

An Analysis of Person Deixis in E-commerce Live-streaming Advertising

Hongya Fan, Haoyang Li

School of Foreign Languages, Shanxi University, Taiyuan, China

Email address:

hyfan@sxu.edu.cn (Hongya Fan)

To cite this article:

Hongya Fan, Haoyang Li. An Analysis of Person Deixis in E-commerce Live-streaming Advertising. *International Journal of Language and Linguistics*. Vol. 10, No. 1, 2022, pp. 1-4. doi: 10.11648/j.ijll.20221001.11

Received: November 11, 2021; **Accepted:** November 27, 2021; **Published:** January 12, 2022

Abstract: Deixis is a significant component of pragmatic study and one of its types is person deixis which plays a crucial role in people's communication. Person deixis is the reference of a person. Flexible use of person deixis can facilitate interpersonal relationships so as to achieve the goal of communication. Live-streaming advertisers' discursive practices are investigated from the perspective of person deixis in this paper to examine how the anchor uses the various discourse practices to attract consumers and motivate the purchase desire to buy with the way of qualitative analysis. Findings indicate that the discursive practices of first person deixis help construct the unique characteristics of live-streaming anchors and shorten the social distance between the anchors and the audiences; the discursive practices of the second person deixis is a labor-saving way to refer to every audience and make them have the sense of involvement so as to boost sales; the discursive practices of the third person deixis help anchors modify their commodities as well as lead customers' attention. Theoretically, this paper is an empirical endeavour towards the analysis of person deixis and practically, it reveals the pragmatic realization of person deixis in virtual sales activities so as to be possibly applicable.

Keywords: Pragmatics, Person Deixis, E-commerce Live-streaming Advertising

1. Introduction

With the development and popularization of artificial intelligence recognition, along with the further promotion and application of intelligent terminal equipment, the domestic network e-commerce live-streaming has developed rapidly. Different from physical shopping, it, as the most popular shopping trend at present, furnishes consumers with a new way that one can stay at home to buy. Due to this distinctive feature, the anchors play a vital role in making full use of various discursive practices to build up a connection with the audience, so that the audience can emotionally obtain a sense of identity and belonging via the viewing process, so as to further prompt the audience's action of staying, watching and consuming in the live broadcast. Therefore, the anchors in e-commerce live-streaming have undertaken the new function of communicating with customers.

Roughly speaking, this paper aims to inquire about the use of person deixis by means of the discursive practices used by anchors motivating the audience to buy. Person deixis can be applied to people's communication, as well as to the discourse

within the e-commerce live-streaming context.

2. Theoretical Model and Corpus Sources

The term deixis derived from Greek and originally means "pointing" or "indicating". It focuses on the relationship between language and the context of language use. In a word, "deixis" manifests the relationship between language and the context in which the language is used [1]. Therefore, many linguists have focused on the importance of context and have tried to define the nature of deixis and here are some classical definitions chosen to demonstrate this kind of aspect.

Lyons pointed that "deixis" refers to the function of personal and demonstrative pronouns, of tense and of a variety of other grammatical and lexical features which relate utterances to the spatio-temporal coordinates of the act of utterance [2]. Levinson held that "deixis" can be used to reflect the relationship between language and context in the structures of languages themselves [3]. Jaszcolt stated that "deixis" refers to the phenomenon of encoding contextual information by means of lexical items or grammatical

distinctions that provide this information by means of lexical items or grammatical distinctions that provide this information only when paired with this context [4]. Yan Huang believes that “deixis” is a kind of phenomenon where discourse or speech events are encoded by lexical or grammatical means in language [5]. Therefore, the analysis of deixis is inseparable from the premise of context.

Up to now, Levinson's classification of deixis is the most comprehensive and widely accepted, which can be divided into five categories: person deixis, time deixis, place deixis, discourse deixis and social deixis [3]. Among them, person deixis refers to the mutual address when communicating with each other. “Person deixis consists of the first person (the addresser), the second person (the addressee) and the third person (other participants in the speech event) [6]”. It is worth noting that proper nouns and appellation nouns also belong to the third person deixis [7].

Person deixis has been probed into many different registers and has fruitful research findings at home and abroad.

Pangaribuan, Manik & Pasariibu conducted research on the use of person deixis on business brochures text. Through quantitative analysis, it was found that there are five types of deixis used in business brochures text in which the person deixis accounts for 16.33%. The study puts forth the suggestion that the person deixis should be clearly addressed in written business brochures [8].

Oliva M. investigated the two grammatical choices of plural first person deixis and singular second person deixis used in Spanish media texts, which finds that the plural first person deixis can connect the speaker with the audience, highlights interpersonal involvement whereas the singular second person deixis co-occurs with speakers' personal stances and experiences that are desubjectified through viewpoint displacement from the speaker towards the audience [9].

