A Linguistic Analysis of Slogans Used in Refractive Surgery Advertising

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Tässä pro gradu -tutkielmassa tarkastellaan taittovirheleikkausten mainostamiseen käytettyjen sloganien eli iskulauseiden kielellisiä piirteitä. Tutkielman teoreettinen viitekehys pohjautuu deskriptiivisiin tutkimuksiin mainonnan kielestä ja erityisesti Geoffrey N. Leechin 1960-luvulla luomaan "Standard Advertising English" -käsitteeseen, joka perustuu hänen tekemiinsä päätelmiin mainonnassa käytetyn englannin yleisimmistä piirteistä. Tutkielman ensisijaisena tarkoituksena on selvittää, kuinka yhteneväisiä tutkimusaineiston muodostavien sloganien kielelliset piirteet ovat Leechin ja muiden aihetta tutkineiden kielitieteilijöiden tekemien huomioiden kanssa.

Tutkimusta pohjustetaan teoriaosassa tarkastelemalla mainonnassa käytetyn englannin yleisimpien piirteiden lisäksi lyhyesti sekä taittovirheleikkausten historiaa että niiden mainostamiselle asetettuja rajoituksia ja suosituksia. Lisäksi osiossa määritellään medikalisaation eli lääketieteellistymisen käsite ja kuvaillaan, kuinka taittovirheet on viime vuosikymmenten kuluessa alettu nähdä terveydellisinä ongelmina, jotka vaativat lääketieteellistä hoitoa.

Tutkielman empiirisenä aineistona on 153 sloganista koostuva korpus, joka kerättiin yhdysvaltalaisten ja isobritannialaisten taittovirheleikkauksia tekevien klinikoiden internet-sivuilta. Sloganien syntaktisia, rakenteellisia, kieliopillisia ja sanastollisia piirteitä analysoitiin yksityiskohtaisesti ja verrattiin aiempien tutkimusten tulosten kanssa samankaltaisuuksien ja eroavaisuuksien löytämiseksi. Tutkimuksessa havaittiin, että Leechin "Standard Advertising English" -käsite ja muut vertailussa käytetyt deskriptiiviset tutkimukset ovat pääosin sovellettavissa myös taittovirheleikkausmainosten analysointiin. Kuitenkin myös eroja vertailtuihin tutkimuksiin löytyi usean kielellisen piirteen osalta. Nämä erot vaikuttavat osoittavan sen, että lääketieteellisellä markkinoinnilla on omat erityispiirteensä, joihin kuuluvat muun muassa rajoituksista ja valvonnasta johtuvat epäsuorat ja monimerkityksiset väittämät sekä tieteellisen ja abstraktin kielen käyttö. Toisaalta kävi ilmi myös, että mainonnan kieli on erittäin heterogeenistä, ja mainostajan valitsema lähestymistapa vaikuttaa merkittävästi mainoksessa käytettyyn kieleen. Esimerkiksi tunteisiin vetoavat sloganit eroavat järkeen vetoavista sloganeista monen tarkastellun piirteen osalta.

Analyysissä havaittiin myös, että suuri osa sloganeista oli lääketieteellistä mainontaa valvovien tahojen asettamien säännösten ja suositusten vastaisia. Lisäksi tutkimus antoi viitteitä siitä, että mainokset ylläpitävät ja edesauttavat taittovirheiden medikalisaatiota.

Avainsanat: mainonnan kieli, lääketieteellinen mainonta, slogan, mainonnan etiikka, medikalisaatio

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1 Introduction

The purpose of this thesis is to examine slogans created for the advertising of refractive eye surgery. My interest in this particular topic arose during my work experience at an eye clinic, where I was closely involved in both the daily routines and the selling of refractive surgery operations, and also conducted a market research project and participated in the planning of a new marketing strategy. While medical marketing has received plenty of research attention, very few studies on advertisements for refractive surgery have been conducted so far, and those with a linguistic focus are virtually non-existent. The language of advertising has been studied by several scholars from different sub-fields of linguistics, but their focus has often been on products of a more tangible nature. One of the most renowned studies on the language of advertising was conducted by Geoffrey N. Leech (1966), who described British television advertising from a linguistic point of view. In his study, Leech developed the concept of ”Standard Advertising English” by listing the most prominent and widespread characteristics in his corpus of advertisements. In this thesis, Leech's framework will be adapted for the analysis of slogans in refractive surgery advertisements. Despite my background in marketing and similarly to Leech's study, the objective of the thesis is to offer a purely linguistic analysis of the corpus for the purposes of isolating the most salient linguistic features of refractive surgery advertisements. The approach chosen for this thesis is thus neither prescriptive nor particularly critical, regardless of the fact that the issue of ethicalness in the advertising of refractive surgery will also be touched upon briefly.

According to a well-known definition, advertisements can be understood as

> ... the paid, nonpersonal communication of information about products or ideas by an identified sponsor through the mass media in an effort to persuade or influence behavior. (Bovée et al. 1995: 4)

Slogans, on the other hand, can be defined as memorable phrases that are used in

advertisements in order to summarise the premise of the brand or the product advertised. While advertising has been present for many centuries, it has never been as ubiquitous as it is nowadays (Bovée et al. 1995: 16-20). The massive growth of advertising has led to increasing competition between advertisers, as well as to the use of more aggressive advertising strategies.

Similarly to advertising, a concern with health and an obsession with achieving a perfect body have never been as omnipresent as they are now (Gwyn 2001: 6). This has contributed to an explosive growth in cosmetic surgery and medical markets, including refractive surgery, and to the commodification of many medical procedures, meaning the development of medical procedures into commodities. Many problems that used to be regarded as minor, natural and non-medical, such as imperfect eyesight, have thus become ”medicalised” and are treated as medical problems. As illness is constructed and reproduced through language (Gwyn 2001: 6), a linguistic approach to the study of medicalisation and refractive surgery slogans may well be a fruitful one. Another reason why the study of refractive surgery slogans is particularly interesting are the conflicting needs of the advertiser: One of the most significant consequences of the commodification of refractive surgery procedures has been the increase in the funds allocated by clinics to the marketing of their services. There are, however, different regulatory bodies who monitor the advertising of medical procedures, which forces the advertiser to balance between the wish to attract customers and the need to obey the regulations and recommendations set by the authorities.

The purpose of this thesis is to study the syntactic, structural, grammatical and lexical features of the slogans in the corpus in order to answer four primary research questions, which could be formulated as follows. First of all, are the most distinctive linguistic features of the analysed slogans congruent with Leech's Standard Advertising English and the findings of other scholars studying the language of advertising? The objective is not, however, to evaluate

the validity of Leech's findings as that would exceed the scope of this thesis and require data more like that used by Leech. Second, do the results of the linguistic analysis support the hypothesis that refractive errors have been medicalised and that refractive eye surgery has become a commodity as the result of medicalisation and growing markets? Third, are the slogans compatible with the regulations and recommendations issued by the authorities or do advertisers use different syntactic, structural, grammatical and lexical choices to circumvent the problem of ethicalness, as could be hypothesised? Fourth, while conducting my market research project at the eye clinic, I noticed that the slogans used in advertising refractive surgery tended to fall into two different groups, with the emphasis either on medical factors and the procedure or on the quality of life. Therefore, the slogans will also be analysed from this perspective in order to see whether this divergence can be seen in the present corpus as well and to distinguish potential reasons for it. However, according to a popular motto of eye surgery marketers, ”nobody wants eye surgery, everybody wants perfect vision”. Thus, it is also hypothesised that regardless of the emphasis on either medical factors or the quality of life, the focus of the slogans will be on change (i.e. on the improvement of either vision or life), and not on the procedure itself.

The theoretical part of the thesis will first focus on the history of refractive eye surgery and the various requirements and restrictions that have been set by different authorities on advertisements for refractive surgery procedures. The concept of medicalisation and how it relates to refractive surgery will also be discussed. Section 3 will then move on to outline previous research on the language of advertising and to introduce the concept of Standard Advertising English, as well as to list and discuss the syntactic, structural, grammatical and lexical features that have been found to be the most common and the most distinctive by scholars studying the language of advertising. The subsequent sections comprise the empirical part of the thesis. Section 4 is dedicated to a presentation of the materials and methods

employed in the study, while the analysis of the slogans as well as a discussion of the findings can be found in Sections 5 and 6. Section 7 will then summarise and discuss the central findings in relation to the hypotheses and the theoretical background, provide a critical evaluation of the methods employed in the empirical study and propose some topics for further research.

2 Refractive eye surgery

The objective of refractive surgery is eliminating the need for corrective glasses or contact lenses. The commonness of myopia and hyperopia, meaning nearsightedness and farsightedness, as well as rising standards of living make refractive surgery one of the most common methods of improving the function of the eye (Asu 2011). According to Asu (2011), there has been an interest in refractive eye surgery for over a century, but the first surgical attempts were made as late as in the 1930's. Different methods were then developed in Japan, Colombia and Russia during the next few decades. In the late 1970's, the results as well as a growing interest in these studies spread to the United States, where further experiments were conducted by using the new excimer laser technology in refractive eye surgery. Excimer lasers were originally used in manufacturing computer chips, and ophthalmologists began to use them in refractive surgery to make very fine cuts in organic tissue without substantially damaging the tissue with heat. It can be argued that excimer laser revolutionised refractive surgery as it provided a degree of safety and precision that was previously unattainable.

Photorefractive keratectomy, or PRK, was the first method of corrective eye surgery that used a laser to remove corneal tissue. It was approved for corrective eye surgery in the United States by the Food and Drug Administration (henceforth FDA) in 1995. According to Asu (2011), however, it soon became less and less popular following the development of LASIK (laser-assisted in situ keratomileusis), which eliminated the need for a long recovery period after surgery. LASIK differs from PRK in that a flap is created in the cornea with a microkeratome blade before laser eye correction in order to access the underlying tissue. After the corrective procedure, the flap is carefully repositioned over the treatment area. This reduces the amount of post-surgical discomfort and pain significantly. LASIK is the most popular method of correcting refractive errors at the moment, but new improvements to the laser as well as new diagnostic instruments are constantly being developed, including the use

of a femtosecond laser in the creation of the flap (instead of a microkeratome blade) and wavefront technology, which provides a detailed map of the patient's vision allowing the surgeon to fully customise the procedure.

2.1 Restrictions on advertising refractive surgery

Following FDA approval in the United States in 1995 and the rapidly growing number of procedures performed each consecutive year, PRK was increasingly advertised as a treatment that eliminated the patients' need to wear glasses (Mitchell 1998: 1412). Slogans such as *Throw away your glasses* began to appear in advertisements (ibid.), demonstrating the eagerness of advertisers to classify PRK as a revolutionary, yet simple and quick procedure. It has been argued that the aggressive advertising and the competition between the clinics about who would be able to offer PRK and LASIK for the lowest fee resulted in refractive surgery becoming a "retail commodity" (Malley 2005: 91) instead of the medical "miracle" it was previously considered (Mahdavi 2002). Nevertheless, all surgical procedures have risks and possible side effects, and it was thus regarded as alarming by the authorities that clinics were willing to market refractive surgery as a generic commodity product.

