. Kress and Van Leeuwen (1996), following Halliday (1994), argue that visual images perform representational, interactive and compositional functions. Representational function is discussed in terms of process, participant and circumstance. Character identity in our study is visually realized through actional process, analytical process and circumstance. For example, the identity of doctor is defined by the action of performing medical check-up, the uniform, the setting of a hospital, and so on. In terms of character engagement, the visual resources mainly refer to nonverbal attitudinal behaviours, such as facial expression and gesture.

For discursive voice, the social practice of a certain discourse type is constructed with different semiotic resources. For example, the social practice of 'seeing a doctor' is visually characterized by the uniform of a doctor (participant), the setting of the hospital (circumstance), the medical checkup (process) and other features. The engagement of external social practice is not as straightforward as that of character voice. Nevertheless, they both interact with the advertised information in complex ways that will be explicated in the fourth section.

As a discourse strategy, intertextual voice functions to enhance the credibility of advertising claims, reduce the commercial nature of advertisements

and increase the desirability of advertisers and products through the construction of intended 'reading position' and the activation of intended stereotyped knowledge. One important means of realizing these functions is to construct different writer–reader relations to manipulate the attitude and behaviour of readers. Kress and Van Leeuwen's (1996) framework of interactive meaning is employed to investigate the advertisements' viewer engagement/alignment. Based on Kress and Van Leeuwen's (1996) framework, Macken-Horarik (2004) studies the interactive meaning in students' artworks and the present study attempts to address a similar issue in the genre of advertising. The persuasive effect of viewer engagement is elaborated in the section on manipulating the viewer.

CHARACTER VOICE AND ENGAGEMENT IN TV ADVERTISEMENTS

In this section, we explore two dimensions of the character voice as suggested in Figure 1: source of the voice and engagement strategy. These two aspects can be illustrated with an example from Cook (1992). In accordance with Bakhtin's theory, Cook (1992: 183) points out that the proposition 'the beer is the best in the world' has a very different meaning for a consumer when it is uttered by its producer, a celebrity or a close friend. Moreover, similar utterances 'the beer is possibly the best', 'I believe the beer is the best' and 'according to research, the beer is the best' would evoke very different attitudes in the viewer. These variations suggest that the source and the attitudinal stance matters to the advertisements' persuasive effect.

As mentioned earlier, while it is difficult to categorize the various characters, it is important to examine the patterns of their distribution. Two aspects of this pattern need to be considered: the choices of particular characters from all possible choices and the configuration of the characters in an advertisement. What character is chosen depends on the product being promoted. While a quantitative study of character choice should be based on a large corpus of the advertisements of certain products (for example, ideally, all toothpaste advertisements), our small data set can reveal some basic preferences in toothpaste advertisements. A striking fact is that the character of doctor/dentist appears in 15 out of the 21 advertisements. The next common figure is that of mother or wife, which appears in 6 advertisements (mother figure and doctor may appear together in one advertisement). This certainly reveals the 'domain' of toothpaste and the social practice of brushing teeth: it is a health issue and it is part of family life. But the relation between the domain of the product and the characters in advertisements is anything but a simple one-to-one correspondence and needs further investigation. The second aspect of the pattern is the configuration of different characters. This consideration is significant because there is normally more than one type of character – that is, more than one character voice – in an advertisement and their temporal sequence is crucial to the advertisement's effectiveness. A typical sequence of
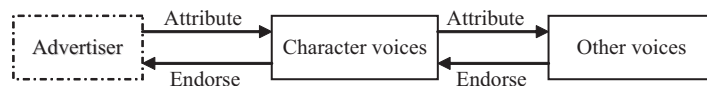
Figure 3 Engagement pattern in TV advertisements.

the voices is a consumer or celebrity depicted in some social activity, followed by an expert recommending the product. However, the structure of an advertisement is not just a sequential representation of characters, but a coherent discourse. The intertextual structure of TV advertisements will be discussed in the next section.

The engagement strategies in TV advertisements are quite simple: the advertisers *attribute* their claims to intertextual voices and the intertextual voices *endorse* the advertisers' claims, as shown in Figure 3. The advertisers themselves may speak, but our concern is the external voices they *attribute* to. The degree of character engagement is high; that is, the characters use every possible means to endorse the product. So our task in analysing character engagement, as stated earlier, is to examine how the characters express their support with multimodal resources. One point that needs to be stressed is that character voices may further source external voices, for example, 'expert voice' could source 'clinic experiment voice'.

