

Gender and Politeness: A Case Study on Advertising Discourse

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Abstract

The wide variety of beauty and body care products available in the market for industrialized societies clearly suggests that materialism and the beauty mystique move the world in which we live. Trying to conform to social rules that govern the various specific communities of practice in which we interact is a social behaviour that is common to all human beings. However, we wonder how those social rules are created, perpetuated and assimilated by society. It is a matter of fact that the world has long been divided by a *gender-line* leaving many times men and women playing in different parts of the same field of social life. Two important fields that have been gender-divided have been those of language and consumerism. Superimposing these two realities (language and consumerism) we come across what we call advertising discourse. My objective in this paper is to analyse different instances of advertising discourse to understand the relationship between language, looking through the lens of politeness theory, and the social dimension of gender. This analysis will show how advertising discourse is produced within a context which is constrained to the particular objective of moving H to buy a particular product. To do so, S must pay attention to both the positive and the negative face of H by means of using positive, negative and off-record politeness strategies. It is precisely in S attention to H's face that gender identities may come into play. This study will show how advertisements adapt to new postmodern views of consumption and try to adapt to postfeminist gender ideas but, at the same time, rely on traditional dualistic gender stereotypes which perpetuate, in a more subtle way, a dichotomous and dangerous vision of the world.

Key Words: Advertising discourse, Gender, Politeness theory

1 Basic notions on advertising discourse and the concept of gender

Del Saz (2000: 17), following Van Dijk (1977: 238), defines advertisement as a non-impositive exhortative macro-speech act in so that such a global speech act is performed by sequences of speech acts that require global planning and interpretation, thus providing it with a multi-layered discursive and social nature. In Hidalgo's (2003) terms, advertising can also be considered as "a genre where the setting up of vivid contexts and discourse situations is often crucial to the achievement of the text producers' goals". In this respect, advertisements try to project situations which invite the addressees to identify themselves with the properties displayed in the advertisement and, in that way, it invites them to buy the product.

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It is precisely this conative or persuasive function what can be considered as the most relevant intrinsic feature of advertisements. Their main purpose is, therefore, that of affecting the addressee, to invite him or her to buy the product being advertised. We can claim that this conative or persuasive function of advertisements, which urges people to buy a product, has an important impact in the use of language and, more precisely, on the use of politeness strategies.

According to Hidalgo (2003), when analysing advertising discourse it is important to take into consideration linguistic phenomena like implied meanings, personal pronouns, deixis, ellipsis, presupposition and frame knowledge which contribute to the creation of the conversational tone needed in order to create a kind of interactive communication to fulfil the persuasive function of advertisements.

This idea of persuasiveness is intrinsically related to that of community of practice (CofP). Eckert and McConnell-Ginet (1992b: 464) define a CofP as an aggregate of people who come together around mutual engagement in an endeavor; as ways of doing things, ways of talking, beliefs, values, power relations - in short, practices - that emerge in the course of this mutual endeavor. As Mullany (2002) puts it, CofP can, therefore, develop out of formal or informal enterprises, their members can be either core or peripheral, their size and quality can also vary, they can either survive changes in membership or they can come out of existence. Relevant to our purpose of analyzing the way in which gender and language interplay in advertising discourse is Eckert and McConnell-Ginet's (1992a: 93) idea that individuals "participate in multiple communities of practice and their individual identity is based on the multiplicity of this participation". This individual identity is, as Mullany (2002) claims, made up of different and interrelated variables such as gender, class, race, age, etc. These variables are produced and reproduced in different forms of membership in CofP and, probably, one of the most relevant ones in our current society is that of advertisements. This is so because advertising discourse can be considered as a field in which, among others, individuals find gender identities produced and reproduced. In that sense, advertisements can thus be considered as a common ground, as a practice that helps create, maintain and perpetuate certain identities which are relevant for specific CofP.

The gender variable, that is, the inequality and differentiation between men and women, is the subject of gender studies. Traditionally, it was considered that those two polar identities were the result of biological differences. Nowadays, however, as Kacen (2000: 346) puts it,

gender identity is determined by a society's distinct sense of what is "essential" to, and characteristic of, one or the other sex class. Although distinct from "sex", a biological construct, gender is often confounded with - and viewed as inseparable from- being male or female.

Since the appearance of the constructionist approach, which no longer considers gender as a dualistic category, gender identities are considered the result of psychological and social constructs that reflects the cultural context in which we live. In Butler's (1999: 179) terms, we perform gender depending on the context of the communicative situation, we express gender through the appropriation and modification of established gender roles and stereotypes which are relevant to the CofP in which we interact at a particular time. In our society, these models or stereotypes can be found at different levels such as family environments, the language we use, educational systems and, of course, the media.