In 1997, the Federal Trade Commission published *Marketing of Refractive Eye Care Surgery: Guidance for Eye Care Providers* partly in response to the aggressiveness of refractive surgery advertising and to the inquiries and complaints the commission had received. As LASIK was rapidly being developed as an improved method for refractive surgery, it was considered necessary by the Federal Trade Commission to provide requirements for the new procedure as well.

In brief, the purpose of these requirements is to prevent "deceptive or unfair practices in or affecting commerce." An advertisement is deceptive and therefore unlawful

> if it contains a representation or omission of fact that is likely to mislead

> consumers acting reasonably under the circumstances, and that representation or omission is material, that is, likely to affect a consumer's choice or use of a product or service.

According to the Federal Trade Commission, these requirements are not only applied to claims that are expressly stated in the advertisement, but also to those that are implied. The Federal Trade Commission Act also prohibits the dissemination of any "objective" claims unless they are supported by competent and reliable scientific evidence, particularly when the claim concerns the safety, success or some other benefit of the procedure. Similarly, omission of information may lead to a deceptive advertisement if it constitutes an implied but false representation of a material fact, for instance when claims about safety are made without reference to the potential risks of the procedure.

In addition to the requirements set by the Federal Trade Commission, the American Academy of Ophthalmology (henceforth AAO) has published its own set of guidelines to regulate the marketing practices of refractive surgery clinics. The guidelines were designed to assist doctors and clinics to ensure that their advertising is truthful and ethical and adheres to the legal requirements (AAO 2008: 1). AAO accomplishes that by examining specific types of advertising claims and indicating what they regard as proper and lawful claims. The types of claims that they analyse are efficacy claims (e.g. *Laser Eye Surgery - Freedom from glasses and contact lenses*)[1], comparative efficacy claims (*Best Doctors*), safety claims (*Laser Vision Correction. SAFE. AFFORDABLE. WORLD CLASS TEAM*), permanence and predictability claims (*Lifetime Aftercare Guarantee*), success rate claims (*98 % of our patients don't need glasses after surgery*; invented example) and "painless" claims (*no more glasses. pain free procedure*) (AAO 2008: 3-6). This categorisation will be revisited in the empirical part of the thesis.

While there has been considerable public debate on refractive surgery advertising in the

[1] All examples in this thesis are drawn from the corpus unless stated otherwise.

United States, slightly less attention has been paid to these matters in the United Kingdom. Nevertheless, the Royal College of Ophthalmologists has responded to public concerns regarding the safety of refractive surgery by publishing guidelines for clinics to utilise when evaluating their practices and planning their advertising (Suarez 2008: 55). It is believed that by adhering to a set of standards, clinics could increase both the safety of the procedures and the satisfaction of the customers (ibid.). The guidelines state that all advertising should be legal, factual and not misleading and that marketing materials should be drafted and designed to ensure that patients do not have unrealistic expectations. According to the Royal College of Ophthalmologists (2009: 7), the standards and guidelines of Advertising Standards Authority, British Medical Association and General Medical Council should also be adhered to, when applicable.

2.2 Medicalisation and refractive surgery

A concern with health can be argued to have never been as omnipresent as it is now. Gwyn (2001: 6) maintains that we are saturated with different health-related issues and are obsessed with them. According to him, the current era can even be said to be dedicated to a so-called body project. The absence of serious diseases is not a sufficient objective in this obsession for a perfect body, which has led to an explosive growth in cosmetic surgery and drug markets (e.g. Bartlett and Steele 2003; Cassels and Moynihan 2005; Conrad 2007). The study of medicalisation, which has received increasing attention from researchers during the past few decades, targets this development by examining the changing discourses of health and illness. According to Conrad (2007: 4-6), a well-known critic of medicalisation, the term *medicalisation* refers to ”a process by which nonmedical problems become defined and treated as medical problems, usually in terms of illness and disorders”. Thus, when a problem

is interpreted through a medical framework and treated with a medical procedure or drugs, it can be considered to have become ”medicalised”. Medicalisation occurs primarily with deviance from the norm and common life events, such as alcoholism, sexual and gender differences, and ageing.

Companies offering medical services or manufacturing drugs have significantly contributed to the medicalisation of various conditions with advertisements and seemingly innocent awareness-raising campaigns, because medicalisation increases the profitability and markets of pharmaceutical and biotechnological firms, for example (Conrad 2007: 8). Indeed, as Cassels and Moynihan (2005: 101) astutely remark, companies are not merely selling drugs or services, but also the diseases connected to them. Advertisers are not the only party contributing to the increasing medicalisation, however: the public’s tolerance of mild symptoms is decreasing, leading to the classification of uncomfortable body states and isolated symptoms as diseases (Conrad 2007: 6). Conrad (2007: 16) argues that these factors have also contributed to the increasing commodification of medical products and services, meaning that drugs and medical procedures are organised into product lines and sold as tangible goods or commodities.

Refractive errors can be considered to have become medicalised during the last few decades. Vision was previously regarded as a scale ranging from sharp to poor. Variation along the scale was seen as normal, whether it was caused by myopia, hyperopia or astigmatism, and presbyopia was considered a normal and inevitable consequence of ageing. Perfect vision was thus not the norm, even though it was the ideal state. With the development and spread of technology suitable for changing the curvature of the cornea relatively safely and effectively, refractive errors quickly began to change from normal variation into deviation from the norm. One of the main reasons for this was the effort of eye surgery clinics to interest customers in this new procedure with the help of advertising. In their advertisements,

refractive errors were presented as medical problems which would prevent a full enjoyment of life but which nevertheless could easily be corrected with the help of refractive surgery. Terms such as *error*, *correction* and *treatment* became common in advertisements and clearly signalled to the readers that their near- or farsightedness was abnormal and belonged to the world of medicine.

The rise of ”the body project”, as it is termed by Gwyn (2001: 6), provided another catalyst for the medicalisation of refractive errors. Consumers were searching for ways to improve their health and well-being, and suboptimal vision did not often suffice in the quest for a perfect body. Supply thus met demand, resulting in a rapid increase in refractive surgery operations performed each year as well as in the commodification of these procedures. As a consequence of these changes, refractive errors now possess the typical characteristics of a medicalised problem, as defined by Conrad (2007: 6): they are interpreted through a medical framework and treated with a medical procedure.

3 THE LANGUAGE OF ADVERTISING

3.1 Standard Advertising English and other linguistic approaches to advertising

Comprehensive classificatory studies of advertising English from a linguistic perspective remain relatively rare. One of the scholars who have conducted such a study is Geoffrey Leech, who has analysed in detail different aspects pertaining to the structure, grammar and vocabulary of advertising. This much-quoted study was published in 1966 but is still of great value as it provides a practical catalog of the defining characteristics of advertising English (Bruthiaux 1996: 26). In his study, Leech developed the concept of ”Standard Advertising English”, which encompasses the predictable patterns and distinctive features of this discourse (Leech 1966: 105-106). Leech studied television advertisements, but his objective was to provide a comprehensive discussion of advertising English that would not be associated with any particular medium of advertising or a specific selling approach (e.g. ”reason-why” or emotive advertising) (ibid., p. 106). According to Leech, disjunctive grammar, the low frequency of function words (e.g. modal verbs), complexity of nominal groups and simplicity of verbal groups are some of the most distinctive properties of advertising language. Among his other points of interest were the distribution of different verbs and adjectives in advertisements, cohesion or the lack of it, and the creative use of language by advertisers.

Toolan (1988) adopts a similar approach in his much shorter study, in which he examines the characteristics of advertising English in the British press. Similarly to Leech (1966), he is interested in recurrent syntactic, grammatical and lexical patterns and only briefly comments on the ideological and ethical aspects of advertising, such as its ability to ”direct us towards acquisition and enjoyment of non-essential material goods” (Toolan 1988: 63).

Other classificatory studies of advertising English include Cook (1992), Myers (1994) and Vestergaard and Schrøder (1985). As Bruthiaux (1996: 26-27) argues, Cook (1992) attempts to expand the narrow linguistic formulations of this discourse by examining advertising texts in connection with their context, including the visual, musical and paralinguistic features surrounding them. Cook also concentrates on the social implications of advertising language and describes in some detail how advertisements can construct identities as well as create or reinforce dominant social types. The approach chosen by Myers (1994) in his introduction to advertising language is close to that adopted by Cook (1992): in addition to identifying the distinctive features of advertisements, his aim is to examine language in the society in which it is produced and to analyse how context influences the interpretation of advertisements. He also applies these analyses to different social issues, namely AIDS, smoking and environmental protection.

Instead of giving a detailed linguistic analysis, Vestergaard and Schrøder (1988) offer an explicitly ideological and critical commentary on advertising language. Their work thus verges on critical discourse analysis, an interdisciplinary approach that emphasises the role of language as a form of social practice and analyses how social and political domination is reproduced in texts. Well-known proponents of critical discourse analysis include Norman Fairclough, whose *Critical Discourse Analysis: The Critical Study of Language* (1995) offers some interesting insights into the critical analysis of advertisements.

Judith Williamson is also among the authors who have aimed to go beyond the formal description of advertising language. In her classic study, *Decoding Advertisements* (1978), she explores social issues through a cultural reading of advertisements. Even though the study has received plenty of criticism after its publication in 1978, most later studies can be said to be indebted to it (Myers 1994: 11).

The study of advertising appeals lies at the other end of the spectrum of approaches to the

study of advertising language. Due to its main argument that every advertisement needs to appeal effectively to its audience in order to succeed in modifying the behaviour of the potential customers and persuading them to act, this approach is often prescriptive by nature and is thus of special interest to writers of marketing textbooks as well as to advertisers themselves. Advertising appeals have, however, also received attention from researchers in fields ranging from linguistics to consumer psychology. The research is based on the proposition that consumers make their purchasing decisions for rational and emotional reasons (Albers-Miller and Stafford 1999: 43), which form the two general categories into which appeals are usually sorted, even though it is also worth noting that some advertisements combine both emotional and rational appeals. According to Bovée et al. (1995: 232), the motivation behind using advertising appeals is their ability to create a link between the product or service being advertised and some perceived need, desire or problem of the consumer. Advertisements using a rational appeal rely on the belief that the consumer makes logical and rational decisions that can be influenced by changing the consumer's attitude towards the product with persuasive arguments and reasoning (Albers-Miller and Stafford 1999: 43-44). Emotional appeals, in contrast, often seek to influence the consumer's feelings about the product or to communicate the satisfaction that would come from purchasing and owning the product (Bovée et al. 1995: 232; Albers-Miller and Stafford 1999: 44). In addition to stirring up positive emotions in the consumer, the objective of an emotional appeal may also be evoking negative feelings (Bovée et al. 1995: 236-237), such as envy, anger or fear: a health campaign, for instance, might publish advertisements which play on consumers' fear of death.