We now examine two Colgate TV advertisements in detail, one using a celebrity voice and the other using a range of different voices.

The main character in Table 1 is Jay Chou, one of the most popular singers in China. The main shots and sound are intercepted according to time sequence. The first two sentences (see numbers in Table 1) encode personal desire and preference and the first sentence is related to the second through causation; the third sentence moves from the personal to providing impersonal information and justifies the second sentence; the last sentence is clearly the advertiser's slogan through Jay's mouth. We now discuss the multimodal construction of the source and endorsement, with a focus on the functions of visual image.

The source of the voice (Jay Chou) is co-constructed by the visual image and the caption 'JAY' at the lower right-hand corner. The visual image makes the voice source more dramatic and the advertisement more persuasive. On the one hand, the mere image of Jay would make his fans scream and buy the product without reasoning; on the other, his facial expression and gestures perfectly match the audio-linguistic expressions and multiply the meaning. In the first image, he looks into the mirror, with an expression of weariness (probably just got out of bed), and says 'I need to be refreshed.' As a solution, he uses Colgate toothpaste. Instantly, he is transformed to a different person, happy, refreshed and charming. Then he recommends this product with his unique, cool expression and pointing gesture.

Character endorsement is constructed with the resources of linguistic choice, facial expression, gaze and gesture. Linguistically, it is constructed

Table 1 Colgate advertisement featuring Jay Chou. © Image copyright Colgate China, reproduced with permission from *www.youku.com*

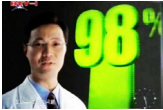| Shot	Visual image	Image description	Sound transcription
1		Jay is looking at himself in the mirror, looking weary.	I need to be refreshed.
2		Display of Colgate toothpaste.	I use Colgate toothpaste.
3		Jay stares at the toothpaste attentively with a slight smile.	
4		Jay is enjoying the refreshment, ice flakes surrounding him.	It contains ice particles and brings me to a new level of refreshment.
5		Low angle shot of Jay.	
6		Jay is holding up the toothpaste, and pointing to it.	Unprecedented refreshing taste, Colgate toothpaste.

by Jay's affirmative choice ('I use …'), his justification ('it contains ice particles and brings me to …') and the marked theme ('unprecedented freshening taste'). Visually, his attitude towards the product is implicitly constructed through the change of his facial expression before and after using the product. The magical transfer from weariness to enjoyment suggests the effect of the product. In terms of gaze, his attentive gaze (shot 3) at the glittering and translucent toothpaste clearly indicates his positive attitude towards it. In terms of gesture, the last shot explicitly constructs Jay's endorsement. He holds the toothpaste in front of his head and points to it as if he is presenting it to the viewer. One important function of character endorsement is to engage or align the viewers (cf. Martin and White's, 2005, notion of reader alignment). There are two Engagement strategies used here which have universal value in advertisements. First, we identify with the character because we all experience a feeling of weariness after waking up and want to be refreshed. Second, the image of

Jay and the 'fact' that Jay is using Colgate provokes the desire to use the product and trust in the product owing to the so-called 'celebrity effect' (Basil, 1996).

Viewer alignment is also constructed with different semiotic resources, especially with gaze, shot distance and camera angle. According to Kress and Van Leeuwen (1996), these three resources construct interactive meanings of contact (offer and demand), social distance and subjectivity (power and solidarity) respectively. In terms of gaze, direct gaze with the viewer is absent in the narrative stage (shots 1, 3, 4) and present in the propaganda stage (shot 5). In the narrative stage, the character is *offering* the 'fact' that he is using Colgate and that it has magical effects. The absence of gaze serves to convince the viewer that the narrative is objective fact. Shot 4 can be seen as a transition from absence to presence of gaze as the character gazes at other characters who are in the same direction as the viewer. In the propaganda stage, the character is *demanding* action from the viewer. The symbolic contact/interaction between the character and the viewer changes viewer position from observer (third person) to interactant (second person) and hence engages him or her. In terms of social distance, this advertisement mainly uses medium and close shots to construct a close relationship with the viewer. For example, in shot 1, medium shot is used to construct 'personal distance', indicating that the character is one of us. In terms of camera angle, eye-level angle and low angle are employed, constructing character–viewer equality and character power, respectively. According to our dichotomy of *invite* and *provoke*, the eye-level angle invites the viewer to identify with the character and the low angle provokes the viewer's evaluation of the character's status. In shot 1, the eye-level angle, as well as medium distance, construct the character as someone we identify with; in shot 5, a low angle is used to highlight Jay's status as pop star and hence provoke the viewer's adoration. The three devices work together to position the viewers and engage them for optimal effect of persuasion.