As Kacen (2000: 345) indicates: “marketing has always been about consumption; gender has always been about differences”. However, as Kacen (2000: 348) also claims, this traditional consumption ethic in which men produced and women consumed has already been broken. The postmodern era has destroyed the masculine-feminine differences by making everyone a consumer but, as stereotypical gender ideologies are so deeply ingrained in our society, I believe that a discursive analysis of advertisements will reveal that some gender differences in relation to linguistic strategies can still be found which directly correlate to the CofP to which they are addressed.

Advertisements are developed within a culture which, in some ways, still differentiates between men and women, masculine and feminine. Advertisements are part of a discourse which tries to persuade the addressee to buy a product and, because of that reason and, as I will demonstrate, the advertising industry, although trying to conform to new postmodern views, still produces, although in a more subtle way, different kinds of advertisement depending on the conceptual image of their addressee. Consequently, it is expected that advertisements directed to men and women possibly differ in their structure, context, setting, and in the language used in them. In agreement with this idea, I believe that politeness strategies used in each of them will also be different.

1.1 Review of literature on politeness

It was between the 40’s and the 70’s when important philosophers of the language started to prepare the field for the forthcoming new pragmatic perspective: the study of language in use.

It is common knowledge that successful communication takes place when interlocutors share knowledge, beliefs, experiences, ideas and assumptions and when they observe similar rules of cooperative interaction.

This implies that language is not only a vehicle to exchange thoughts and ideas; we often use utterances in order to perform social actions. That means that, when people express themselves, they do not only produce utterances containing grammatical structures and words, they also perform actions via those utterances. Within pragmatics, these social actions performed via utterance are called *speech acts*.

Dealing with speech acts, Austin’s work *How to Do Things with Words* (1962) is crucial. There he makes an important distinction between sentence and utterance, that is, words within or out of context. In his words, context is defined as the particular circumstances in which an utterance is uttered. In Leech’s (1983: 13) words, context is “any background assumed to be shared by the speaker and the hearer and which contributes to the hearer’s interpretation of what the speaker means by a given utterance”.

Austin (1962) also differentiates between Locutionary acts (the act of speaking represented by sounds, that is, the act of saying something); Illocutionary acts (the act you carry out while speaking, that is, the speaker’s intention) and Perlocutionary acts (the result or consequence of speaking, that is, the hearer’s interpretation).

On the other hand, Searle, following Austin, also develops his theory on speech acts in works like *Speech Acts* (1969) and *Indirect Speech Acts* (1975). There he presents the idea that the speech act is the basic unit in linguistic communication. It was said above that speech acts

are social actions performed via utterances. Searle (1975: 60) then, describes indirect speech acts as “cases in which one illocutionary act is performed indirectly by ways of performing another”, which means that the form and the function of a given utterance do not need to have a direct relationship.

Another important author within the pragmatic theory is H.P. Grice, who explains the relation between what is said (propositional content) and what is meant (illocutive force). In Grice’s (1975) terms, human communication is based on the fact that, as a rule, human beings want to communicate with one another successfully and want to maintain social harmony. On this premise, Grice develops *The Cooperative Principle*, which states that everyone has to make his or her conversational contribution such as it is required at a stage at which it occurs. In such a context, the study of the social aspect of communication was necessary, therefore, politeness theory appeared.

Following Del Saz’s (2000: 10-11) ideas, the most influential, although criticized, model was that developed by Brown and Levinson ([1978] 1987). As Mullany explains, they based their theory on Goffman’s (1967) concept of *face* (the public self image that all rational adult members of society possess). Face consists of positive face, the desire to be approved of and admired, and negative face, the desire not to be imposed by others. When we communicate in spoken interaction we emotionally invest face and, that is why, it must be constantly considered.

Thus, politeness can be considered as an action to counteract the potentially disruptive effect of *Face Threatening Acts* (FTAs) which are defined as “illocutionary acts liable to damage or threaten another person’s face” (Thomas 1995: 169).

