

# The Realization of Mood through Tense and Voice in English Public Service Advertising Texts

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**Abstract:** Public service advertisement can indicate the relationship between the advertiser and the audience as well as the interaction and negotiation between them. Based on the systemic functional grammar, this research aims to investigate the interpersonal meaning of mood system through tense and voice. In the realization of mood by tenses and voices in public service advertisement, present tense ranks the highest, followed by past tense and future tense is at the third place. Present tense is usually used in the proposals that are beneficial to the audience. The past tense helps the audience realize the important of public service. The future tense is mostly used to show the value of the audience's activities. In PSA, most of the clauses are written by active voice. Most of subjects of the passive voice clauses are things or events rather human beings.

## 1. Introduction

Advertisements can mainly be classified in to two types: commercial advertisement and non-commercial advertisement. Scholars have analyzed commercial advertisements discourse from different aspects. However, with the rapid growth of economy, some serious social problems, for instance, pollution, AIDS, poverty, drug abuse have great negative influences on the development of the society. Solving these problems is not only the government's responsibility, if the individuals and community groups can take part in this event, these problems would be solved in a better and quicker way. Thus, public service advertisements aim to inform the public of those important social issues and problems, to attract people's attention on these things and stimulate their positive action to take part in the campaign to solve these significant issues. Public service advertisement is the medium between the advertiser and the audience; it can indicate the relationship between the advertiser and the audience as well as the interaction and negotiation between them. Therefore, it is meaningful to do research on how the advertiser builds relationship with the audience and how the advertiser persuades the audience to take positive action through a variety of linguistic strategies.

The American public service advertising originated from the year 1941. In 1942, the War Advertising Council was set up and it became a major instrument of the information policy of the Government. In consideration of the fact that the United States is the pioneer in the development of public service advertising, we choose the English public service advertising text issued by the United States as the target research discourses. Based on the systemic functional grammar, this thesis aims to investigate the interpersonal meaning of mood system in English public service advertising texts. We will do research on how the advertiser builds the relationship with the audience and how the advertiser persuades the audience to take positive actions through the application of tense and voice.

## 2. Literature Review

### 2.1. Studies on Mood System in Various Discourse Types.

Mood system, as one way of expressing interpersonal meaning, is one of the important parts in Halliday's Systemic Functional Grammar (SFG). Halliday (1994)[4]points out that interpersonal function can be realized by lexico-grammatical system and phonological system: mood, modality

and key. Mood system plays an important role in the realization of interpersonal function and many scholars in and out of China do research on it.

Halliday (1985) [3] studies the development of dialogue and the mood system in young children's language. Halliday (1994) and Martin (1992) [8] have described the lexico-grammatical system of mood as three types of interaction. Martin especially studies the significance of mood and modality in a particular discourse.

Palmer (2001) [9] in *Mood and Modality* points out three closely related typological patterns: tense, aspect and modality (TAM). M stands for modality, not mood. Mood is the subsystem of modality. Mood system and modal system constitute modality.

Just as the investigation done by the foreign scholars, many Chinese scholars have also done research on the theory of mood. Li Zhanzi (2002) [7] exploits the realization of interpersonal meaning in academic discourses and autobiographies. Meanwhile, the realization of interpersonal functions of mood is also widely used in the analysis of advertisement discourse in China. Wang Lei, Cai Cuihong (2008) [10] focuses on the interpersonal meanings of mood system in English advertising to demonstrate how interpersonal meanings are realized by the mood system and show the importance of interpersonal meaning in achieving success for advertisements.

Scholars have done a lot of researches on mood system in different discourses, including some advertisements, but rarely for public service advertisements. However, the language study of public service advertisement is popular.

## **2.2. Studies on Public Service Advertisement Texts.**

Public service advertisement is the advertisement that aims at serving for the public interest rather than personal profit. The purpose of public service advertising is releasing government policies, promoting desirable lifestyle and high moral standard and appealing to the public to offer help to victims in disasters.