3.2 Syntactic, structural and grammatical features

3.2.1 Imperative clauses

Similarly to interrogatives, imperative clauses are much more common in conversation than in writing (Biber et al. 1999: 221), with the exception of advertisements: Myers (1994: 47) even calls the imperative ”the generic sentence type” for the advertisement. This is because it is the inherent objective of advertisements to urge the consumer to act in a desired manner, usually by purchasing the product in question (ibid.). Leech (1966: 79-80, 110) agrees that the frequency of imperative clauses is considerably high in advertisements and notes that the only other register of English where the same frequency of such bald directives is deemed appropriate by the audience is the public sphere with its road signs, official forms and instructions. The imperative in advertisements signals extreme familiarity, especially since it is seldom employed with a formula of politeness (e.g. *please / would you),* and would thus be considered rude in most other circumstances. Leech explains that the required standard of deference is lower for advertisements since they function under the pretence that they are in fact offering something beneficial to the consumer (cf. *Have some cake!*). Therefore, it is often only in charity advertisements, where the advertiser is directly requesting something from the audience, that the commands are mitigated with politeness markers or structural changes.

The familiarity that results from the use of the imperative is by no means accidental: a command establishes a personal effect, that is, an intimate and interactive relationship between advertisers and their audience (Myers 1994: 47 and Toolan 1988: 54). This is consistent with the advertiser's objective ”to engage the reader rather than simply convey information” (Toolan 1988: 54).

According to Biber et al. (1999: 219), imperatives commonly lack a subject, modals and

tense and aspect markers. They most frequently use the base form of the verb. The omission of the subject is possible since the context usually makes it apparent that the omitted subject of the imperative clause refers to the listener (ibid.). In the case of advertisements, the subject is similarly intended to refer to the reader or listener even though the context is very different from normal conversational interaction and the person uttering the command is absent.

Leech (1966: 110-111) distinguishes three groups of verbs that are especially frequent in commands in advertisements. The common denominator for the first group is that they all deal with the purchase of the product or service (e.g. *get, buy, choose, ask for*) and they are consequently often used at the end of the advertisement as a final call to action. The second category consists of verbs connected with the consumption or use of the product, as exemplified by the verbs *have, try, use* and *enjoy.* The verbs in the third group act as appeals for notice. For instance, *look, see* and *watch* help to direct the consumer's attention and *remember* and *make sure* are used to give the consumer advice on how to act in the future. Leech (ibid., p. 111) also argues that positive exhortations are significantly more common than negative ones (e.g. prohibitive warnings such as *Don't let the traffic jam ruin your day,* example mine).

3.2.2 Interrogative clauses

Interrogative clauses are mostly used to realise questions and occur much more frequently in conversation than in writing (Biber et al. 1999: 203, 211). In consequence, interrogative clauses give a conversational quality to the advertisement and help establish a personal, interactive relationship between the advertiser and the audience on the grounds that a question typically presupposes an answer (Myers 1994: 49; Leech 1966: 111). By forcing consumers into this kind of active participation, where they are expected to provide a mental answer to the question posed, the advertiser succeeds in drawing them from passive receptivity (Leech

1966: 111-112), after which they may make the decision of purchasing the product advertised or may at least remember the name of the product longer.

Interrogative clauses often contain presuppositions that are easy to take for given unless they are made explicit (Myers 1994: 49). Presuppositions have been extensively studied in critical discourse analysis as they often convey implicit assumptions of power and gender relations (e.g. Fairclough 1995) and they are a frequently found feature in advertising language as well. Judy Delin (2000: 118) offers an illuminating definition of presupposition. In her view, the term refers to

> the use of linguistic forms that imply the existence of something, or some fact. If the reader is not already familiar with the presupposed information, he or she is required to accommodate it: that is, accept it as uncontroversial, already shared, or 'in the public domain'.

Presuppositions also enable the advertiser to include more information in a single sentence than would otherwise be possible. To illustrate this, the last question in the slogan *Are you still wearing glasses and contact lenses? Why? Isn't it time you see clearly without them?* implies both that it is possible to eliminate one's dependency on glasses and that it is preferable to do so as soon as possible. The ability to include more information in a single sentence is an important factor, since the attention span of the receiver is often limited and shorter advertisements may be more memorable than long and cumbersome ones (Janoschka 2004: 135). Furthermore, spatial constraints on advertisements and the fact that longer ones are often more costly probably also contribute to the prolific use of presuppositions (Wang 2007: 56.) Another equally important factor is that a presupposition eliminates the need to make a direct claim. For instance, the invented slogan *Why is surgery so much safer at our clinic?* implies that surgery is not as safe at other clinics, without expressly stating so.

Another typical characteristic of interrogative clauses in advertising is that they are often rhetorical, that is, they require an answer that may either be obvious or immediately provided by the advertiser (Myers 1994: 49). The answer is usually one that justifies the purchase of the

product and / or affirms its superiority, as exemplified by the slogan *Want "Sharper Vision" without glasses?* All readers are expected to answer the question in the affirmative.

3.2.3 Exclamative clauses and exclamations

Along with interrogatives and imperatives, exclamative clauses and exclamations suggest personal and interactive communication, which is why they are quite frequent in advertisements (Myers 1994: 50-51). Exclamative clauses are defined as "a type of finite clause used to express strong emotion" by Biber et al. (2002: 457). They begin with either *what* or *how* and continue with a subject-verb pattern (ibid., p. 254), as in the sentence *What a beautiful day it was!* Words, phrases or clauses that function like an exclamative clause and express a strong emotion are called *exclamations*. From a syntactic point of view, exclamations can be realised with a range of both clausal and non-clausal structures, for instance exclamative, imperative, interrogative, declarative clauses and single adjectives (Biber et al. 1999: 219). Therefore, *Great!* and *What a miracle!* are regarded as exclamations.

According to Myers (1994: 51), "purists" contend that exclamations should only be used either as an emphatic form of a statement expressing emotion or in emotional utterances in which some element is missing, as illustrated by an example provided by Myers: *Marrying My Jim!* Myers argues, however, that exclamations used in advertisements rarely conform to the purists' requirements and that most of them could actually be seen as simple statements containing an exclamation mark (e.g. *Great eyecare starts with Dr. Gualtieri!*).

3.2.4 Incomplete clauses

According to Leech (1966: 90), disjunctive syntax, meaning incomplete clauses, is a common characteristics of advertisements that deviates significantly from the normal discursive mode.

Normally, non-finite clauses are dependent and do not have ”mood”, which is why the classification into declaratives, interrogatives and imperatives cannot be applied to them (ibid., p. 113). In disjunctive grammar, non-finite and verbless clauses occur independently and can therefore form a sentence by themselves (ibid., pp. 93, 113-114). This happens when advertisements punctuate phrases as if they were complete clauses, thus forming clauses that may consist of phrases without a main verb or even of a single element (Myers 1994: 55; Delin 2000: 128), as in

Mandel Vision. Helping you see your world clearly.

Both ”sentences” in the slogan above lack some necessary elements: the former is composed of a single noun phrase while the latter consists of a non-finite clause. As is characteristic of advertisements using disjunctive syntax, these two parts are related in content but have been separated by a full stop, and they could even be merged into a complete clause by substituting the full stop with a third person singular *is* (i.e. *Mandel Vision is helping you see your world clearly*).

It can be argued that the spatial and financial constraints that shape this register are an important reason for the prolific use of disjunctive syntax (Leech 1966: 90). Delin (2000: 129) notes that these constraints are inadequate as the sole reason, however, and goes on to state four further reasons for the use of incomplete clauses. First of all, clauses punctuated into smaller grammatically incomplete segments may mimic the conversational style of face-to-face interaction and also enhance memorability (Delin 2000: 129; Pop 2005a: 5), which is what advertisers often aim for. Second, non-finite clauses do not have mood and cannot thus be regarded as statements. As Delin remarks, they cannot therefore be considered either true or false since they do not initiate a ”reason-why” process of argumentation. The information will still be processed by the reader, however, and elicit associations between the juxtaposed elements. This can be most clearly seen in advertisements where the only text is the product

name and an adjective, separated by a full stop or another method of punctuation. For instance, the slogan *Laser Eye Surgery - Freedom from glasses and contact lenses* does not *directly* claim that freedom from glasses automatically follows from undergoing eye surgery, but due to the juxtaposition of the two segments, it is difficult to avoid making that association. According to Pop (2005b: 394), this factor is especially relevant in the highly competitive and regulated field of medical marketing: the advertiser attempts to make the strongest and most positive claim that they have objective evidence for, in order not to risk being held responsible for ungrounded assertions. The inherent ambiguity of incomplete clauses is often seen as a solution to this challenge.

The third reason for the advertisers to use disjunctive syntax may be the fact that each segment has a separate information focus (Delin 2000: 129; Toolan 1988: 57). Thus, the more punctuated the advertisement is into smaller segments, the more ”new” pieces of information or argumentative points can it present. Finally, disjunctive syntax can also be used in ”reason-why”-style advertising: Delin (2000: 129) states that connectives (e.g. *and, because*, *so, plus*) may give the impression of an argument based on logic, especially when placed at the beginning of the sentence, as exemplified by *Because you're worth it,* the well-known slogan of the cosmetics company L'Oréal. While Leech (1966: 116-118) treats such examples as incomplete clauses, they could also be regarded as incomplete sentences due to the presence of a main verb.

3.2.5 Noun phrases

Toolan (1988: 57) notes that one of the standard features of advertisements is their tendency to contain lengthy and complex noun phrases. He lists superlative and compound adjectives and nouns functioning as modifiers as particularly prominent in advertising English. Bruthiaux (1996: 79) confirms this finding and suggests that these nominal chains are so

lengthy and pervasive that they would seldom be acceptable in other registers, even formal written ones. In his study, Bruthiaux analysed the register of classified advertising, where spatial constraints are especially stringent. He concludes that classified advertising favours heavy modification of nouns, which reduces the need for relative pronouns, articles, copulas, verbal inflection and other spatially costly function words (ibid., pp. 80-81). While this finding may be relevant in all advertising, spatial and financial constraints shape some forms of advertising to a greater extent than others. Advertisers' own websites, for example, offer a cheap option for long advertisements with greater syntactic elaboration.