As Mullany (2002) recapitulates, on Brown and Levinson’s ([1978] 1987) account, human politeness can be summed up in four main strategies “designed to avoid conversational breakdowns”, i.e. FTAs.:

- a. Bald on-record strategy: It does nothing to minimize threats to the hearer's face. For example: “Come in”, “Pass me the bucket”.
- b. Positive politeness strategy: It shows that the speaker recognizes that the hearer has a desire to be respected, that is, his / her positive face. It also confirms that the relationship is friendly and expresses group reciprocity. For example: “You must be hungry after such a long journey, would you like something to eat?”
- c. Negative politeness strategy: It recognizes the hearer's face but also that the speaker is in some way imposing on them. For example: “You must forgive me, but I forgot to bring your laptop”
- d. Off-record indirect strategy: It takes some of the pressure off of the speaker because he / she tries to avoid the direct FTA by either inviting conversational implicatures or by being deliberately ambiguous or vague. For example: “Perhaps someone should have call you first” “Wow, it’s getting cold in here”

In their work, Brown and Levinson ([1978] 1987) also claim that it is the speaker who decides the strategy to be used when performing a FTA taking into account the potential risk for the hearer’s image –what makes this theory compatible with the CofP framework. In this

sense, these authors claim that the variables that have to be taken into account when considering the potential risk of FTA are:

- a. The social distance (D) between the hearer and the speaker.
- b. The speaker's power (P) over the hearer or vice versa.
- c. The degree of absolute imposition (I), the ranking of imposition.

Bearing all these ideas in mind, Del Saz's (2000) conceptualizes politeness as a regulation principle, as the social adequacy to a given context taking into consideration the relationships established among interlocutors. Del Saz's (2000) notion of politeness is relevant to our purpose of analyzing the subtle relationships between gender and language in advertising discourse because it is directly connected to the abovementioned CofP theory. As it was said, CofP are regulated by the intrinsic unstated rules of behavior, values and beliefs of what is appropriate or not in a given communicative situation, therefore, Del Saz's description of politeness as a regulation social principle based on the interlocutor's face is crucial to our objective.

On the other hand, the topic of politeness within gender and language studies seems to be a popular one. This field of study emerged with Lakoff's (1975) assertions that women are more linguistically polite than their male counterparts. Following Mullany (2002), early studies on language, gender and politeness can be criticized for over-generalizing the relationships between language and gender by simply cataloguing differences in male or female speech patterns. Some works in this line are those by Zimmerman and West (1975), Fishman (1978, 1980), Tannen (1991) or Holmes (1995) which, despite the fact that they brought up an intense and enriching sociolinguistic debate, are, in the end, as Lorenzo-Nus and Bou (2003) claim, essentialist and based on traditional and stereotyped conceptions of women and men's speech styles.

Consequently, the introduction of the CofP framework can be seen as an alternative approach to language and gender studies. In this line, as Mullany (2002) puts it, Mills (2003) argues that by adopting the CofP approach to studies of gender and politeness then individual linguistic acts between individual speakers must be replaced by a community-based perspective on gender and politeness, which must therefore involve a sense of politeness having different functions for different people.

Without a doubt, this new perspective on the study of gender and politeness is also of paramount importance to achieving the goals of advertising discourse. This is so because, by means of getting to know what is appropriate or expected in a given CofP, the advertising industry will be able to participate actively and fruitfully in a specific CofP thus achieving its goal of inviting the interlocutors, in a non-impositive way, to buy the products being advertised. In this new scenario, as Mills (2000) claims,

politeness should be seen as a set of strategies or verbal habits which someone sets as a norm for themselves or which others judge as the norm for them, as well as being a socially constructed norm within particular communities of practice.

However, as Bayles (2009) claims, whilst Mills's (2003) new model of politeness and her emphasis on CofP is of invaluable consideration, it is also virtually impossible to judge politeness as an outsider within this framework. For this reason, and for the purpose of this

paper, I will complement the essence of Mills's model with Brown and Levinson's ideas and Del Saz's conception of politeness.

Analyzing advertising discourse in this light will allow us to decipher the complex ways in which the gender variable interplays with language use and politeness because, as Hidalgo (2003) claims

an analysis of advertising discourse can thus reveal significant details about the way given situations or realities are seen and (re)-constructed by senders and target addressees, and about the individual and more general cultural features which form part of given communities and social groups.

In this way, we will be able to see how advertisements adapt to new postmodern views of consumption and try to adapt to postfeminist gender ideas but, at the same time, rely on traditional dualistic gender stereotypes which perpetuate, in a more subtle way, a dichotomous and dangerous vision of the world.

2 Materials Used

My main concern here is to analyse different instances of advertising discourse to understand some aspects of the relationship between language and the social dimension of gender. More specifically, I will look at the politeness strategies used in different advertisements and their relation to the gender identities represented in them in order to understand what are the rules and expectations of a given CofP in relation to gender identities. Obviously, within this CofP framework, this will provide an idea of the addresser's (in this case a cosmetic brand) cognitive interpretation of the addressee's (the audience) expected and accepted gender identities.