Up to now, commercial advertising discourse has been extensively explored in and out of China, while comparatively fewer scholars have paid attention to the public service advertising texts. Moreover, researches on public service advertising texts in China are mainly from the perspectives of sociology and aesthetics. Few studies have focused on the interaction and negotiation between the advertiser and the audience.

Therefore, there is the space for us to do some detailed investigation on tense and voice of mood system in the realization of interpersonal meaning in English public service advertising texts. Thus, the present research attempts to explore the interpersonal meaning of public service advertising texts and hopefully it may enrich studies on this particular area. While, before we carry out this analysis, it is necessary to introduce the theoretical framework of this study. In what follows, theoretical framework of the present research is surveyed.

## **3. Theoretical Framework: The Realization of Mood by Tense and Voice**

We use language to exchange meanings, to express our ideas, and influence others' attitude, behavior, to establish and maintain relationship with them. This function of language is called the interpersonal function. In Hallidian systemic functional grammar, tense and voice can also be used to realize the interpersonal function of language. And this is one part of the mood system. In other words, the realization of mood can be done through tense and voice. However, up to now, very few scholars have done research on the interpersonal meaning of tense and voice.

### **3.1. Tenses in English.**

In English, there are three basic tenses: present, past, and future. Each has a perfect form, indicating completed action; each has a progressive form, indicating ongoing action; and each has a perfect progressive form, indicating ongoing action that will be completed at some definite time. The following table 1 is the illustration of these tenses.

Table 1 Tenses in English

	Simple Forms	Progressive Forms	Perfect Forms	Perfect Progressive Forms
Present	Make/s	Am/is/are making	Have/ has made	Have/has been making
Past	Made	Was/were making	Had made	Had been making
Future	Will/shall make	Will be making	Will have made	Will have been making

Simple Present tense expresses an unchanging, repeated, or reoccurring action or situation that exists only now. It can also represent a widespread truth.

Table 2 Simple Present tense

Example	Meaning
The rivers are long and wide.	Unchanging action
Every year, the government repairs the main streets.	Recurring action
The sun rises from the east.	Widespread truth

Simple Past tense expresses an action or situation that was started and finished in the past. Most past tense verbs end in -ed. The irregular verbs have special past tense forms, which must be memorized.

Table 3 Simple Past tense

Example	Form
He worked in a shoe factory five years ago.	Regular-ed past
Jane made a delicious birthday cake for her mom yesterday.	Irregular form

Simple Future Tense expresses an action or situation that will occur in the future. This tense is formed by using will/shall with the simple form of the verb. E.g., “The student will finish her thesis in April.” The future tense can also be expressed by using am, is, or are with going to. E.g., “The newly-married couple are going to have their honey in Hawaii.” We can also use the present tense form with an adverb or adverbial phrase to show future time. “We will not go fishing if it rains tomorrow.” (Tomorrow is a future time adverb.)

Present progressive tense describes an ongoing action that is happening at the same time the statement is written. This tense is formed by using am/is/are with the verb form ending in -ing. E.g., “The mother is cleaning the new house.” Past progressive tense describes a past action, which was happening when another action occurred. This tense is formed by using was/were with the verb form ending in -ing. E.g., “Sam was playing basketball with his friends when it began to rain heavily yesterday afternoon.” Future progressive tense describes an ongoing or continuous action that will take place in the future. This tense is formed by using will be or shall be with the verb form ending in -ing. E.g., “John will be preparing for the final exam next week.”

Present perfect tense describes an action that happened at an indefinite time in the past or that began in the past and continues in the present. This tense is formed by using has/have with the past participle of the verb. Most past participles end in -ed. Irregular verbs have special past participles that must be memorized.