The source of voice in the second example (Table 2) is more complex: a combination of correspondent, doctor, patient and Colgate stomatologist. The voices work together to construct a coherent and effective multimodal discourse. First, the correspondent brings us to the scene of Beijing Sports Centre where 'everyone uses Colgate'. Correspondents are considered to be telling the truth, so his utterance 'Everyone here uses Colgate toothpaste' is taken as fact and this fact is significant in manipulating viewers' attitude and behaviour, analogous to alleged statistics such as '80% of consumers use …'. Information of this kind is extraordinarily effective because people trust the majority and conform to them (Basil, 1996). Scene 2 depicts a fictional situation of a dentist re-examining a patient's tooth problem. It is *expert voice* at play here. However, the dentist does not say how effective the product is, just stresses that the patient is much better now and, from the correspondent voice, we know that this is because she uses Colgate. Similar to correspondents, doctors are presumed to be professional and reliable, so their diagnosis is supposed to be true. In this way, the effectiveness of Colgate is made evident and credible, and is reinforced

Table 2 Colgate advertisement: doctor and patient. © Image copyright Colgate China, reproduced with permission from *www.youku.com*

Shot	Visual image	Image description	Sound transcription
1		Reporter speaking with smiling face.	We are back to the sports centre. Everyone here uses Colgate toothpaste.
2a		The doctor is re-checking a patient who has being using Colgate.	Last time you had three buccal problems. Let's see how it looks now.
2b		The doctor smiles, with the screen displaying the problems Colgate solves.	Great! It is significantly improved.
2c		The patient smiling, displaying white, beautiful teeth.	No utterance
3		Colgate stomatologist speaking.	Clinical experiments proved that Colgate can improve dental health.

by the radiant smile of the charming lady. The lady patient does not have a voice per se, but her smile can be seen as 'kinesic voice', which expresses her delight over her recovery, thanks to Colgate, of course. Scene 3 is a summing-up scene, which is performed by the Colgate stomatologist. He is featured as a lecturer, or a news broadcaster, which again lends credibility to his words. It is interesting to note that he uses the strategy of *explicit endorsement* ('Clinic experiments have proved that …'). This is not surprising, because as a Colgate stomatologist, it is his job to carry out experiments and find out whether the product is effective or not. So, he is the right person to talk about experiments and we tend to believe that the experiments *did* exist and *did* prove that Colgate is effective. This can be called 'double sourcing' – that is, there is a voice within a voice, as illustrated in Figure 4.

The sources of the external voices, that is, the identities of the characters, are mainly constructed through visual actional and analytical processes. The identity of the correspondent is represented by his action of reporting and the microphone he is using. The identity of the doctor is visually represented by the action of checking up on the patient and the 'attribute' of his uniform. The identity of the patient is visually represented as the 'goal' of the check-up

Figure 4 Double sourcing voices.

in the first shot of Scene 2 (shot 2a) and the identity in the third shot of Scene 2 (shot 2c) refers back to it through visual anaphora (Tseng, 2009). The identity of the Colgate stomatologist is explicitly represented in the caption and is co-articulated by the uniform.

These characters' endorsement of the product is constructed with resources of language, intonation and facial expression. The linguistic choices of the correspondent ('*Everyone* here uses Colgate …'), the dentist ('significantly improved') and the stomatologist ('Clinical experiments *proved* that …') all encode their positive attitude. The correspondent's endorsement is reinforced by his tonal emphasis on 'everyone'. Visually, the smile of the correspondent, the doctor in Scene 2 and the patient all contribute to the positive attitude towards Colgate.