For the purpose of this paper, I have decided to focus on advertisements that clearly show the relationship between politeness and gender in order to get more readable results. It seems clear to me that beauty products fulfil the characteristics necessary for us to develop such an analysis. This is so because beauty products represent a field which, traditionally, has been related to women but, after the break up in the consumption ethic, as it was mentioned before, it is equally applicable to men. Nevertheless, despite the fact that this break up of the consumption ethic implies a postmodern and postfeminist view of cosmetic products as non-gendered, I believe that the field of cosmetic products and advertisement still plays such an important role in the transmission and perpetuation of stereotypes that I find it really important to analyse the way in which this is done in particular CofP. Particularly, I circumscribe a well-known brand of beauty products: *L'Oreal* in order to proceed to the analysis. I have chosen two advertisements, one performed by a woman and another performed by a man, both well-known actors from the USA. In this way, comparing both advertisements from the same brand and performed by two different gender persons and addressed to two different CofP I could analyse, from a more neutral perspective, the relationship between gender and politeness strategies, as well as their influence in the construction of the advertising discourse.

3 Methodology

Throughout this paper, I will follow Del Saz's (2000) methodology on the description of politeness in advertising discourse. Advertising discourse will be considered as a fictional dialogue between speaker (S) and hearer (H) in order to establish a link between them but also to move H to buy a particular product. In order to study how linguistic politeness regulates social relations between S and H in advertising discourse I will focus on:

- a. The fact that advertising discourse uses politeness strategies to establish a fictional dialogue between S and H to promote the social relation between them and to move H to buy the product.
- b. The fact that S will mainly use positive politeness strategies to emphasize social relations in order to move H to buy the product.
- c. The fact that the advertising discourse is a speech act against H in the sense that it is an exhortative illocutive act that tries to move H towards a particular end: to buy the product.
- d. We will also be able to find off-record strategies that will try to balance the instability between positive and negative politeness strategies.

4 Analysis

Throughout this section, I will analyse two advertisements of a well-known commercial brand, *L'Oreal*, in order to discover the politeness strategies used and their relation with the transference or construction of gender identities.

This will be, as Mills (2000) states, "a discourse analysis of politeness, rather than a linguistic analysis of politeness" because I will very much take into account the context of the interaction. Here, as Cook (1992) claims, aspects such as the physical material of the advertisement, music, pictures, paralanguage, situation, co-text, intertext, participants and function are essential to decipher the assumed expectations of the CoFP (S and H) involved in the message. In this sense, as it was mentioned before, it needs to be stressed that "this notion of a community of practice is particularly important for thinking about the way that individuals develop a sense of their own gendered identity" (Mills 2000) and advertisements are a perfect scenario for the construction of gender identities.

4.1 Analysis of the advertisement for *Age re-perfect pro calcium* from *L'Oreal*¹

As it was explained before, the multimodal description of the context will help us to decipher the relation established between S and H.

¹ See appendix.

L'Oreal products are well-established within the international market and it is a prestigious brand among young and adults. In this case, the advertisement is directed to adult women who will identify themselves with the protagonist, Jane Fonda, a famous American actress. Therefore, the target audience assumed for this publicity is female.

The macro-speech act of advertising discourse is mainly formed by a series of assertive speech acts whose illocution, i.e. intention, is to move H to buy a product. In this sense, we can be in front of an indirect speech act, as Searle (1975: 59-60) puts it, because the assertive form of the utterances does not need to correspond to their persuasive function. In this case, this macro-speech act is an advice and, therefore, it attempts against the negative face of H (her desire not be imposed). In this case, it is the protagonist who explains the advantages of the product in a kind of narrative story.

She describes the feelings she is experimenting now at the age of 69, claiming that she had never felt better before. In this sense, she is exalting the qualities of the product and the benefits that H will get from it. It is an act of imposing on H because S is stating her belief that H should obtain some benefits from the product.

The scenario is quite relaxing and takes into consideration the average age of H. A big and comfortable house, the beach, a bunch of flowers, golden colours, white medium size letters on screen, etc. This context invites H, who identifies with this atmosphere, to establish a fictional dialogue with a supposed member of her CofP.