Table 4 Present perfect tense

Example	Meaning
The researchers have traveled to many cities in China in order to enrich their data collection.	At an indefinite time
Women have voted in presidential elections since 1921.	Continues in the present

Past perfect tense describes an action that took place in the past before another past action. This tense is formed by using had with the past participle of the verb. E.g., “By the time he arrived at the station, the train had already gone.” Future perfect tense describes an action that will occur in the future before some other action. This tense is formed by using will have with the past participle of the verb. E.g., “By the time she arrives at the cinema, the movie will have been on for an hour.”

Present perfect progressive tense describes an action that began in the past, continues in the present, and may continue into the future. This tense is formed by using has/have been and the present participle of the verb (the verb form ending in -ing). E.g., “Old Jack has been collecting stamps since 10 years ago.”

Past perfect progressive tense describes a past, ongoing action that was completed before some other past action. This tense is formed by using had been and the present perfect of the verb (the verb form ending in -ing). E.g., “Before the budget cuts, the students had been participating in many extracurricular activities.” Future perfect progressive tense describes a future, ongoing action that will occur before some specified future time. This tense is formed by using will have been and the present participle of the verb (the verb form ending in -ing). E.g., “By the year 2020, linguists will have been studying and defining the Indo-European language family for more than 200 years.”

In general, the basic tenses in English are present, past, and future. In mood system, that means the present, the past and the future compared to the time the speaker speaks. A proposition has something to do with the environment that is indicated by these tenses. Mood consists of Subject and Finite, and finite element is one of a small number of verbal operators expressing tense and modality. According to Halliday, we can classify the finite elements in simple present and past tenses.

### 3.2. Voice in English.

Sentences can be written or spoken in the active or passive voice. In the active voice, the subject of the sentence acts upon something or someone. In the passive voice, the subject is acted upon. The active voice is the “normal” voice. This is the voice that we use most of the time. You are probably already familiar with the active voice. In the active voice, the object receives the action of the verb: Cats eat fish. The passive voice is less usual. In the passive voice, the subject receives the action of the verb: Fish are eaten by cats. Although the voice in English is very simple, different voices in clause can express the speaker’s diverse opinions and attitudes towards what he or she says. Therefore, voice also plays a certain role in the realization of interpersonal meaning in clause.

## 4. The Realization of Mood through Tense and Voice in PSA

In Halliday’s systemic functional grammar, tense and voice can also be used to realize the interpersonal function of language. Tense and Voice are one of the parts of mood system. However, up to now, there are few researches on the interpersonal meanings of tense and voice in texts. This is the same thing to the public service advertising texts. In the following part, we will try to make an analysis of the interpersonal meaning of tense and voice in public service advertising texts.

### 4.1. The Realization of Mood through Tense in PSA.

The distribution of tense in the public service advertising texts selected in this research is show in the following Table 5:

Table 5 Tenses

Tenses	Simple Forms	Progressive Forms	Perfect Forms	Total
Present	173	2	5	180
Past	65	1	4	70
Future	19	0	0	19

As we can see in Table 5, in public service advertising texts, present tense (180) ranks the highest. The second place is the past tense (70), and the number of future tense (19) is comparatively small. Among all the tenses, simple forms are most frequently used—simple present accounts for 173, which is the highest, and simple past (65) is on the second place, simple future (19) is on the third place. We can also find some perfect forms in the public service advertising texts, including 5 perfect present and 4 perfect past. However, progressive forms are rare in public service advertising texts. There are only 2 present progressive forms in all the texts.

Present tense represents the regular and habitual actions. It indicates continuance, forever and directness. Thus, it can express the reality and eternality of what the advertiser said in the public service advertising text. So it is usually used in the proposals that are beneficial to the audience.

Example (1):

Our national symbol nearly become extinct because of the deadly impacts of DDT

Today, pesticides still kill over 67 million birds in the United States annually.

CONGRESSMAN POMBO'S BILL weakening the Endangered Species Act has passed the House. It creates big loopholes allowing pesticide use regardless of the potentially deadly effect on endangered wildlife.