Luo Yujia and Liu Fengguang studied the speech of the Queen of England in the public health crisis. It was found that the queen demonstrated her social identity through the first person deixis, and tactically used different person deixis to realize the communicative intentions of calling on the people to actively cooperate with the government, appease and encourage the people to unite [10]. Feng Guangwu and Ding Jiaolong explored the use of first person deixis in the subject position in ancient Chinese “Mencius” [11]; Peng Yuan explored the pragmatic empathy of person deixis within the context of teaching scaffolding that the empathy of person deixis can better help defeat the negative effects of interpersonal relationships [12]. Gao Yifeng conducted a pragmatic analysis of person deixis in the novel “The Joy Luck Club” [13]; Jiang Bei studied the use of person deixis in the TV program “Intimate Talk with Lijing” [14].

In a word, the pragmatic implications of person deixis are plentiful and it can produce different pragmatic forces when it is combined with various contexts. However, in recent years, with the rapid development of network context, the analysis of the e-commerce live broadcast anchors' discourse practices is rare. Therefore, starting from the context of

e-commerce live broadcast, this paper shed light on the mechanism of the application of person deixis through the discursive practice from the internet celebrity Li Jiaqi in Taobao live-streaming context from 2020 to 2021.

3. Application of Person Deixis in E-commerce Live-streaming Advertising

3.1. Analysis of First Person Deixis

The first person deixis “presented the speaker himself or his group [15]”. Both the speaker and listener are involved in the real communication process, so that the self-centered characteristic of deixis always alternate in turns. These are examples of the use of first person deixis as follows:

Example 1: The price of this lipstick on the official website is 299. But today, in my live studio, it's only 100 yuan.

Example 2: How many girls are waiting to buy this bottle of makeup remover, but they didn't get it on Double 11. I must buy it this time.

Example 1 is the pure referential of the first person deixis which refers to the anchor himself. It can easily put the speaker in a salient position that the audience can follow up with so that it can embody a sense of autonomy, independence and control of the anchor. The use of the first person deixis “I(my)”, not only demonstrates the speaker's subjectivity, but also can, from the perspective of speech acts, indicate the illocutionary act that the audience can buy the discounted products only in Li Jiaqi's live studio. Through this implication, the consumers' desire for shopping was provoked by the anchor.

For example 2, the first person deixis “I” here not only refers to the anchor himself, but also some consumers who did not buy this bottle of makeup remover. The center of deixis projects from speaker himself to the audience in respect of connecting the set situation with the experience of some audience who didn't buy the products. Through this way, the anchor sends out a signal to the certain group of audience to purchase, avoiding them regret again.

Example 3: *Meimeimen, our Meimeimen...(Beauties, our beauties...)*

Example 3 is the most popular and prevalent beginning part of e-commerce live-streaming, which uses the first person plural deixis “our” with a clear reference to all the audience who are watching this live broadcast, using a labor-saving way to naturally connect the audience with the speaker. This kind of approach is conducive to narrowing the social distance between them so as to produce the effect of pragmatic empathy. Furthermore, it also shows us that the anchor puts himself in alliance with the audience, which well maintains the positive face of the audience. Thus the audience and the anchor can get closer and more intimate quickly, so as to achieve the purpose of maintaining their relationships to promote selling.

Example 4: What will be available tonight is O'shudan's body cream, cherry blossoms. All girls, fairies and little fairies must have this bright flash, fragrant, sweet and smooth body cream. Once it is wiped, then you will get girlish skin, and like a star. The price of Tmall is 485, but today it is 445 in Jiaqi (=I) live studio. If you buy it, you will be given the same 175ml Cherry Blossom Body cream, and another 175ml of Cherry Blossom Shower Gel and 4 hand creams. The whole is a 4.9% discount.

Example 4 is a typical usage of anti-preemptive of the first person deixis. The anchor initially compared the price with the Tmall store and then he emphasized the lower price in his (Jiaqi) live studio. The emphasis here is the use of anti-preemptive of the first person deixis that the anchor intentionally violates the egocentricity of deixis to shorten the psychological distance in order to turn the interactive subject from the speaker to the listener. Conforming to the perspective of the audience, their attention alter to the content that the speaker wants to emphasize. Combining with the context of E-commerce, if the anchor wants to achieve the purpose of selling goods, he must constantly select different discursive practice to meet the intention of interaction. The anti-preemptive use of the first person deixis here is conducive to prompting the interpersonal relationship between the anchor and the audience, as well as helping the speaker build his own identity, so that the audience can naturally link with the products in their mind. During the sales process, while giving the listener a sense of security and protection to the consumer, it also promotes the consumer's desire to buy.

3.2. Analysis of Second Person Deixis

Example 5: Meimeimen, real and effective shampoo can help you fix and grow your hair. Not all shampoos have hair growth certificates. What does that mean? Now the pressure is too high, the sun's ultraviolet rays are too strong, and the urban pollution is also very serious, the bad habits including regular drinking, staying up late, pressure, and a bad mood. All of these will cause your hair loss. This shampoo has five main ingredients to lock your thick hair, which also has Brazil ginseng essence and ATP factor to activate your hair follicle activity and to extend the growth period. Three plant essence, such as sweet orange, lavender, rosemary, are all able to activate your scalp skin.