In relation to the variables of politeness, we can say that the power variable (P) is negative because there is no power exercised by S over H; in this case S is someone who has already tried the product and has some knowledge or expertise, which the other person, H, needs. In relation to the social distance (D), H very likely knows who Jane Fonda is and this situation places S at a very high place. What is more, the advertisement is creating an imaginary situation where S and H could be friends having a conversation where the one who has already experienced the benefits of the product (a famous actress and physical fitness promoter during the early 80's) is telling her friend (a members of this specific CofP) to use it. Finally, in relation to imposition (I) we are dealing with a double problem: we could think that imposition is trivial if we consider that S is imposing on the benefits of the product for H; on the other hand, if we consider that S is just thinking about her economic benefits, it would be a strong act of imposition on H. For this analysis, I will take into account the first consideration –the imposition is trivial.

In considering politeness strategies, it is important to remember that the macro-speech act of advertising discourse uses politeness strategies to establish a fictional dialogue between S and H to promote the social relation between them and to move H to buy a product. For this reason, S will mainly use positive politeness strategies to emphasize social relations, in order to move H to buy the product.

Regarding positive politeness strategies, we can notice that this advertisement makes use of several strategies to emphasize the closeness between S and H and to mitigate or attenuate the illocutive force (intention of selling a product) in order to pay attention to the negative face of H.

In the first place, the protagonist of the advertisement narrates a kind of story that tries to establish a fictional dialogue with H. In utterances like “I’ve never felt this good / Without a doubt, confidence grows with age” the protagonist, whose appearance establishes a link with

adult women who may identify themselves as members of her CofP, uses some substrategies of positive politeness. She presupposes something in common with the audience. Age and the feelings about aesthetics at an adult age are the links the protagonist and the audience possibly have in common. The protagonist states her interest for the feelings of her companions and pays attention to their necessities.

Also in utterances like “But after 60, no matter what, your skin can let you down / It becomes more fragile” the protagonist is making use of positive politeness strategies to make H feel in a dialogue with S, making them identify with her problem and preparing the ground for her piece of advice. In this sense, the use of positive politeness strategies is emphasizing the positive face of H but also mitigating the potential threat to the negative face of H. Here, we can also appreciate how the protagonist is trying to establish the common ground between her and H, to set out the CofP to which they belong in order to emphasize her concern with H and to give sense to the fictional relation. The protagonist is including H in her CofP but also stating the understanding of H’s feelings and desires, something that, as we will see later, is crucial in the subtle construction of gender identities.

Another substrategy of positive politeness can be seen in the previous utterance “But after 60, no matter what, your skin can let you down” where we can also observe sympathy and comprehension, another substrategy of positive politeness that pays attention to the positive face of H.

In the utterance “My skin feels toned” the protagonist is offering some benefits to H, paying attention to her needs. The protagonist is also giving reasons to buy the product, in this respect, she is giving advice to H with the presupposition that she cares about the necessities of the audience.

The utterance “I’m 69 and *Age Re-Perfect Pro Calcium* is the future of my skin” is giving reasons to H to buy the product. Here we can clearly appreciate the persuasive function of language because S is openly stating that by buying the product H will secure a future for her skin. At the same time, in this utterance, we can also find another substrategy of positive politeness. Imperatives will be a clear threat to the negative face of H in the sense that S will be imposing on her to buy the product, therefore, S gives reasons to avoid using imperatives.

It is also important to emphasize and exaggerate the qualities of the product “is the future of my skin / and yours” in order to accentuate the benefit of the product and mitigate the imposition on H. Mitigation works in this sense because, as members of a given CofP, when we hear another member extolling or praising the benefits of using something, we are being gently encouraged to participate from that benefits and, therefore, we are subtly being induced to acquire something that, probably, we do not need but we feel the necessity to in order to have the same experiences as other members of our CofP. In this utterance, we can also observe the use of personal pronouns that make S and H closer.

This, the use of personal pronouns, is another important substrategy of positive politeness. Here, the protagonist states a very famous slogan of this brand “We’re worth it”. With this slogan, the protagonist is also including H in the statement, she is emphasizing the needs of H, her positive face, the need to be accepted and liked by others. With this, she is also creating the idea of community and commonness, the basis for the CofP and the creation and transmission of gender identities.

Apart from positive politeness strategies, it is important to remember that advertising discourse is also a speech act against H in the sense that it is an exhortative illocutive act that tries to move H towards a particular end: to buy the product. In this sense, some negative politeness strategies are also needed.