The multiple and multilayered voices contribute to the credibility of the information and the desirability of the product from different angles, manipulating the viewer through both reasoning and emotion. Specifically, the correspondent voice and the patient voice target viewers' *emotions* by suggesting that everyone is using Colgate and that you would have such beautiful smile, respectively. The doctor voice and the stomatologist voice target viewers' *reasoning* by objective diagnosis and clinic experiment, respectively. This manipulative effect is realized by visual interactive resources, in particular. In terms of contact, the correspondent and the stomatologist directly interact with the viewer while the dentist and patient are involved in the narrative process. In terms of social distance, medium and close shots are used to construct character–viewer closeness. In particular, the very close shot of Shot 2c, which clearly shows the woman's beautiful face and white teeth, invokes the viewer's adoration as well as the desire to identify with her. In terms of subjectivity, a frontal eye-level angle is used to construct symbolic involvement and character–viewer equality.

DISCURSIVE VOICE IN TV ADVERTISEMENTS

Discursive voice refers to the style and content of certain types of discourse. At the level of semiotic resources, it is the typical, or conventionalized way of re-contextualizing certain social practices in a culture. Experienced users of a discourse type often manipulate discursive conventions to respond to novel situations. A major way this is done is through what Fairclough (1992) calls 'interdiscursivity'. That is, the voices of other discourse types 'vocalize' in the current discourse. Of course, this 'voice' is metaphorical here, since there is no real speaker. At the semantic level, different discourse types have different

social practices to represent. For example, the practice of medical check-up is normally represented by medical discourse and has nothing to do with advertisements. However, as people are increasingly tired of direct propaganda, TV advertisements represent a wide array of social practices that are completely irrelevant by nature. Hence, various other situations also find 'voice' in advertisements and they are termed 'discursive voices'. Since stylistic hybridization has already been widely discussed, in this study, discursive voice deals with the 'fields' that occur in advertisements and their contribution to the persuasive power of the advertisements.

While we intend to explicate the 'borrowing' of external genres from the perspective of intertextuality and recontextualization, this phenomenon can be easily explained from other theoretical perspectives, especially the notion of contextual metaphor (Martin, 1997, 1999). Contextual metaphor refers to the use of one text type to stand for another (Martin, 1999: 34). Analogous to grammatical metaphor (Halliday, 1994), contextual metaphor is concerned with strata tension at the level of context. However, we find the notion of recontextualization is better equipped to account for the degree of inter-discursive interaction as well as the various mechanisms of the interaction.

In our data of 21 Colgate TV advertisements, there are various social practices represented.[3] Four of them are drawn from educational discourse, which involves the explanation of certain phenomena. For example, an advertisement shows a group of children visiting the museum and seeing an elephant's tooth. One child discovers that the tooth has a yellow spot on it and says 'that must be because it doesn't brush its teeth.' Then the teacher comments that now they have Colgate and do not have to worry about the problem. Six are family scenes, which represent either parent–child or husband–wife engaged in conversation, such as the wife telling the husband to brush his teeth before going to bed. Others are about activities such as business, sports and fashion. It is interesting to note that the 'expert/doctor' image appears in 15 advertisements, which suggests its popularity as far as Colgate is concerned. The preference in the choice of social practice, hence the corresponding discursive voice, reflects the domain of the product as is made clear in the section on the choice of characters. The choice of character should be seen as closely related to the choice of social practice because the character constitutes the participant in the social practice. From the perspective of discursive voice, a certain social practice, hence a certain discourse type, can only be chosen for a certain product if the product can serve as a functional component in it. For example, it is unlikely that the practice of medical check-up will be seen in car advertisements. So the external social practice has to be able to accommodate, or contextualize, the product and form a coherent text. This relation between social practice and product information leads to our discussion of *discursive engagement*.

◆ **Co-occurring**, typically the relation between advertisements and the TV programsbefore and after.	**Minimum Engagement**
◆ **Situating**, occurs in most TV advertisements when we know clearly (explicitly) they are advertisements.	**Median Engagement**
◆ **Embedding**, typically occurs in implicit advertisements which are carefully built in movies, popular music, etc.	**Maximum Engagement**

Figure 5 Engagement values of generic voices.

Discursive engagement is a more tricky issue than character engagement. It is easy to understand how a character may take a stance towards his or her utterance through the engagement system featured in Martin and White (2005). But how does a discourse type 'position' itself towards the advertised information? We will answer this question by proposing two aspects of discursive engagement. First, similar to the *contextualization relations* among semiotic modalities (Lim, 2004: 239), we propose that the intertextual relations among different discourse types/social practices are also achieved through *contextualization*. Put another way, we are talking about how the other discourse types accommodate and support the advertising message. Seen in this way, the degree of engagement is the degree in which the external discourse[4] *contextualizes* the current one: the more thoroughly the external discourse contextualizes the advertised information, the more it engages with it. We propose three ways in which other discourse types contextualize the current discourse, as illustrated in Figure 5.