Example 6: L02 Givenchy. Everyone can use it, and the people who use it will be envious of your mouth. They will say: Wow, why is your mouth so beautiful?

In Example 5, when the anchor is introducing the product, he frequently uses the second person deixis "you" to relate to the audience with the experience of using shampoo. Example 6 is the anchor who also uses the second person deixis to show his tactic in boosting sales. Although the second person deixis "you" can refer to either singular or plural one, in the context of e-commerce, the speaker is the anchor who is facing various audience in front of the screen and the hearer is the audience who does not exist in the moment of face-to-face communication, so in most cases the second person deixis used by the anchor is a non-deictic usage of the person deixis,

which does not have a specific object of reference, but generally refers to any audience who is watching the live broadcast. Due to the potential consumers in e-commerce live broadcasts being wide, the anchor skillfully applies the pragmatic economic principle for using a simple second person deixis "you" to easily refer to all the audience, so that he can pull the targeted audience into the same interactive situation in a short time and can be feasible to naturally connect with "you". Hence, the audience will be engrossed in the content of speaker's utterance to achieve the goal of attracting the potential consumers so as to further conducive to the realization of advertising effects. At the same time, "you", as a second person deixis, leaves the audience with a kind of impression that two people, no matter how far they are, can make face-to-face communication, which the listeners are talking with the anchor. Through this way, the distance between the anchor and the audience is shortened. It is also helpful to reduce or eliminate the speaker's egocentric tendency, so as to obtain favor and trust of the audience. Compared with the use of first person deixis, the second person deixis has less information processing time, which can make the listeners understand the content of information in a short time.

Example 7: The color of 203 is similar to the color of burgundy red wine or rose bean paste, which is the color that Guifujiejiemen (= you) must buy.

In Example 7, the anchor uses "Guifujiejiemen" to refer to the audience who will buy this lipstick. In Chinese traditional culture, the term "Guifu" mostly refers to elegant women whose clothes are made of silk, and the meaning is further extended to a group of people who have more power, money, and a higher quality of life in modern society. Therefore, in the e-commerce live-streaming context, the word "Guifujiejie" is used to substitute the second deixis "you". This phenomenon is the anti-preemptive usage of second person deixis, bringing the listener into the set role. What's more, this action also well complies with approbation maxim and tact maxim in the politeness principle that can well maintain the audience's positive face and enhance the customers' status by fully meeting their vanities so as to enlarge the scales of selling goods.

3.3. Analysis of Third Person Deixis

Example 8: This is supergoop's sunscreen. They have a series of sunscreen products including hair sunscreen, lip sunscreen, eye sunscreen, body sunscreen.

In Example 8, the anchor initially mentioned the name of the product supergoop, then he used the third person deixis "they" to further this topic. It is the usage of discourse deixis that makes the content more coherent so as to make the audience always immersed in the current context and automatically unify the selling process.

Example 9: This is the lipstick of 004. Look, after I'm done with it, I will be the focus that's in the spotlight.

Example 10: This sunscreen that many stars also process is supergoop. It is a sunscreen + makeup primer, two in one function. As a sunscreen, it also has two different effects. First

of all, look at the texture of sunscreen. The color is not white, because it feels like cream. Yeah, it will be thinner, not rubbing mud. If you gently wipe it, you will find, wow, matte texture. Its film-forming speed is very fast. You will feel a little oily when you just wipe it. But after 3 seconds, it is matte, light. If you have oily skin, you will find that your pores have been filled up after you use it. It's very powerful!

Example 9 is the gestural usage of the third person deixis, in which the anchor uses "it" with a paralinguistic feature, that is, he refers to the color on the lips with his hand at the same time. Within the current situation, the audience should focus on the product not only hearing the sound but also to see the object to understand the meaning of the word. Through such use, the audience's attention is focused on the product rather than the anchor himself, deepening their own feelings about using the product and thus arousing their desire to buy.

Example 10 is the description of a product that the anchor skillfully uses the third-person deixis "it" to project the center of the deixis to the third person, that is, the product, in the selling process. "Compared with the first and second person deixis, the third person deixis mainly depends on the context of the discourse and common knowledge of both parties." Therefore, "it" here is a product that is common knowledge to listeners and the speaker and with the speaker's detailed description, the audience will focus on the words about the recommendation of the product in a short time, increasing the attention to the product and deepening their impression of the sold product.

Example 11: Maybelline is coming.

Example 12: The Perfect Diary's kitten and dog themed eye shadow is coming.

Examples 11 and 12 are the usage of the appellation noun of third person deixis that the anchor directly speaks the brand name, trying to introduce the product from the perspective of a third party, to increase its objectivity, in order to reduce the speaker's subjectivity. The precise and concise use of this way is prominent to the audience so as to deepen the audience's impression of the product.

4. Conclusion

The particularity of e-commerce live-streaming is that the anchor should flexibly use different language strategies in a short time to construct an intimate relationship with the audience who is watching this live-streaming. Person deixis is a bridge that efficiently connects the anchor with the audience. The findings indicate that effectively mastering this pragmatic strategy can better motivate the purchase desire of consumers so as to reap the benefits of economies.

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