Spatial and financial constraints are not the sole reason for using lengthy and complex noun phrases in advertising, however. As Leech (1966: 127, 129-130) argues, the tendencies to use technical terms and product names, to give attractive descriptions of the product, and to join information and commendation together lead to heavy pre-modification in advertisements. The first two of these tendencies, the use of technical terms and product names, are quite straightforward. The former are especially characteristic of technological communication and serve in detailing the features and functions of the product, whereas the use of product names as pre-modifiers stems from the habit of many advertisers to refer frequently to the advertised product. The third tendency mentioned by Leech, giving attractive descriptions of the product, refers to the use of attributive rather than designative adjectives as pre-modifiers. According to Leech, attributive adjectives differ from designative adjectives in that the former are evaluative and may have strong overtones of value-judgment, while the latter are used to specify something. Leech also notes that clusters of two or more attributive pre-modifiers are not uncommon in advertising. The last tendency, joining information and commendation together in a noun phrase, happens when the advertiser attempts to ”mingle praise with practicality”, as Leech puts it. In the slogan *Ireland's leading laser eye clinic*, the pre-modifier *Ireland's leading* is mostly evaluative, while *laser* and *eye* specify the areas in

which the clinic specialises.

Biber et al. (2002: 267) demonstrate, however, that both pre- and post-modifiers are rare in conversational language while abundant in the language of science and news. Bearing in mind the propensity of many advertisers to imitate informal face-to-face communication, there probably also exist many types of advertisements that have little noun modification.

3.2.6 Verbal groups

Leech's (1966: 120, 122) survey of television advertisements in the 1960's yielded the result that there was usually maximum simplicity in verbal groups, meaning that they consisted of a single word (e.g. *give, gives*). Biber at al. (2002: 158, 168, 178) note that the preference to use simple verb forms is rather consistent across various registers, but while Leech (1966: 122) admits this, he argues that the unmarked type of verb is especially ubiquitous in advertising English. The term *unmarked* has to do with the system of aspect (perfect and progressive forms), voice (active vs. passive) and modality (the use of modal verbs) and indicates those verb phrases that are ”neutral” in that they have not been marked by a special grammatical form in those categories (Biber 2002: 149; Leech 1966: 121-122). Using the verb *see* as an example, an unmarked present tense form would be *see,* while the form marked in both aspect, voice and modality could be realised as *may have been seen* or *can be being seen,* for instance.

Leech (1966: 122) also maintains that simple present tense forms (e.g. *see, sees*) and simple imperatives (e.g. *see!*) are by far the most frequent finite verbal groups, while past tense forms (e.g. *saw*) are much less common in advertising language. According to him, this can be explained by the fact that the focal point of any advertising message is the present moment, and the use of the past tense excludes the present. To illustrate this, advertisers almost invariably describe the product as it is ”now” and list benefits that it can offer to the

potential customer if they buy it. Leech (1966: 124) observes, however, that past tense forms are sometimes used to emphasise the difference between ”then” and ”now”, when the product is advertised as being able to effect some positive change. The following example (mine) demonstrates this use:

> Yesterday, my eyesight was far from perfect. Now, after having laser surgery at this clinic, I can finally see everything clearly!

Another usual application of the past tense is in so-called prestige advertising, that is, in advertising designed to enhance the reputation of the company. Leech (1966: 125) notes that it can be used when reporting the milestones and achievements of the company, as illustrated by the following example (mine):

> We were the pioneers of eye surgery and wanted to help as many people as possible. So far, we have helped over 10 000 people get rid of their glasses.

Prestige advertising is also one of the few areas where the perfect aspect can be seen in advertising language. In the slogan above, the last sentence contains the perfect verb form *we have helped,* which gives the reader the impression of a long tradition and accumulative experience that the customer can now benefit from.

Even though modals in general are rather infrequent in advertising English, *will* and *can* are indicated by Leech (1966: 125) as two significant exceptions. According to him, the modal *will* occurs in clauses expressing a promise. In some contexts, it can also be seen as implying the infallibility of the claim, for instance *You'll love your new freedom from glasses* (my own example), which could be paraphrased as *You cannot help but love your new freedom from glasses.* If the subject of the modal *can* is animate, it most often refers to consumers, who are positioned as the beneficiary of an ability or power that the product advertised grants them. The subject also commonly refers to either the product or service offered or to the advertising company, in which case the use of the modal *can* expresses the opportunity or possibilities that the product or the company can offer to the consumer. The

following slogans demonstrate the difference between the two uses of *can*:

> Imagine the possibilities and soon you can see for yourself!
>
> If you are considering laser eye surgery, another form of refractive eye surgery or cataract surgery then Grange Eye Consultants can help

Vestergaard and Schrøder (1985: 69) describe another function of the modals *will* and *can* that is related but not identical to the ones mentioned above. The authors maintain that these modals are frequently employed in a situation where the advertiser wants to encourage the consumer to act without sounding too directive. Therefore, the advertiser simply provides information about the use or availability of the product by using *will* or *can,* as in an example provided by Vestergaard and Schrøder, *you can use it at the table as well as in the cooking*.

In addition to the aforementioned reasons for using *will* and *can,* advertisers have a tendency to imitate face-to-face interaction, which may also account for the fact that those modals are so frequently found in advertisements: as Biber et al. (2002: 178) observe, *will* and *can* are the two most common modal verbs in the language of conversation. The infrequent occurrence of certain other modals, such as *may, might, could* and *should,* may also be explained by their tendency to weaken the advertising claim (Delin 2000: 131). The modal *might*, for example, substantially dilutes the assertion in the invented example *You might get rid of your glasses with the help of eye surgery*. It is worth noting, however, that it is in fact quite common for advertisers to intentionally weaken the advertising claim in order to circumvent the ethical problem of making assertions for which there is no evidence. Thus, in some areas of advertising where this is an important factor, modals might be more widespread than in others.

3.2.7 Personal pronouns

The use of pronouns is an area where advertising differs significantly from other registers (Cook 1992: 155), which makes it an especially fruitful and meaningful subject of linguistic analysis. The inherent problem of advertising is that while it is a non-personal method of communication, it needs to personalise the message for the consumers, since they do not like the impression of only being addressed as part of a mass audience (Delin 2000: 136). In consequence, the only solution is for the advertisement to *seem* personal, even though it targets a large number of people at once (Myers 1994: 78). According to Williamson (1978: 50), the pronoun *you* that is so common in advertisements is thus to be regarded as referring to *you*, the reader of the advertisement, even though there is no logical reason to suppose that it was specifically *you* that the advertiser had in mind when creating the advertisement. As Williamson (1978: 50-51) elaborates,

> Every ad necessarily assumes a particular spectator: it projects into the space out in front of it an imaginary person composed in terms of the relationship between the elements within the ad. You move into this space as you look at the ad, and in doing so 'become' the spectator... The 'you' in ads is always transmitted plural, but we receive it as singular.

Consumers are thus expected to recognise themselves in the pronoun *you* as well as to accept the other assumptions that make the advertisement purposeful and logical (Myers 1994: 88). As Myers (ibid.) remarks, ”even if we don't buy the product, we may for a moment buy a view of the world”.

The use of certain pronouns in advertisements, especially *you,* also helps to produce a sense of equality and a conversational tone while downplaying the role of the advertiser as a possessor of information and an authority (Delin 2000: 136; Fairclough 1989: 37). The pronoun *we*, for example, can be used in both exclusive and inclusive senses in advertisements (Biber et al. 2002: 94; Myers 1994: 81). In Myers's (1994: 81) view, when *we* includes the person who is spoken to, it creates a sense of solidarity with the consumer, which

in turn gives the advertisement a more equal and conversational tone. Myers (ibid., p. 82) provides an illustrative example of this use from the 1940's:

> WE ARE CONSTANTLY BEING ATTACKED
> Not by Blitzkrieg, which we can and will face - but by hosts of insidious foes in the shape of germs

It can be assumed that the advertiser expects readers to include themselves in the *we,* as the advertisement would otherwise be illogical. In contrast, when *we* is used exclusively, it refers to the company, granting it a more personal image. For instance, if the pronoun *we* is substituted with the name of the clinic in the slogan *We bring YOUR life back into FOCUS*, the image projected becomes more impersonal and detached and the tone less friendly: *Manhattan Lasik Center brings YOUR life back into FOCUS*.

The pronoun *I* most commonly refers to the potential customer, the expert or advocate of the product, or the sceptic (Myers 1994: 83; Cook 1992: 155). As with *you* and *we,* consumers are expected to recognise themselves in the *I* when it is used to refer to them, and to accept the underlying assumptions, as in the following example (mine):

> I want to get rid of glasses and feel more confident.

Myers (1994: 83, 85) argues that *I* is used in advertisements to offer readers a new way to define themselves and to be distinctive individuals. As advertising is fundamentally mass communication, the goal of advertisers is to persuade consumers to ”be different *like* other people” (Myers 1994: 83).

Even though the third person pronouns (*he, she, it, they*) do not involve either the reader or the advertiser, they can also be used to establish positions and to create the impression of a personalised message (Myers 1994: 85). *He, she* and *they* can indicate someone known to the reader either through the advertisement or as part of their life (Myers 1994: 85, 87), but they are also frequently used by advertisers to refer to those that fail to use the product, in order to distance them from the reader (Cook 2001: 155-156), as illustrated by the following example

(mine):

> She thought refractive surgery was a waste of money. But should you really put a price on your health?

3.2.8 Cohesion

The study of cohesion is defined by Leech (1966: 142) as ”the study of elements by which the individual logical parts of a message are joined together in coherent discourse”. It is another area in which advertising language differs significantly from the other registers of written English. As Toolan (1988: 58) maintains, the standards of explicit textual linkage are often intentionally neglected in advertisements. This incompleteness or obscurity, as Toolan calls the result of this practice, often creates conversational informality and forces readers to construct the connections for themselves, thus becoming active participants in the interpretation of the advertisement. The latter factor is especially important, since it may increase the memorability of the advertisement. When advertisers wish to achieve coherence, they prefer lexical cohesion to pronominalisation and other structural cohesive devices.