In the case of *co-occurring*, the other discourse types and the advertised message are simply put together, with minimum contextualization. This is exemplified by the relation of advertisements to their surrounding TV programmes (or surrounding texts in print media). The engagement degree of other discourses (TV programmes) towards the advertised message is the lowest, since they are not semantically linked. The subliminal advertising experiment by James M. Vicary in 1957, which used instant flash of corporate slogans such as 'drink coke' and 'eat popcorn' over the film is also minimally contextualized by film. *Embedded* advertising, which is gaining popularity as people are getting tired of advertisements per se, refers to the embedding of product propaganda implicitly in other discourses. The Aston Martin car in James Bond movies is a good case in point. In embedded advertisements, there is maximum contextualization between other discourse types (social practices) and advertised information: the advertising part is an inseparable part

of the plot. Since this article deals with normal TV advertisements, these two types will not be elaborated upon.

The advertisements in our data, as well as most TV advertisements, use the strategy of *situating*. That is, the external discourses (the 'appropriated' discourses) and social practices provide a 'context of situation' for the advertised information. The degree of contextualization is median for two reasons. First, normally there is a distinct episode of product information not so inherent to the external discourse. As we see in the example in Table 3, shot 2 is pure commercial propaganda and makes the whole discourse unmistakably a commercial. In this sense, the external discourse merely provides a situation for introducing the product and then the 'advertising voice' takes over the job. This is unlike embedded advertising, in which the external discourse (e.g. the movie plot) itself speaks for the product. Second, unlike embedded advertisements, the external discourse types can no longer be properly called 'educational discourse', 'scientific discourse', 'classroom discourse', etc. because nobody fails to recognize that they are advertisements. As Rahm (2006: 203) demonstrates, the borrowing of scientific discourse in advertising only renders the advertisement 'a thin scientific aura but nothing more'. As a result, the endorsing power, or the Engagement value, of the external discourse is undermined as compared with the fully-fledged support in embedded advertisements. It may be surprising to see that the most frequently used discursive voice only moderately supports the advertising claim, but this has optimal effect: too strong an external voice may make the viewer fail to recognize that it is an advertisement. So advertisers are trying to strike a balance between voices from external discourse and the current discourse.

However, median engagement value of situating does not mean the discursive voices are neutral: they undoubtedly endorse the product. This is the second aspect of engagement value: the intertextual social practices provide *discursive means* to support the advertising message. Two principal ways of discursive endorsement will be discussed. The first draws on the notion of *primary genre*, which refers to the highly general rhetorical structures that are common to many discourse types (Bakhtin, 1986). The prevalent problem^solution pattern in advertisements is such a primary generic feature (Cook, 1992; Thibault, 2000) and we will examine how this pattern contributes to the endorsement of the product through the analysis of the example in Table 4. The second way of endorsement comes from the fundamental structure of narratives, which is 'change in time' (Baldry and Thibault, 2006: 13). Sequence of change is the hallmark of narratives, as 'our daily experience of the world is based on patterns of change' (O'Halloran, 2004: 109). In television advertisements, the narrative normally involves bad-to-good changes and the cause is invariably the product. The 'change', *congruently* realized by cause–effect relation, is usually construed *metaphorically* through temporal sequence. The ideological implication of the metaphorical construction is discussed in the next section.

Table 3 Colgate advertisement: music class. © Image copyright Colgate China, reproduced with permission from *www.youku.com*

Shot	Visual image	Image description	Sound transcription
1a		The teacher is teaching music, singing the lyrics (left column) and clapping her hands.	T: What is a healthy face like? S: Rosy and radiant. T: What are healthy teeth like? S: (hesitating) Yellow? Stained?
1b		The teacher's facial expression is showing disapproval of students' answers.	No sound.
2		The teacher is displaying Colgate, to the students as well as the audience.	The new Colgate can whiten your teeth and prevent dental caries.
3		The teacher and the students are singing together happily, fingers pointing at their teeth.	T & S are singing together: healthy teeth are white, with no dental caries.