In relation to negative politeness, that is paying attention to the needs of H not to be imposed by others, it is important to analyse the use of verbal tenses different from the present for the analysis of context and the relation between S and H. In the example “I found *Age Re-Perfect Pro Calcium*”, the use of the simple past is a temporal deictic detachment that tries to mitigate the effect of the FTA creating a temporal space between S and H.

Another substrategy in order to mitigate the FTA is the personalization of the name of the brand. By means of utterances like “*Age Re-Perfect Pro Calcium* is the future of my skin / and yours”, the brand becomes the active agent of the actions described in the advertisement. It will be the brand the one that will give future to your skin. This strategy creates a feeling of detachment but also mitigates the imposition on H.

The use of what is called *hedged performatives* like “Without a doubt” or “no matter what” although recognizes S’s imposing on H, also tries to recognize H’s face. In this sense, it is a negative politeness substrategy because it tries to protect H’s negative face but also presents S as a rational being, preoccupied for H’s needs.

We can also find off-record strategies that try to balance the instability between positive politeness and negative politeness strategies. This is why S uses mechanisms of emphasis and mitigation (as in “I’ve never felt *this* good”, “But after 60, *no matter what*, your skin can let you down” “My skin feels toned, *more* resilient”, “is *the future* of my skin / and yours”) to safeguard and emphasize its own image in the communicative act. In the analysis of linguistic politeness, as we stated before, S uses off-record strategies in order to regulate the interaction, establish and maintain the social relations (Del Saz 2000). In this sense, this advertisement makes use of short pauses for H to infer and accept that the skin cream being sold is adequate for her. After the good reasons given to H and the context (which helps to identify herself with that CofP), H is given a pause after the voice over to think about the benefits that this product will do on her. This mitigates the imposition on H but also neglects any responsibility on the part of S.

All in all, it is important to mention that, through the use of positive politeness, negative politeness and off-record strategies, as Del Saz (2000) claimed, advertising discourse creates a fictional dialogue between H and S where the objective of the advertiser –to move H to buy a product– is achieved by taking into consideration both the negative and positive face of both S and H.

On the other hand, thanks to these particular linguistic mechanisms and the context, the idea of CofP is created for H to identify herself with the protagonist and, therefore, be moved to buy the product. It is important to mention here that, the use of positive politeness strategies makes it more plausible for H to feel part of the CofP, to identify with the gender identity being promoted by the advertisement, the situations and feelings described, the context and the atmosphere. Everything creates a friendly environment that moves H to buy the product in order to feel as one of the members of such community.

On the other hand, the use of the pronoun “we” promotes the idea that both S and H belong to the same group and, the preoccupations of the protagonist must be the

preoccupations of H. In this sense, the advertisement is promoting a gender identity that is prototypical of adult women in western society. Following Friedan's (1963) ideas on the concept of the beauty mystique, we can say that it is still alive in the 21st century. Women must take care of their appearances and, even when they are adult, they cannot forget about physical appearances and beauty.

Apart from that, it is important to mention that the voice over in this advertisement only appears when the name of the brand is stated. In this respect, it is the protagonist, a woman, one of themselves, the one who explains how she feels and the benefits of the product establishing a closer fictional relationship between S and H.

4.2 Analysis of the advertisement for *L'Oréal men expert*²

This advertisement also belongs to the same cosmetic brand. In this case, it is a young man, the actor Matthew Fox, who tries to sell the product to the members of his CofP. In this case, H, the addressee, is supposed to be a middle-aged man.

In contrast to what we could see in the previous advertisement, here the advertisement is full of visual action. Due to the fact that he is a young man, the activity is higher. He is also a famous American actor and, therefore, the audience to which this advertisement is directed has to identify themselves with his lifestyle.

As we saw before, the context is important to create the idea of CofP and to establish, create and maintain gender identities. In this case, a young man describes his hard but gratifying lifestyle fulfilling his stereotypical male image. Several images illustrate the words of the protagonist, a big and expensive car, the recording of a movie on a boxing ring, a reunion with some friends. This is supposed to be describing the lifestyle of every middle-aged man (in the same way as the previous advertisement and its context tried to describe the lifestyle of adult women).

The macro-speech act is also an advice and, therefore, it goes against the negative face of H (his desire not be imposed). In this case, the protagonist also explains the advantages of the product but, in contrast with the previous one, it is not a placid and relaxing narrative. The visual images and background noise are quite different from the previous one and try to reflect the protagonist's lifestyle. Apart from that, it is not only him who recalls the benefits of the product, but the voice over also supports the statements of the protagonist. In this sense, we could say that the relationship established between S and H is more formal. In this case, the scientific voice is supporting the man's statements and ideas about the product, while in the previous advertisement it was a fictional personal conversation between S and H, with no intervention of the voice over except in the naming of the brand.