In the analysis of the present data, I will follow the classification of cohesive devices provided by Guy Cook (1992: 148):

> 1. The repetition of lexical items
> 2. Lexical items or phrases with some sense relation, e.g. synonymy, antonymy
> 3. Referring expressions (especially pronouns) understood by reference to a unit in another sentence
> 4. Ellipsis, in which an omitted unit is recoverable from a previous sentence
> 5. Conjunctions (words and phrases which indicate a logical, temporal, causal or exemplifying relationship)

As Cook demonstrates, all of these linguistic devices help to make a text cohesive and to link clauses and sentences within it together. While Leech (1966: 143-150) also discusses these cohesive devices briefly, he focuses mainly on linking, parataxis and apposition. He argues that these features are especially common in advertising language due to the frequent use of

disjunctive grammar and the tendency of advertisers to let the relationship between different sentences be assumed, instead of expressing them overtly with the help of conjunctions or other cohesive devices that are normally used in written English. By linking, Leech (ibid., p. 146) refers to the listing of different properties or uses of the product, linked together by the conjunctions *and* or *or*. Parataxis differs from linking in that no conjunction is used to connect the listed items together. The following slogans illustrate the difference:

> What makes Centre for Sight special? LEADERSHIP, EXPERIENCE, EXPERTISE and REPUTATION *(linking)*
>
> Freedom - Experience - Convenience - Dedication - Vision - Reassurance *(parataxis)*

Apposition, another construction that is very common in advertising language, refers to the practice in which two noun groups are placed side by side, with one element serving to define or modify the other, which is most commonly the name of the product or the service provider (ibid., p. 147). The slogan *Yorkshire Eye Hospital: A leading laser eye treatment centre* is an example of apposition. These three methods of coordinating elements will also be taken into consideration when analysing the data.

3.3 Lexical features

In this section, typical lexical features of advertisements will be examined. Those features include the use of some common verbs and adjectives, comparative reference, weasel claims, technical and scientific terms, brand names, neologisms and other forms of creative deviation from lexical rules.

Leech (1966: 151-155) has studied adjective and verb vocabulary in television advertising and notes that there is much more variation in the former than in the latter. He also presents a list of the most common verbs and adjectives, of which the ten most popular are

listed in Table 1.

	Adjectives	**Verbs**
1.	new	make
2.	good / better / best	get
3.	free	give
4.	fresh	have
5.	delicious	see
6.	full, sure	buy
7.		come
8.	clean, wonderful	go
9.		know
10.	special	keep, look

Table 1. *The ten most popular adjectives and verbs in Leech's (1966) sample.*

As Table 1 evidences, the most frequently used adjectives and verbs in advertising language tend to be very commonplace English words and most often monosyllables. Indeed, when one compares Leech's list of verbs with that presented by Biber et al. (2002: 110) of the twelve most common lexical verbs in English, there are many similarities. The verbs *make, get, give, see, come, go* and *know* are on both lists, for example. The most notable difference is the lack of the verb *say* in Leech's list: according to Biber et al., *say* is the single most common lexical verb in English. On the other hand, the verbs *buy, have, keep* and *look* are absent from the list compiled by Biber et al. These differences are understandable considering the unique characteristics and objectives of advertising language. A further feature that characterises the verbs in both lists is that they are mostly of Germanic origin.

A linguistic construction called *comparative reference* is very common in advertisements. According to Goddard (1998: 103-104), this construction ”tells the reader that they need to locate particular items in the text, and draw them together for comparison on a specified basis”. To illustrate this, the sentence *our product is cheaper than the product made by our*

rival contains a comparative reference, and the basis for comparison is inexpensiveness. Comparative reference occurs most commonly in a modified form in advertisements, however: advertisers usually omit the comparative item but retain the basis for comparison as they try to avoid comparing their product directly with others by referring to their rivals. Leech (1966: 160) calls these constructions *unqualified comparisons*. For example, there is a comparative reference in the slogan *Want "Sharper Vision" without glasses?* but it remains unclear to us whether the advertiser means *sharper vision than before* or *sharper vision than what other clinics can offer.*

The use of weasel claims is yet another lexical feature that many advertisements tend to have. *Weasel claim* is an informal term for a phrase which has been chosen for its ability to create the impression that something specific and meaningful has been said, when in reality only a vague, ambiguous claim has been communicated, thus misleading consumers. To illustrate this, the verb *help* is one of the most common weasel words and can be used in slogans such as *Mandel Vision, helping you see your world clearly*. The slogan gives the impression that the clinic is able to make the customer see clearly, when in fact no promise has been made: the clinic and refractive eye surgery may only have a very small part in this process in reality. Weasel claims are a ubiquitous feature of advertising language, even if a controversial one from the point of view of advertising ethics.

In addition to comparative references and weasel claims, technical and scientific terms, neologisms and brand names occur frequently in advertisements. The use of technical terms and product names as nominal pre-modifiers is discussed in Sections 3.2.5 and 5.1.5, whereas their lexical features will be discussed here and in Section 5.2.4. The frequency of technical and scientific terms naturally depends on the nature of the advertised product and the objectives of the advertiser, and in some areas of advertising they may even be very uncommon. When the advertiser wishes to create the impression that the service provider or

the product is particularly modern, professional, technologically advanced or based on some scientific principle, for instance, technical and scientific terms can be very useful.

The use of brand names, on the other hand, has to do with memorability. As Leech (1966: 28-29) maintains, an advertisement needs to make a lasting impression in order to affect the behaviour of the consumer. Repetition has an important role in enhancing memorability, which is why the name of the product or the service provider is often mentioned several times in a single advertisement. This increases the probability that consumers remember the name when they are making a purchase decision. According to Leech (ibid., pp. 145-146), the repetition of brand names can also be seen as a means of creating cohesion, but that is only a secondary function. Indeed, this repetition often occurs in neighbouring clauses, where it would normally be avoided by using a pronoun, as in *And Clark's sandals really fit, because Clark's sandals are made in four width fittings* (Leech's example).

A further feature that is highly characteristic of advertising language is creativity, or ”copywriter's licence”, as it is termed by Leech (1966: 176). Intentional and creative deviation from lexical, orthographic, semantic, grammatical and structural rules (e.g. incomplete clauses in Section 3.2.4) is common in advertisements. Neologism, which refers to the invention of new words or new senses of existing words, is the most typical manifestation of lexical creativity. Using an unorthodox combination, or collocation, of lexical items is another common kind of lexical violation. In the slogan *See better, play harder*, the phrase *see better* is juxtaposed with the phrase *play harder*. Normally, the phrase *play harder* is collocated with the phrase *work hard* (as in *Work hard, play harder!*), which is why *see better* is unexpected and surprising.

According to Leech (1966: 176), the advertiser profits from using neologisms and other linguistic violations for several reasons. First of all, they can catch the potential customer's attention. They can also enhance memorability by helping to imprint the advertising message

in the consumer's memory. Leech also distinguishes a more subtle function that linguistic violations have: the ability to establish ”symbolic connections between the product and the ideals and emotive urges of the consumer”. This can be used in creating a positive image for the brand, for example, by prompting consumers to link certain positive feelings with the product. According to Leech, this kind of a clever use of linguistic violations greatly resembles ”creative writing” in a literary sense.

4 METHODS AND DATA

The slogans to be analysed were collected on the Internet in November 2010 by visiting websites of clinics offering refractive eye surgery in the United Kingdom and the United States. Slogans were deemed to be the suitable unit for the analysis as they are a language-based and distinctive part of an advertisement, and their meaning is usually not dependent on extra-linguistic factors such as the layout. They are also short and concise enough to enable the inclusion in the analysis of slogans created by a sufficiently large number of different advertisers in order to enhance the representativeness of the data.

Websites were chosen as the source of slogans because of easy availability and the fact that the Internet is one of the most important channels in refractive surgery marketing. Due to the difference in the number of eye clinics in the two countries, all clinics performing refractive surgery in the United Kingdom were included, whereas a random sample of clinics in the United States was chosen. To improve representativeness in the latter, clinics were selected from various parts of the United States (the states of New York, Illinois, Florida, Texas and California). Some clinics offered cataract surgery or other services as well, but only those focusing on refractive surgery were included. The objective was not to compare slogans from the United States with those from the United Kingdom as this thesis aims to examine advertising language in general. Linguists examining both British and American advertisements have influenced the study of advertising English as well as the theoretical framework of this thesis, which is why it was deemed justifiable to include slogans from both of these counties. It also made it possible to gather a sufficiently large sample of slogans for analysis. Some remarks will nevertheless be made concerning any emerging differences between them, and possible explanations for these differences will also be sought.

All suitable slogans were collected on the websites of the selected clinics. A slogan is

typically understood as a short and memorable motto or phrase used in advertising and politics. For the purposes of this study, a slogan was further defined as follows: first, it had to have a marketing function, and not merely an informative one, and second, it was to be clearly distinct from the main body of text (e.g. appearing in a flash animation or as a headline). Neither the length of the slogan nor the number of sentences which it contained was considered a decisive factor when collecting the sample. In all, 153 slogans fulfilled these criteria and were included in the analysis. Some websites contained two or three different slogans, and they were all accepted if they fulfilled the criteria mentioned above. Due to the scarcity of refractive surgery clinics in the United Kingdom, the US sample was considerably larger with 103 slogans, whereas only 50 suitable slogans were found on the websites of clinics situated in the United Kingdom. This disparity was considered acceptable in order to gain a large enough sample of slogans for analysis.

After collecting a sufficient number of slogans, a linguistic analysis was conducted. Syntactic, structural and grammatical as well as lexical features of the slogans were examined mostly qualitatively, but also quantitatively where appropriate. Stylistic features were mostly excluded from the analysis as they were beyond the scope of this thesis. Similarly, extra-linguistic factors, such as typography and layout, may also influence the consumer's perception of the advertisement, but they were also excluded from this thesis as the focus was purely linguistic. The syntactic, structural, grammatical and lexical features examined were mostly selected based on what were considered the most distinguishing qualities of advertisements by Leech (1966), but other studies on the language of advertising were taken into account, as well. The chosen features are summarised in Table 2 below.

Syntactic, structural and grammatical features	Lexical features
Imperative clauses	Verbs and adjectives
Interrogative clauses	Comparative reference
Exclamative clauses and exclamations	Weasel claims
Incomplete clauses	Technical and scientific terms
Noun phrases	Product names
Verbal groups	Creative deviation from lexical rules
Personal pronouns	
Cohesion	

Table 2. *The syntactic, structural, grammatical and lexical features examined.*

It was observed in the Introduction that slogans used in refractive surgery advertisements tend to fall into two different groups, with the focus either on medical factors and the procedure or on the quality of life. In order to examine this divergence, the advertising appeals that the slogans used were also analysed. First, nine different categories were formed by examining the slogans and finding the most common claims used in them, for instance ones pertaining to price or medical supremacy. The slogans were then each placed into one of the nine categories according to the claim that seemed to be the most central in them. To enhance the validity of the classification, another person was also asked to categorise the slogans to see whether the results would be congruent with mine, and the necessary adjustments were then made. The nine categories were then further classified into rational and emotional appeals, the former representing slogans with the focus on medical factors and the latter consisting of slogans emphasising the quality of life (see Table 3 below). This categorisation was deemed appropriate to be used in the analysis of the slogans to see whether there would be any syntactic, structural, grammatical or lexical differences between slogans emphasising medical factors and ones emphasising the quality of life.