We now provide a detailed analysis of the discursive voice using two examples, one that recontextualizes classroom activity and the other business activity. We will examine how the external social practices are multimodally constructed and how they engage with the advertised information.

The first advertisement (Table 3) is a multimodal discourse of a music class, constructed by the audio-visual resources of participants (teacher and students), the processes (teaching singing) and the circumstances (classroom, blackboard with music stave on it) (Halliday, 1994). The character voices are transcribed in the right column and together they form the discursive voice of classroom discourse. The classroom episode is made up of three exchanges, each of which constitutes Initiation^Response^(Feedback/Follow-up) (Sinclair and Coulthard, 1975). It is a contextual metaphor in the sense that generic structure of classroom discourse is borrowed in advertising discourse. The first *Initiation* is a typical lyric that would appear in children's songs in China and its function is to elicit the second Initiation, which is atypical in songs (recognizable as commercial). The same is true for the first and the second *Response*. The second Response is unnatural, in which the students hesitate and give wrong answers. The teacher's *Follow-up* is expressed visually through facial expression in shot 1b, which is clearly discomfort and disapproval. The first two exchanges provide a context for Colgate – it comes to rescue the students from hesitation and the teacher from discomfort. After a description in scene 2, the problem is solved and the teacher and students are all singing happily in shot 3. In this sense, the classroom interaction provides a context for the product and delivers part of the advertising information.
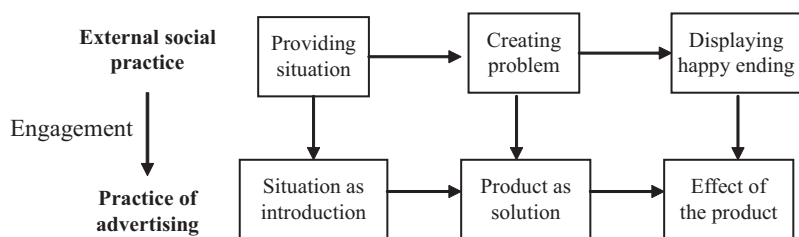
Figure 6 Endorsement in problem^solution pattern.

The classroom activity contextualizes and engages with the product using multi-semiotic discursive resources. That is, the music class, constructed with multimodal resources, provides a coherent discourse structure for accommodating the product. First, it provides a context (constructed with audio-visual resources as mentioned in the last paragraph) in which the plot may unfold (shot 1a), but we cannot relate the situation to the product yet. This step is like the pre-sequence in conversation (Sacks et al., 1974), or what Thibault (2000: 329) calls 'introductory shots'. Then, it introduces the toothpaste through the teacher's mentioning of 'teeth' in the lyric and the students' 'deviant' response to the question. This step can be seen as 'creating a problem' which calls for a solution. The problem is created in the multimodal logogenetic process of Initiation, Response and Feedback. The teacher initiates linguistically 'What are healthy teeth like?' The students show embarrassment on their faces because they don't know the answer and two students take wild guesses by replying 'yellow?' and 'stained?' in a rising tone which indicates uncertainty. The teacher's feedback makes the problem more salient with the facial expression of dissatisfaction (shot 1b). Then Colgate comes as a solution, which is constructed visually with the frontal close shot of the product and linguistically with rationalizing information (why it can solve the problem). Third, the situation depicts the *effect* of the product: they are now singing happily. The engagement relation is illustrated in Figure 6 for clarity. Note that this pattern also has a universal value, which echoes the problem^solution pattern that Cook (1992) argues is the most prevalent macro-structure in advertisements.

The second example (Table 4) is less complex and similar to the first in that they both recontextualize an external social practice and that they both use a problem^solution pattern to endorse the product. The story is that the customer considers the beautician's technique and product inferior because even the beautician herself is not 'beautiful' with her yellow teeth. As a result, the beautician is embarrassed and unhappy, which is the 'problem'. Then she uses Colgate (solution), and everything turns out well (effect).