We are Americans. We protect what's ours.

That's why we passed the Endangered Species Act over 30 years ago.

That's why we need it today.

Senators, stop Congressman Pombo's bill weakening the Endangered Species Act.

Our children and grandchildren deserve better. (NO.7)

This public service advertisement is published by the Defenders of Wildlife to fight against the CONGRESSMAN POMBO'S BILL, which weakens the Endangered Species Act. Among the 13 clauses, 11 of them apply the present tense. The advertiser uses the present tense to describe the present serious problems caused by the CONGRESSMAN POMBO'S BILL. Because of this bill, pesticides kill millions of birds. Because of the bill, pesticides use causes deadly effect on endangered wildlife. The use of present tense makes the audience feel that all these serious things just happen around them and therefore attracts the audience attention. After that, the advertiser also uses present tense to give the audience some proposals to solve the problem. In this way, the audience feels that the problem is serious and the suggestion is beneficial to them. Then the audience would take positive actions to solve this problem.

The past tense is use to describe an action or situation that was started and finished in the past. In public service advertising texts, it is used to describe what did people suffered from the natural disaster and what did these public service agencies do to help them. In this way, people will realize how important public service is and they may take positive actions to join the public service things. See Example 2:

Example (2):

FOR THE NEWMANS, HELL WAS HIGH WATER.

In 2005, Lynn and Rhett Newman braced for the worst as Hurricane Katrina moved toward their Gulf Coast home. But even before Katrina reached land, its storm surge devastated the Newman's entire neighborhood in Pascagoula, Mississippi. Shoulder-deep water left the Newmans, like so many, homeless.

It was the largest disaster recovery effort in the American Red Cross' 125-year history. After the storm, thousands of Red Cross volunteers poured into the region to provide food, shelter, clothing and basic needs for hundreds-of-thousands of Gulf Coast residents. In the words of Lynn Newman, "They came and they helped and they stayed with us."

The Red Cross was there for them. 9 The Red Cross is here for you. (NO.16)

This public service advertisement is published by the American Red Cross to tell the people that no matter what kind of natural disaster comes, the American Red Cross is here for them. In this public service advertisement, the advertiser uses 12 past tense clauses out of the 13 clauses in this text. The advertiser uses the past tense to describe how Hurricane Katrina destroyed Newmans' in 2005. The advertiser uses these words "moved", "reached", "devastated" to describe vividly how strong the hurricane was. Then he also use past tense to describe what was the situation of Newmans—"FOR THE NEWMANS, HELL WAS HIGH WATER", they "braced", and "Shoulder-deep water left the Newmans, like so many, homeless". After reading these, the audience cannot help feeling worried about the Newmans' safety and eager to know what happened next.

Then the advertiser again uses past tense to describe how the American Red Cross saved the Newmans. "Thousands of Red Cross volunteers poured into the region", "They came and they helped and they stayed with us." All these past tense actions show what the American Red Cross

did when disaster happened—”The Red Cross was there for them.” In this way, through the vivid true story, the audience is fully attracted by the story and they clearly know how important the public service agency and activity are. Therefore, in the last sentence, the advertiser tell the audience the real purpose of this advertisement—”The Red Cross is here for you.” This tells the audience to call the Red Cross for help when they are in trouble.

The future tense expresses an action or situation that will occur in the future. In public service advertising texts, the future tense is mostly used to describe what would happen if the audience does the positive action to support the public service affairs. This would clearly show the value of the audience’s activities if they do as what the advertiser says. By knowing this, the audience’ enthusiasm for public service affairs will be greatly aroused. See Example 3:

Example (3):

That means bald eagles, grizzly bears, California condors, and sea otters will be around for future generations to enjoy. (NO.4)

More importantly, these magnificent creatures will be around for our children and grandchildren to enjoy. (NO.8)

Either way, on Friday, April 12, a percentage of your bill will be donated to Mississippi hunger relief organization. (NO.33)

Not only will you be funding yourself, you’ll also be helping to feed others. (NO.33)

That’s because all of the proceeds will be used to help fight hunger. (NO.34)

The sentences from advertisement NO.4 and NO.8 tell the audience the importance of the Endangered Species Act. If people do as the act says, our future generations can still see the wildlife such as bald eagles and sea otters. When considering the better future life of the children, the audience would undoubtedly support this act and take positive actions to carry out this act. In this way, the advertiser’s expectation comes true.