This fact helps us to decipher some of the basic ideas on the more subtle construction and indirect maintenance of gender stereotypes in advertisements in this postmodern era. In a more subtle way, we can still evidence how while men have the support of science and have control over public domains, women are left in the personal sphere. This dualistic and opposing placement of gender identities in different social domains in these two particular

² See appendix.

advertisements can lead us to think that the role of both men and women are still expected to be different in these two particular CofP. Consequently, although not in complete agreement with Holmes's (1995) idea that women are more polite than men –as Lorenzo-Nus and Bou (2003) recapitulate, Holmes (1995) implies that women's higher use of politeness strategies is derived from their more frequent social and personal interactions and this can be found, for example, in their tendency to interrupt less in conversation, "to be more attentive listeners, concerned to ensure others get a chance to contribute" than men (Holmes 1995: 67) or from their more frequent use of apologies– we could predict that, derived from the placement of men and women in different social domains in these two particular CofP, their expected language use, and therefore, use of politeness strategies, will also be different.

In this example, the variables of politeness, that is, power (P), distance (D) and imposition (I), are identical as the circumstances are the same as the ones described in the previous example.

Taking into consideration politeness strategies used in this advertisement, it is important to remember that the macro-speech act of advertising discourse uses politeness strategies to establish a fictional dialogue between S and H to promote the social relation between them and to move H to buy the product. Because of this, S will mainly use positive politeness strategies to emphasize social relations, in order to move H to buy the product. For example, when the protagonist claims that he likes his lifestyle "I live life to the full /I love action / In life / On the job" the protagonist is trying to create a bond between S and H. Here he is making use of some substrategies of positive politeness like presupposing something in common, the same hobbies and likes. "I never like myself to look tired, so I care for myself", here the protagonist goes on trying to establish the common ground between him and H. He tries to establish the rules of their CofP. He is also giving reasons for the use of the product implying something like: *if you are like me, if you enjoy life but want to look wonderful, then, buy this product.*

Here, in contrast to the previous advertisement, it is the voice over the one who relates the benefits of the product "fights the signs of fatigue for a lasting healthy look" but still taking into consideration the positive face of H, that is, paying attention to his needs and desires.

We can also find the use of personal pronouns as in "the future of your skin is in your hands. You're worth it". In this way, the protagonist is establishing a link between him and H because "you" can be considered as being used in an inclusive way. This is so because, taking into consideration the fact that advertisements have mainly a persuasive function, S must be very careful in including H in every instance of language he uses in order to make him part of his CofP and not to sound imposing on H.

But, as we saw, advertising discourse is also a speech act against H in the sense that it is an exhortative illocutive act that tries to move H towards buying a product and, in this sense, attention to the negative face of H must be paid. One negative politeness substrategy used in this advertisement is the naming of the brand by the voice over in order to create detachment between S and H and mitigate the imposition on H. The fact that it is the voice over and not S the one who tells H what to buy, allows S to transmit to H his consideration of his negative face (S is not directly imposing on H) but also emphasizes the positive image of S being shown as sensitive in front of the necessities of H.

In this second example, we can also find off-record strategies that will try to balance the instability between positive politeness and negative politeness strategies. This is why S uses mechanisms of emphasis and mitigation to safeguard and emphasize his own image in the communicative act. As in the previous advertisement, we can find pauses for H to infer and accept that the skin cream being sold is adequate for him. After all the good reasons given to H and the context, which helps the audience to identify themselves with that CofP, H is giving a pause to think about the benefits that this product will do on him “I live life to the full / I love action / In life / On the job / So I take care for myself.” This mitigates the imposition on H but also neglects the responsibility of S.

In this second advertisement we can see that the use of personal pronouns and some substrategies of politeness differ from the previous one. In this case, the personal pronoun “you” is used along the advertisement instead of the pronoun “we” used in the previous one. The fact that we can find this difference in the use of pronouns in the slogan of the brand can lead us to think that the conception of CofP by these particular men and women may also be different. In my opinion, the fact that the woman in the first advertisement uses the word “we” emphasizes, in a more powerful way, the idea of community, of common interests, ideas and ways of life. On the other hand, the use of the second person singular “you” by the man, although it is intended to be inclusive, can make the viewer feel as more alien to the situation being described in the advertisement. As I claimed, in these examples, this could be linked to Holmes’ (1995) idea that women are expected to be more polite than men in the sense that they take more into consideration the positive face of H in trying to make him or her feel part of the CofP. The fact that the brand has a slogan is important for commercial interests, however, I find it particularly interesting that the pronoun usage is different when S and their expected H in each CofP are either female or male. From my experience, this could be linked to specific gender identity features expected in each CofP. As it was mentioned before, traditionally, and as some studies state, women are expected to be more polite, cooperative and considerate than men and, from my point of view, the different usage of personal pronouns in the slogan of this brand in these two advertisements, in a way, confirms these different gendered expectations in these two particular CofP.