The beautician's identity and her business, hence the discursive voice, is co-constructed by the visual resources of analytical process (business attire), actional process (serving a customer), the setting of the beauty parlour, as well as the linguistic resource of referring to herself as a beautician. The discursive voice endorses the product because it solves the problem and helps her

Table 4 Colgate advertisement: beautician. © Image copyright Colgate China, reproduced with permission from *www.youku.com*
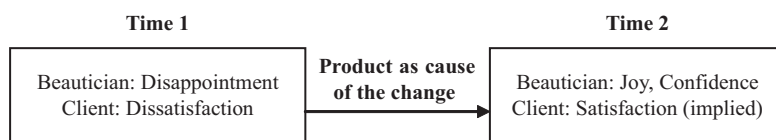
Shot	Visual image	Image description	Sound transcription
1		The beautician is serving a customer.	The customers don't trust the beautician's technique if she has yellow teeth.
2		The customer is dissatisfied and the beautician embarrassed.	Once a customer saw my yellow teeth and lost interest. I want to use whitening toothpaste, but I am afraid it is not healthy.
3		The beautician presents Colgate with a broad smile, showing white teeth.	With Colgate, the problem is solved. Now I can have healthy and white teeth.
4		The beautician hands her product to a customer with a charming smile.	Now I always smile and the effect is totally different.

business. Using the 'change in time' pattern, we could say that the product causes the situation to change from bad to good, as is illustrated in Figure 7. The change is constructed by the multimodal narrative sequence. Linguistically, contrast is formed in the utterance of shot 2 ('customer lost interest') and shot 4 ('now I always smile and the effect is totally different'); visually, in shot 2, the customer's facial expression is unhappiness and in shot 4 the customer is smiling and takes the product happily.

The 'product solves problem' and 'product saves career' advertisement is very common. In fact, they don't just help one's career; they help everything and solve all problems. However, this is done *indirectly* through 'change in time' of the narrative sequences. Compared to direct linguistic claims, the visual narrative construction is not only safer (not violating regulations), but also more effective, because the narrative is constructed as a faithful representation of reality.

MANIPULATING THE VIEWER: A CRITICAL REFLECTION

We have seen the use of intertextual voices in TV advertisements through the detailed analysis of four examples. It is clear that the use of intertextual voices is significant in enhancing the persuasive power of advertisements and this is achieved through the *endorsement* of external voices. In this section, we focus on the persuasive functions of intertextual voices.

Time 1		Time 2
Beautician: Disappointment Client: Dissatisfaction	**Product as cause** **of the change** ⟶	Beautician: Joy, Confidence Client: Satisfaction (implied)

Figure 7 Endorsement as part of the narrative sequence.

Character voice manipulates the viewer's attitude in three ways. First, by assuming a certain identity (or actually having a certain identity, as in the case of celebrities, or a real doctor), the character activates our stereotypical knowledge and attitude towards him or her and the group that he or she belongs to; that is, the character functions as a token embodying values. For example, our stereotypical knowledge about doctors is that they are experts and credible. The stereotypical expectations we have about certain people are evident when they fail to live up to them. A very good case in point is when an advertisement for a fertility clinic represented by one of China's well-respected TV stars was found to be fake and the TV star was more harshly criticized than others. Many people say that the only reason they went to that fake hospital is because they trusted the star and they thought that celebrities like him should be more careful about the products they represent because of their great influence.

Second, by playing certain roles, the character reproduces life-like situations with which viewers may identify. As mentioned in the section on character voice, the characters and life-like situations in advertisements invite viewers to enter into a fictional world and identify with certain characters. For instance, in one Colgate advertisement, a young loving mother utters the words 'I want to give the best to my child and I choose Colgate.' The targeted audience, young mothers, would probably identify with the character and say to themselves 'I also want to give the best to my child and I also choose Colgate.' This aspect of manipulation is co-articulated and reinforced by the naturalistic modality of the iconic nature of photographic images, which are seemingly 'messages without a code' (Barthes, 1977: 17). Of course they are coded, but the point is that they are perceived as uncoded, or less coded. As pointed out by Barthes, the denoted message 'naturalizes' the system of connoted message, which is the advertised information here (p. 51). This aspect of manipulation applies to ordinary people voice (viewers identify) and celebrity voice (viewers desire to identify). As we can see, celebrity voice works both ways, which means greater persuasive power, and this is perhaps why advertisers are so keen on using celebrities, paying them millions of dollars without further thought.