Rational Appeals	Emotional appeals
Medical supremacy / expertise	Changing / improving one's life
Vision	Seeing the world / one's life in a new way
The procedure / techniques	Freedom / Independence from glasses
Price / value	Enjoyment of life
	Psychological factors

Table 3. *Rational and emotional appeals.*

Seven slogans were excluded from the classification either because they did not clearly belong to any of the nine categories (e.g. *The London Vision Clinic. It's not for everyone, but you owe it to yourself to see if it's right for you.*) or because they incorporated elements from three or more different categories without a clear emphasis on any of them (e.g. *Improve your vision and change your life with Laser Eye Surgery from the UK's No. 1 provider. From only £395 per eye.*). There were also a few slogans that were classified into two different categories at once, but this was not seen as a problem since those categories were always on the same side of the rational-emotional spectrum.

5 Analysis and findings

5.1 Syntactic, structural and grammatical features

The slogans in the corpus were generally not very long but nevertheless often consisted of more than one sentence (1.32 sentences on average). They contained approximately 7.2 words, and the average number of words per sentence was 5.43. The slogans collected from the websites of the clinics in the United Kingdom were slightly longer than those of the clinics in the United States: the former had approximately 1.38 sentences and 8.12 words in a slogan, while the numbers were 1.26 and 6.29 for the latter. The British slogans also tended to have more words in a sentence than their American counterparts (5.88 vs. 4.98). The average number of words and sentences in the slogans and the average number of words in each sentence are presented in Table 4 below:

	UK	**US**	**Total**
Sentences / slogan	1.38	1.26	1.32
Words / slogan	8.12	6.29	7.2
Words / sentence	5.88	4.98	5.43

Table 4. *Average number of sentences and words in the slogans and average number of words in each sentence. When calculating this table, segments divided by a dash were considered to belong to the same sentence, whereas segments divided by a line break were regarded as separate sentences.*

In the following sections, we shall first examine the use and functions of imperative, interrogative, exclamative and incomplete clauses. The distribution of different clause types is presented in Table 5 below:

	UK		US		Total	
	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%
Imperative	18	20	36	25.2	54	23.2
Interrogative	3	3.3	5	3.5	8	3.4
Exclamative	0	0	0	0	0	0
Incomplete	61	67.8	78	54.5	139	59.7
Declarative	8	8.9	24	16.8	32	13.7
Total	90	100	143	100	233	100

Table 5. *The number of imperative, interrogative, exclamative and incomplete clauses and the percentages of these constructions in the data. The number of declarative clauses is also presented here for the purposes of comparison.*

5.1.1 Imperative clauses

As hypothesised, there were a significant number of imperative constructions in the data. In the United Kingdom sample, 20 % of all clauses were imperative clauses. In the slogans collected from the websites of clinics situated in the United States, the percentage was 25.2. Imperative constructions were thus a very common structural feature in the data, but not necessarily ”the generic sentence type,” as Myers (1994: 47) proposes.

As mentioned in Section 3.2.1, imperative clauses are seldom accompanied by a politeness marker in advertisements. This was true also in the present data, since none of the slogans contained any. Leech's (1966: 111) argument that positive exhortations are significantly more common than negative ones was valid in this corpus, as well: only one of the slogans contained a prohibitive warning, and even that was followed by a positive imperative construction:

Don't just improve your eyesight. Enhance it.

The division of imperative verbs into the three categories distinguished by Leech (ibid., pp. 110-111) was not very fruitful with the present data. The first category consists of verbs that have to do with the acquisition of the product, but only one slogan (*Get laser eye surgery*

in November or December and take advantage of our 10% offer) in the data can be regarded as clearly belonging to this category. As a further point one can mention that, according to Leech (ibid., p. 110), the verb used in that sentence, *get,* is the most common verb in imperative constructions in advertisements.

In contrast, there were more examples of verbs belonging to the second category, that is, verbs that deal with the consumption and use of the product. Most of them were realised with the verb *enjoy* and the product (or service in this case) was referred to in a rather abstract and indirect manner, as exemplified by the slogan *Enjoy the freedom of clear vision*. Even more common than *enjoy* was the verb *see,* which Leech classifies as a third category verb. Verbs in that category have to do with noticing and observing, but while some of the imperative constructions with the verb *see* can be considered to do that, some other uses of *see* would rather belong to the second category:

See why we're clearly different (third category)
See your life more clearly than ever (second category)

The same applies to *view* and *experience*, two verbs which superficially seem to belong to the third category, but in fact might be classified into the second category for semantic reasons (e.g. *view LIFE with clear VISION*). This semantic ambiguity in the use of verbs of perception in the data has probably been deliberately created by the advertisers.

The three categories devised by Leech covered only a minority of the verbs in the imperative constructions in the data, which can probably be explained by the fact that the corpus Leech used was very different. Refractive surgery is a rather abstract service, but Leech analysed television advertisements of probably very tangible products. It might also be argued that hard-sell advertisements such as *Buy this car now!* may be less common nowadays than in the 1960's, and would even sound quite odd in the context of ”buying” a better sight. For the present purposes, the addition of two other categories would help classify the majority of the imperatives in the present data: first, verbs asking the potential customer to

contact the service provider[2] (e.g. *Take the first step to clear vision: Call 949-251-0229 for a free consultation*) and second, verbs urging the audience to change or improve their life. The slogans belonging to the latter category naturally carry the implication that the change and improvement is to be achieved with the help of the product. Surprisingly, however, merely three of those slogans actually mentioned refractive surgery, while the vast majority only referred to the desired outcome:

> Feel more confident.
>
> Improve your vision and change your life with Laser Eye Surgery from the UK's No. 1 provider. From only £395 per eye.

Interestingly, there were also some slogans in the data which did not use the imperative but which can nevertheless be regarded as indirect commands:

> Now is the time to get LASIK!
>
> It's not for everyone, but you owe it to yourself to see if it's right for you.

As Myers (1994: 47) argues, statements, questions and exclamations are sometimes used for a similar effect to the imperative. It could be argued that the reason why the advertiser used such a tactic in the former slogan is that they wanted to soften the command in order to decrease the impression of a hard-sell advertisement (cf. *Get LASIK now!*). In the latter slogan, the advertiser created a sense of a logical and objective argument by using a statement, whereas an imperative construction would have sounded more like a traditional persuasive advertisement (cf. *See if it's right for you!*).

It was noticed in the analysis of imperatives that they were very frequent in slogans appealing to emotions, whereas rational appeals rarely utilised them. This finding is consistent with the fact that the objective of rational appeals is to change the attitudes of the consumer towards the product with persuasive arguments and reasoning. It is thus important for the

[2] Viskari (2008: 39) made the same observation with her data.

advertiser to make the slogan sound more like a neutral argument than a subjective appeal, and turning to another register than advertising can provide the solution. In this context, it is advantageous for the advertiser appealing to reason to use the academic or medical registers, which seldom use imperatives (Biber et al. 2002: 255), to describe the positive qualities of the service provider and the benefits of the surgery to the patient. Conversely, the objective of emotional appeals is to evoke positive emotions in the consumer and to make them feel good about the product (Albers-Miller and Stafford 1999: 44), which can best be achieved by using conversational language and therefore imperatives as well, since they help to move the focus from the unpleasant and potentially dangerous medical procedure to the consumers themselves.

5.1.2 Interrogative clauses

There was a relatively low number of interrogatives in the data: only 3.3 percent of the clauses in the British corpus and 3.5 percent of the clauses in the American one. Interrogative clauses in the corpus regularly functioned as problems requiring a solution, and it was common for them to be followed by a statement which did not directly answer the question but which provided the means to address the problem, for example:

> Tired of wearing glasses or contact lenses? Take your first step towards natural vision today.

> Tired of wearing glasses or contact lenses? Get laser eye surgery in November or December and take advantage of our 10% offer

The above questions can also be seen as rhetorical, since the solution provided by the advertiser is only meaningful if consumers affirm that they indeed are tired of their glasses.

As discussed in the section on imperatives, clauses can sometimes realise a different speech act from the usual one for their grammatical type. Such an indirect speech act occurs when a question is used to issue a command, for example, as illustrated by the following

slogan:

> Change your outlook for 2010! Why Wait?

The rhetorical question at the end of the slogan urges the consumer to act and could also be read as *Don't wait!* Thus, it can more reasonably be understood as an indirect command than a genuine question requiring that the consumers state to themselves their reasons for waiting. The latter might even help psychologically cement the consumer's reluctance towards having surgery, which would naturally be against the advertiser's objectives.

Another common characteristic of interrogatives in advertising language, presuppositions, also occurred in the data. It was used either to associate a positive characteristic with the clinic or to make a claim about the procedure, as illustrated by the following slogans:

> What makes Centre for Sight special? LEADERSHIP, EXPERIENCE, EXPERTISE and REPUTATION

> Want ”Sharper Vision” without glasses?

The first sentence contains the presupposition that the clinic in question is special without stating this directly, while the second implies that sharper vision without glasses is possible with the help of the advertising clinic. Both of these uses of presupposition are economical: they contain the desired amount of information while being concise and managing not to seem pretentious and arrogant, as can be seen if the presupposition is substituted with a preceding statement, for instance:

> Centre for Sight is special. What makes it special? LEADERSHIP, EXPERIENCE, EXPERTISE and REPUTATION

The division into emotional and rational appeals did not seem relevant with interrogatives. There were a few more interrogatives in the former category than in the latter, but because interrogative clauses occurred so infrequently in the corpus, it is impossible to make any definitive conclusions based on this observation.

5.1.3 Exclamative clauses and exclamations

Exclamative clauses and exclamations were very rare in the data studied. In fact, there were no instances of exclamative clauses in the whole corpus, and while seven slogans contained an exclamation in the US sample, there were no exclamations in the British corpus. From a syntactic perspective, exclamations were realised with either incomplete or declarative clauses in the present data.

As stated in Section 3.2.3, the puristic view defines an exclamation either as conveying a spoken emotion or as an emotional utterance in which a certain element is missing. While the corpus contained some exclamations lacking grammatically necessary elements, it is doubtful whether they could be considered emotional, as illustrated by the following three slogans that all contain incomplete clauses:

> Home of 20 / 20 vision... or your money back!
>
> Helping you to see what matters most!
>
> Less than $5.50 per day!

Myers's (1994: 51) observation that most exclamations in advertisements do not conform to the purists' view is thus valid here as well. To illustrate this, the following slogans could be read as simple statements were it not for the exclamation marks, which indicate an expression of emotion:

> freedom from poor vision, glasses and contact lenses is possible now!
>
> Great eyecare starts with Dr. Gualtieri!
>
> Now is the time to get LASIK!

5.1.4 Incomplete clauses

Incomplete clauses were by far the most common clause type in the present data: 67.8 % of the British clauses and 54.5 % of the American clauses were incomplete. The prevalence of disjunctive syntax in the data can probably be explained by the fact that disjunctive syntax occurs most often in headlines, signature lines and poster advertising (Leech 1966: 95), which the slogans used in this study can be associated with due to their concise and pithy nature.