On the other hand, the utterance “*Age Re-Perfect Pro Calcium* is the future of my skin / and yours” (advertising 1) and “the future of your skin is in your hands” (advertising 2) are also an example of positive politeness substrategies that try to establish bounds between S and H but it also shows the differences in gender stereotypes. First, in the first utterance, we can see that women are not responsible of the action. It is the skin cream, the brand, the one that will provide the benefits for them. In the next example, however, it is men who are responsible of their skin “the future of your skin is in your hands”. Here we can appreciate the traditional stereotypical distinction between men as exerting control (related to the notion of agency) and women as lacking control of an action (related to the notion of passivity).

5 Conclusion

Throughout this paper I have briefly presented and analysed some main ideas and concepts coming from pragmatics and politeness theory. I have also studied the way in which the CofP

and the language used in them play a crucial role in the development and construction of identities. This is a theory that goes hand in hand with the notions developed within Gender Studies in relation to the creation, re-creation and maintenance of gender identities.

I have also analysed how advertising discourse is produced within a context which is constrained to the particular objective of moving H to buy a particular product. To do so, S must pay attention to both the positive and the negative face of H, that is, his or her desire to be liked and not to be imposed by others. Because of this paradoxical situation, S must use several positive, negative and off-record politeness strategies in order to recognize H's negative and positive face. By doing so, S is also taking into consideration his or her own image in the communicative situation.

This is also the reason why no bald on-record strategies are used. Bald on-record strategies do nothing to minimize threats to H's face and, because of the objectives of advertisements, that is, to sell a product, they cannot avoid the use of politeness strategies that show S's concern for H and S's own positive image in front of H. For this reason, I have claimed, following Del Saz's (2000) ideas, that politeness strategies in advertising discourse have the function of emphasizing and mitigating both the positive and negative face of H and S.

It is in S attention to both the positive and the negative face of H that gender identities may come into play. As I mentioned at the beginning of this article, although we have been witnesses of some great changes and advances in the destruction of gender differences, there still exist some barriers and distinctions between men and women at different social levels. This is particularly appreciable in specific discourses, as it is the case of the advertising discourse dealt with in this article, where different communicative, social and ideological interests may come into play

Language, along with the idea of consumerism, is the basis of this advertising discourse but, at the same time, it is one of the pillars on which the creation, establishment, maintenance and transmission of gender identities is based.

Finally, I want to add that, taking into account the ideas coming from the so-called Third Wave Feminism (Mills 2008), the concept of gender should be understood as a multifaceted concept that needs to be studied within a pragmatic and discursive framework. In this sense, the linguistic connection between gender identities and politeness has been largely analysed by researches but, I believe, more studies are needed which take into account the discursive aspect of languages and the construction of identities. I think that, my paper has contributed in a small way to this perspective by providing an example of the connection and the importance of this discursive link between language (and more specifically politeness theory) with gender studies, something that may lead us to better analyse the relation between language, society and the workings of the human mind.

Appendix

Age re-perfect pro calcium from L'Oreal (Jane Fonda).

Video Link: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QWut2Tv4HB8&feature=related>

I've never felt this good / Without a doubt, confidence grows with age / But after 60, no matter what, your skin can let you down / It becomes more fragile / I found Age Re-Perfect Pro Calcium from L'Oreal / My skin feels toned, more resilient / I'm 69 and Age Re-Perfect Pro Calcium is the future of my skin / and yours / [Age Re-Perfect Pro Calcium from L'Oreal Paris / And now discover new Age Re-Perfect Pro Calcium night] We're worth it.

L'Oreal men expert (Matthew Fox).

Video Link: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nu54hrYmmL4>

I live life to the full / I love action / In life / On the job / I never like myself to look tired, so I take care for myself, and of my skin / [Hydra energetic from L'Oreal Men Expert / It fights the signs of fatigue for a lasting healthy look / L'Oreal Men Expert] / The future of your skin is in your hands / You're worth it.

Symbols

/ Pause between utterances

[] Voice over

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