Third, by playing certain roles, the characters also enter into symbolic relations with the viewer. Every role has its counterparts, a teacher has students, a doctor has patients, a lawyer has clients, etc. So the role of the characters assigns viewers a corresponding one, thus endowing them (or forcing them into) a reading position (Fowler, 1991). The reading position is not casually assigned, but carefully designed for best persuasive effect. Among role relations, the most unwelcome is the seller–buyer relation and this is avoided

by advertisements wherever possible. As far as toothpaste (and other health products) is concerned, the best replacement is the doctor–patient relation. In a Colgate advertisement in our data, the final scene is the 'doctor' uttering the words 'I advise you to give your kids Colgate toothpaste. Used twice a day, it can help enhance tooth health and prevent tooth decay.' In this way, the seller–buyer relation is transformed into doctor–patient relation and the proposal is not a selling propaganda but is construed as professional medical advice.

In terms of discursive voice, our investigation departs from the perspective of the appropriation of external social practices in advertising, and this takes with it the discursive conventions that are typically used to represent certain social practices. Discursive voice manipulates the viewer in similar ways to character voice and we will discuss them only briefly. First, discursive voice lends the advertisement our stereotyped knowledge/attitude about certain genres, such as the objectiveness of the scientific discourse. Second, different discourses position the viewer differently in terms of power and distance. For example, some advertisements are in the form of a private letter which makes viewers feel that they are in an intimate relation with the advertiser. In our data set, social practices such as family activity, classroom activity and clinical activity position viewers differently as mothers, students, patients, etc. Third, and most important, persuasive power comes from the functions of the product in the social practices/narratives represented: they construct a fantasy that the product will change consumers' fate and realize their dreams. More ideologically, this is not articulated directly through language, but visually through temporal change and contrast. The result is that the meaning (the effectiveness of the product) is not imposed on the viewer, but is constructed or inferred by them. This is one important aspect of visual persuasion because people are more easily persuaded by the meaning they construct themselves (Jeong, 2008).

However, these external voices are merely strategies designed by the advertisers (agents). The people involved are merely fictional characters and the social practices are constructed. Even if the character is real, as in the example of Jay Chou, the episodes where he wakes up weary, where he uses Colgate and gets instantly refreshed, are made up. This goes perfectly with the working of advertisements: they function on the level of a day-dream, constructing an imaginary world in which readers are able to make those desires that remain unsatisfied in their everyday life come true (Vestergaard and Schroder, 1985: 117). But the truth is the purchase of the product does not redeem the promise of the advertisement. Consumers seem to be aware of this but in their dream-world they enjoy a 'future endlessly deferred fantasy' (Berger, 1972: 146).

CONCLUSION

This study shows the multimodal construction of intertextual voices and their persuasive function in television advertisements. Departing from the assumption that all discourses are intertextual recontextualizations of social practices, filled with external voices from both specific discourses and discursive

conventions, we identified character voice and discursive voice in advertising discourse. We also demonstrated that the choice of the types of character and social practice is closely related to the product being promoted and found that intertexual voices contribute to the current discourse through multimodal Engagement strategies. Character voice endorses the advertised product through lexico-grammar, intonation, facial expression, staged narrative, etc. and discursive voice moderately endorses the advertised product through contextualization, but highly through the problem^solution macro-structure and narrative sequence.

The study contributes to the understanding of intertextual voice and engagement in two ways. First, it shows the multimodal construction of character identity and character engagement which extends the current study of voice in language. Second, it proposes methods of explaining the interaction between external discourses and the advertised message, in terms of contextualization and discourse structure.

One point that is brought up but not addressed in this article is the universality and homogeneity/heterogeneity of intertextual voices in advertising discourse. That is, do advertisements about different products/services resort to intertextual voices to different degrees and with different preferences? And what voice or voice configuration is most effective in what types of advertisement? Daunting as it may seem, it is an interesting topic which needs further study.

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NOTES

1. Many authors do not maintain a clear distinction between genre and discourse type. Fairclough (1992) actually suggests that 'discourse type' is a safer choice if 'genre' is controversial. So 'discourse type' in our use is similar to the notion of genre by many authors.
2. The system does not include the 'seller voice' because it is inherent to the genre of advertising and hence is not 'intertextual voice'.
3. There is overlap between the categorization of types of character and types of social practice. This is necessary because the character is an indispensable part of the social practice (as participant).
4. External discourse (type) is used to refer to the representation of social practice other than the direct promotion of the product. Its presence in the advertisement constitutes the 'discursive voice'.

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