In both corpora, the noun phrase was the most typical manifestation of disjunctive grammar: Approximately half of the slogans in the corpus had a noun phrase functioning as if it was an independent clause. It was also very common for the advertiser to use multiple noun phrases in one slogan by separating them with a full stop, multiple consecutive full stops, colon, dash or less frequently a comma. The juxtaposed noun phrases were usually the name of the clinic or the service provided by it followed by a positive characteristic. For example:

BLADE-FREE CUSTOM LASIK: The Safest LASIK Yet

Birkdale Pure Sight... an array of unrivalled specialist options

Yorkshire Eye Hospital: A leading laser eye treatment centre

LaserVue Eye Center – a LASIK center you can trust.

As the above examples demonstrate, it was common for the noun phrases to be modified by either one or more adjectives, a relative clause or a prepositional phrase. It was also common to juxtapose unmodified noun phrases that denote a desirable quality for a clinic to have:

reputation - care - excellence

Expertise - Advanced Diagnostics - Latest Treatments - Choice

Another quite typical method of realising an incomplete clause in the present data was the use of non-finite clauses. They were almost exclusively used to refer to the clinic in question and can therefore be read as a logical extension of the company name or logo, especially

when placed in close proximity to the latter on the web page, for example:

Committed to Highest Standards of Care

Bringing your world into focus

Providing quality eye care

Helping patients achieve visual freedom

Additionally, there were instances of single adjectives (e.g. *Affordable. Dependable. Experienced.*), prepositional phrases (e.g. *With LASIK... Better vision in minutes.*) and adverbial clauses (e.g. *Where patient's care is top priority*) functioning as if they were independent clauses, as well as some idiomatic expressions without an auxiliary (e.g. *Why wait?*).

According to Delin (2000: 129), there exist various reasons for using disjunctive syntax in advertisements, and it is possible to discern their influence on the present data, as well. For instance, by separating the name of the clinic or the procedure from an adjective or a noun phrase denoting a desirable quality or a positive characteristic with the help of punctuation and the omission of the verb linking them, the advertiser avoids making an explicit claim for which they do not necessarily have objective evidence. As can be seen from the following examples, the information will nevertheless evoke associations between the juxtaposed elements, making it difficult for the reader to avoid connecting the positive quality with the clinic or the procedure:

Laser Vision Correction
SAFE. AFFORDABLE. WORLD CLASS TEAM

Birkdale Pure Sight... an array of unrivalled specialist options

Another important reason for punctuating a clause into smaller, ungrammatical segments is that it enables the advertiser to present additional argumentative or informative points (Delin 2000: 57; Toolan 1988: 57). For example,

The right doctor. The right technology. The right time. No money down. 0 %

interest. Less than $5.50 per day!

Unrivalled care. Ultimate service.

The first slogan could theoretically be written as a single complete clause, but it would become cumbersome and lose its structure of six separate information foci. Furthermore, many advertisements attempt to mimic the conversational style of face-to-face interaction, as stated in Section 3.2.4. If the slogan was merged into a single sentence, it would lose its resemblance to speech, which is often characterised by abrupt pauses and short segments. The second slogan offers another illuminating example: by separating the two noun phrases with a full stop, the advertiser is not only able to place emphasis on both the care and the service they offer, but also to profit from the stylistic effect that the repetition of the consonant *u* provides, which accentuates the allegedly exceptional nature of the clinic even further. The slogan would sound less emphatic and poetic if the segments were merged with the connective *and* (i.e. *Unrivalled care and ultimate service),* especially when one reads the slogan aloud.

In the present data, there were no instances of slogans using connectives at the beginning of an incomplete clause to create a ”reason-why” argument, which was the fourth incentive for using incomplete clauses suggested by Delin (2000: 129). A comparable construction was found, however, in which a prepositional phrase was used as an incomplete clause before a noun phrase, creating a sense of ”a logical argument unfolding”.

With LASIK... Better vision in minutes.

The atypical placement of the prepositional phrase at the beginning of the slogan also strengthens the impression that achieving better vision in minutes is only possible with LASIK. All in all, the analysis of the corpus indicates that the reasons for incomplete clauses that were put forward by Delin are valid to at least some extent in eye surgery advertising, as well.

5.1.5 Noun phrases

While there is usually maximum simplicity in verbal groups in advertisements (see Section 3.2.6), it has been argued that noun phrases tend to be lengthy and complex. Somewhat contrary to the views presented in Section 3.2.5, however, a careful analysis of the noun groups in the present data yielded the result that while complex noun phrases were indeed abundant, simple noun phrases were also plentiful. There were instances of slogans that consisted of unmodified noun phrases only (e.g. *Clarity. Comfort. Confidence.*), as well as slogans with heavily modified noun phrases (e.g. *VISX LASIK Technology - For safer more precise results approved for use by NASA and the US Airforce*). The positions of the noun phrases varied thus greatly on the scale between maximum simplicity and maximum complexity.

Possible reasons for this variation might include the fact that some of the slogans were used in flash animations, where spatial and often even temporal constraints apply, and some as headlines in the main part of the website, where there is room for longer and syntactically more elaborated sentences. As Bruthiaux (1996: 80-81) argues, spatial and financial constraints often lead to a heavy modification of noun phrases in order to reduce the need for function words. While this was true in some cases in the present data, the situation proved to be more complex, however: there was a discernible trend towards both short sentences and unmodified noun phrases in flash animations and in other spatially constrained parts of the site, while slogans acting as a headline tended to consist of longer sentences with more complex noun phrases (see Table 6 below). Thus, spatial constraints did not seem to correlate with maximum complexity in noun phrases in the present data. On the contrary, the existence of spatial and temporal constraints most often seemed to lead to the use of both simple verb phrases and simple noun phrases. It can therefore be argued that the need for function words was eliminated in some other manner than by the use of complex noun phrases. As shown in

Sections 5.1 and 5.1.4, incomplete clauses were the most common clause type in the data. The use of incomplete clauses reduced the need for verbal inflection, prepositions, pronouns and other function words, and the frequent use of imperative constructions (see Section 5.1.1) and the lack of cohesion (see Section 5.1.8) had the same effect in some respects.

Spatial and / or temporal constraints (appearing in flash animations)	**No spatial or temporal constraints (appearing as headlines)**
Trust the Doctors the Doctors Trust	Latest procedures and state-of-the-art technology
Enjoy life without glasses	Tired of wearing glasses or contact lenses? Take your first step towards natural vision today.
reputation - care - excellence	State of the Art Laser Vision Correction from Delaware's Leader

Table 6. *Examples of slogans either constrained or not constrained by spatial and temporal factors.*

Another possible reason for the surprisingly great number of simple noun phrases in the present data has to do with the attempt of many advertisers to imitate conversational language, which is characterised by significantly less pre- and post-modification than the registers of advertising and science, as Biber et al. (2002: 267) demonstrate. For advertisers of refractive surgery who wish to move the focus away from the medical nature of the procedure, this can be an important factor. Indeed, it was found that the slogans emphasising quality of life aspects contained plenty of noun phrases with either no modification or one single pre-modifier. Both post-modifiers and clusters of more than one pre-modifier were rare. On the other hand, there were a great number of complex noun phrases in the slogans emphasising medical factors, for example *Internationally Renowned Excimer Laser Experts* and *The safest, most advanced laser technology available worldwide.*

Both pre-modifiers and post-modifiers were frequently used in the present data. Biber et al. (2002: 265-266) distinguish three different types of pre-modifiers: adjectives, participials

and nouns. While all of these were very common methods of modifying nouns in the analysed slogans, their distribution was interesting. Adjectives were frequently used as pre-modifiers both in the slogans emphasising medical factors and in the slogans focusing on the quality of life, but nouns and participials functioned as pre-modifiers only in the former, with few exceptions (including the frequent occurrence of the compound noun *contact lenses* in the quality of life category). To illustrate this, noun phrases such as *Ireland's leading laser eye clinic* often occurred in slogans emphasising medical factors, while noun phrases with a single adjective as a pre-modifier, such as *a better life, new horizons* and *visual freedom* were the most common noun phrase type in the other category.

Leech (1966: 127-132) distinguishes four different typical ways of using pre-modifiers in advertisements, and there were examples of each of them in the present data. First, technical terms serve in detailing the features and functions of the product. It is not uncommon to see whole clusters of technical pre-modifiers in the same noun phrase in technological communication and many advertisements. In the analysis of the slogans, it was noticed that technical terms were one of the most common forms of noun modification. The vast majority of technical pre-modifiers occurred in slogans focusing on medical factors, as these examples demonstrate:

> Internationally Renowned Excimer Laser Experts
>
> Home of 20 / 20 vision... or your money back!
>
> Ride the wave of technology with the new custom cornea lasik
>
> VISX LASIK Technology - For safer more precise results approved for use by NASA and the US Airforce

Secondly, the use of product names is given by Leech (1966: 130) as one of the reasons for using complex noun phrases. Advertisers have a habit of referring frequently to the product that they are selling, and that can be done conveniently by using the product's name as a pre-modifier. The analysis of the slogans in the present corpus yielded little evidence of this

habit, however. Indeed, there were only two slogans that could be seen as using the product name as a pre-modifier of a noun:

> VISX LASIK Technology - For safer more precise results approved for use by NASA and the US Airforce
>
> The Tylock Advantage

The former slogan combines the name of a company that manufactures refractive surgery instruments, *VISX*, with the technical pre-modifier *LASIK* and the noun *Technology*. The latter slogan was found on the website of ”Tylock Lasik”, a clinic run by Dr. Gary R. Tylock. By using his surname as a pre-modifier of the noun *advantage*, Dr. Tylock succeeds in juxtaposing the two elements in a way that helps create an impression of some unique quality that only his clinic has to offer. The lexical features of the product names in the slogans will be examined in more detail in Section 5.2.4.

Unlike product names, attributive adjectives were often used to modify nouns in the data. According to Leech (1966: 129), equally important as giving information about the advertised product or service is ”giving glowingly attractive descriptions of it”. When there were attributive adjectives modifying nouns in the medical slogans category, they referred either to the clinic or to the service they offered:

> Great eyecare starts with Dr. Gualtieri!
>
> The right doctor. The right technology. The right time. No money down. 0 % interest. Less than $5.50 per day!
>
> Best Doctors

Attributive adjectives were somewhat less common in the quality of life category. In the majority of the cases, they were used to modify nouns denoting either the vision or the life of the prospective customer:

> Better vision for a better life
>
> freedom from poor vision, glasses and contact lenses is possible now!