The sentences from advertisement NO.33 and NO.34 are all published with the aim to fight hunger. The two public service advertisements invite the audience to take part in the hunger-fight campaign. The audience only has to eat in a restaurant that is participating in this public service affair. Then as the advertiser describe in the above sentences, “a percentage of your bill will be donated to Mississippi hunger relief organization.” and “all of the proceeds will be used to help fight hunger.” The audience can enjoy the delicious food and at the same time help the hunger people. Both the stomach and the spirit are satisfied. By knowing this, the audience would probably do the positive actions as the advertiser says. These are all due to the wonderful expectations created by the future tense sentences.

#### **4.2. The Realization of Mood through Voices in PSA.**

Sentences can be written or spoken either by active voice or by passive voice. Considering the mind of the audience and the meaning of the passive voice, in public service advertising texts, most of the clauses are written by active voice. Because active voice can make the audience think that they are in active place, and they can do the things on their own initiative rather than passively do the things that they are unwilling to do. Therefore, in the public service advertising texts, most of subjects of the passive voice clauses are not human beings, which may refer to the audience. See Example 4:

Example (4):

Of the more than 1,800 plants and animals protected by the Act, only 9 have been declared extinct. (NO.4)

How about admitting that if the Rockefeller drug laws were applied to Norman Bruce Coleman on Long Island in 1968, or to me, or to our friends, and fellow students, (NO.11)

Pick a place where family members can gather in a disaster and figure out in advance how you’ll get in touch if communication is disrupted. (NO.22)

a percentage of your bill will be donated to Mississippi hunger relief organization. (NO.33)

The event is hosted by over twenty-five of Jackson’s best restaurants, so it’s a great opportunity for you to sample the specialties of the city’s most distinguished chefs. (NO.34)

That's because all of the proceeds will be used to help fight hunger. (NO.34)

As we can see in the above Example 4 all the subjects of these clauses are things or events rather than human beings. Such as “plants and animals”, “drug laws”, “communication”, “bill”, “event”, and “proceeds”. Take the clauses from public service advertising text NO.33 and NO.34 for example; the subjects of the passive voice clauses are the “bill” and “proceeds”. “a percentage of your bill will be donated to Mississippi hunger relief organization.” What will be in the passive place is the audience' bill, but the audience is doing an active action to help the “Mississippi hunger relief organization.” As for the clause of text NO.34, what will be in the passive place is the “proceeds”, similarly, the audience is taking an active action to “help fight hunger”. As we can see in these clauses, although the clauses are written in passive voice, the audience is enjoying the happiness of taking active actions to help the others. That is how the relationship between the advertiser and the audience built through passive voice.

## 5. Summary

In the realization of mood by tenses and voices in public service advertisement, present tense ranks the highest, followed by past tense and future tense is at the third place. Present tense expresses the reality and eternality of what the advertiser says in the public service advertising texts. So it is usually used in the proposals that are beneficial to the audience. The past tense describes what did people suffered from the natural disaster and what did these public service agencies do to help them. Thus, the audience realizes the important of public service. The future tense is mostly used to describe what would happen if the audience does the positive action to support the public service affairs. This would clearly show the value of the audience's activities. In PSA, most of the clauses are written by active voice. Because active voice can make the audience think that they are in active place, and they can do the things on their own initiative rather than passively do the things that they are unwilling to do. Most of subjects of the passive voice clauses are things or events rather human beings.

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