Lastly, the tendency of advertisers to join information and commendation together often leads to high complexity in noun phrases in advertising. According to Leech (1966: 129-130), by using both attributive and designative pre-modifiers, the advertiser is able to include both some vital information about the product and praise for it in the same noun phrase. Since the two elements are juxtaposed and thus closely interwoven, it is often impossible for the consumer to distinguish fact from the advertiser's own opinion. The present data contained some examples of this habit:

Yorkshire Eye Hospital: A leading laser eye treatment centre

New York's Premiere LASIK Surgeon

Birkdale Pure Sight... an array of unrivalled specialist options

Dr. Goosey is named one of the best LASIK doctors of Houston.

As can be seen from the examples, the most common strategy was to combine the abbreviation *LASIK* or another term denoting eye surgery with an evaluative pre-modifier to create a phrase that sounds both professional and commending. As could be expected on the basis of this finding, all of the slogans that contained noun phrases with both attributive and designative pre-modifiers belonged to the category emphasising medical factors.

While pre-modifiers have been extensively studied by scholars interested in advertising English, post-modifiers have received relatively little attention. The analysis of the present data showed, however, that post-modification of noun phrases in advertising slogans is a common practice, as well. According to Biber et al. (2002: 266), both clauses and phrases can be used as post-modifiers. The former include relative clauses and *to*-, *ing*- and *ed*-clauses, and the latter prepositional phrases, appositive noun phrases and less commonly adjective phrases. With the exception of *ing*-clauses, all of these different types of post-modifiers were found in the present data, as the following examples illustrate:

The only LASEK center in NYC that doesn't cut flaps *(relative clause)*

Now is the time to get LASIK! *(*to-*clause)*

Laser eye surgery directed by surgeons, not corporations, overseen by the Leeds Teaching Hospitals NHS Trust *(*ed-*clause)*

The way to clear vision *(prepositional phrase)*

Stephen Turner, M.D., official LASIK surgeon of the Golden State Warriors *(appositive noun phrase)*

Quality Worth Experiencing *(adjective phrase)*

While prepositional phrases, *ed*-clauses and relative clauses were rather common with numerous instances found in the corpus, the other types of post-modification were used quite infrequently.

5.1.6 Verbal groups

Leech's (1966: 120, 122) observation that simple verb forms are preferred to marked ones in advertisements can be seen to be valid in the present data, as well. Perfect, progressive and passive forms were relatively rare and modal verbs were seldom used. It was also suggested in Section 3.2.6 that past tense forms are much less common in advertising language than present tense forms and imperatives. This was clearly seen in the analysis, as there was only one past tense form in the corpus:

Over 20,000 eyes chose one centre of excellence
When making your choice, see, hear and talk to the professionals first

The use of the past tense is somewhat surprising here, and the present perfect might have been a more natural choice, since it would have created a sense of continuity. In other words, the past tense verb form *chose* carries a slight implication that the clinic used to be chosen by over 20,000 eyes but is not anymore. It is possible that this was an attempt at a common strategy used in prestige advertising, reporting the milestones and achievements of the company. Prestige advertising is indeed one of the very few areas of advertising where the

past tense is regularly used (Leech 1966: 125). The use of the past tense in reporting the clinic's achievement may create the impression that the slogan is rather a solemn and objective recounting of history than an advertisement. Additionally, the imperative forms in the second sentence help bring the focus back to the present, urging the consumer to act after they have been ”objectively” told about the clinic's achievement.

The perfect aspect was one of the least common methods of creating ”marked” verb forms as there were only two perfect verb forms in the whole data:

> See what you've been missing.
>
> SEE the life you've been missing

By using the perfect aspect in these slogans, the advertiser indicates that the consumer has missed things in the past and that this continues in the present. The implication is, naturally, that it will be the case in the future as well unless the consumer undergoes eye surgery. The use of the progressive aspect in the same verbal group emphasises this continuity and, since the progressive aspect usually describes events that are in progress for a limited amount of time (Biber et al. 2002: 156, 162), it also implies that the situation need not be irreversible but can be changed with the help of the advertising clinic.

There were also two ambiguous constructions that could be regarded as indicating the perfect aspect:

> more than 25,000 laser eye procedures carried out in the last 15 years
>
> Serving the West Houston & Katy Areas for over 25 years

In the former slogan, the auxiliary has been omitted, which makes the clause incomplete. It is impossible to ascertain whether the advertiser intended the slogan to be read as *more than 25,000 laser eye procedures have been carried out in the last 15 years,* but semantically this seems the most probable interpretation. The same reading is valid with the latter slogan, as excluding the perfect aspect from the interpretation would render it illogical (i.e. *We are /*

were serving the West Houston & Katy Areas for over 25 years).

There was a surprising difference in the frequency of progressive forms between the British and the American corpora: there was only one instance in the former but as many as fifteen in the latter. The reason for this is probably the tendency of advertisers to imitate spoken English: as Biber et al. (2002: 158) attest, the use of the progressive aspect is much more common in American English conversation than in British English conversation, whereas in written texts there is no significant variation between the two varieties. Therefore, American advertisers wishing to give a conversational quality to an advertisement needed to use progressive forms, while their British counterparts used non-progressive forms. Apart from the two instances of present perfect progressive forms discussed above, all the other progressives were in the present progressive without the perfect aspect, for example:

> If you are considering laser eye surgery, another form of refractive eye surgery or cataract surgery then Grange Eye Consultants can help.
>
> Clearer vision is waiting

Another interesting observation was the propensity of advertisers to remove the subject and the auxiliary *be* from the progressive verb phrase, which was the case in almost 70 % (eleven out of sixteen) of all occurrences of the progressive. Normally, the progressive aspect is formed with *be* + *ing*-participle, and the removal of the conjugated form of the auxiliary results in the clause becoming non-finite, as exemplified by the slogan *Helping patients achieve visual freedom*. It can be argued here that the consumer is supposed to make a mental link between the implied subject (the advertising clinic) and the slogan, which makes it possible for the advertiser to omit the subject and the auxiliary *be* altogether and to use the non-finite clause as an independent, yet incomplete clause. This kind of implication is especially strong when the slogan and the company name or logo are in proximity of each other, as suggested in the section discussing incomplete clauses.

It is worth noting, however, that this use is somewhat similar to that of a non-finite *ing*-

clause as a supplement clause modifying the subject of the main clause (Benner 2010; Biber et al. 2002: 259-260). This can be demonstrated by altering the example slogan:

> [We are] helping patients achieve visual freedom *(the original slogan with the implied subject and auxiliary added)*
>
> Helping patients achieve visual freedom, [we are able to improve their life] *(as a supplement clause modifying the subject* we *in the main clause)*

As shown above, this particular slogan can easily be seen as realising the progressive aspect, but the case is more complicated with some other slogans. It is unclear, for instance, whether the slogan *Changing your vision* can be rewritten in the progressive form *We are / have been changing your vision,* as this would sound semantically quite odd in the context, or whether it should rather be regarded as a supplement *ing*-clause modifying the name of the company (i.e. *The Refractive Laser Specialists of New York, changing your vision.*).

The active voice seemed to be almost invariably preferred to the passive by the advertisers, as only one slogan contained a grammatically complete passive construction:

> Dr. Goosey is named one of the best LASIK doctors of Houston.

The agent of the passive construction *is named* is unspecified, which has assumably been the advertiser's objective in choosing to use the passive voice. The observation by Biber et al. (2002: 166) that the passive reduces the importance of the agent is especially relevant in the field of marketing: by specifying the agent, the advertiser would have been obliged to indicate whether it was the medical community, the customers or the doctor himself who performed this ”naming”. The use of the passive voice also enables the foregrounding of the doctor whose services are being advertised, since he becomes the subject and the first element of the sentence.

There were also some constructions in the corpus that seemed to involve the passive voice even though some necessary elements were missing:

> more than 25,000 laser eye procedures carried out in the last 15 years

Committed to excellence in vision care

Committed to Highest Standards of Care

The first slogan can be unproblematically classified as a passive construction in an incomplete clause where the auxiliary *be* in its inflected form is absent. The other two, from which both the auxiliary and the subject have been removed, are more complicated. As argued above, consumers are often supposed to make a mental link between the slogan and the name or logo of the company, which enables them to supply the omitted subject and auxiliary themselves. A closer examination shows, however, that the verbs in these two slogans do not actually indicate the passive voice: it is evident from the context that the verb *committed* is rather stative in meaning and that this ”committing” has not been done by an outside agent (cf. *A crime was committed.*). In consequence, it should rather be regarded as a predicative adjective in an incomplete clause.

The corpus also contained a few other *-ed* verb forms, and they incidentally also occurred in incomplete clauses. Some of them them can be classified as participial adjectives, as illustrated by the following two examples:

Limited time only $1000 OFF LASIK

experienced surgeons

The other *-ed* forms functioned as postmodifying participle clauses:

Laser eye surgery directed by surgeons, not corporations, overseen by the Leeds Teaching Hospitals NHS Trust

VISX LASIK Technology - For safer more precise results approved for use by NASA and the US Airforce

As Biber et al. (1999: 631) argue, the verbs in the post-modifying participle clauses can be seen to correspond directly to the passive in finite clauses. Thus, the meaning of the first example could be paraphrased either as *Laser eye surgery is directed by surgeons, not corporations, and it is overseen by the Leeds Teaching Hospitals NHS Trust* or as *Laser eye*

surgery that is directed by surgeons, not corporations, and overseen by the Leeds Teaching Hospitals NHS Trust. As using this kind of a full passive construction or a relative clause would have conveyed essentially the same meaning as the original slogan, it could be argued that the reason for using reduced passive constructions in these two slogans is the desire to use fewer words (Biber et al. 1999: 632).

On the basis of the present data, Leech's argument (1966: 122) regarding the scarcity of passive constructions in advertising language can thus be confirmed. Advertisers seem to avoid the passive voice at all times unless there are some specific conditions that demand it, for instance when the agent needs to be mentioned but backgrounded. As demonstrated above, the frequent use of incomplete clauses in slogans also requires a careful analysis of the *-ed* verb forms as they do not always indicate the passive voice but some other function, even though the form is identical due to the omitted auxiliary in many passive constructions.

Unsurprisingly, modal verbs did not occur frequently in the corpus, either. With the exception of *can,* which was found in four slogans altogether, and one instance of *will*, all modal verbs were absent. The modal *will* occurred in a sentence expressing a promise:

> You won't believe your eyes

As suggested in Section 3.2.6, this type of promise can often be regarded as implying the infallibility of the claim. The slogan could indeed be paraphrased as *You cannot help but disbelieve your eyes.*

Two of the four slogans with the modal verb *can* had *you* as the subject. Leech's (1966: 125) argument that the subject *you* most often refers to the consumer, who is positioned as the beneficiary of an ability or power that the product grants them, applies to one of them:

> Are you still wearing glasses and contact lenses? Why? Isn't it time you see clearly without them? Imagine the possibilities and soon you can see for yourself!

The implication that it is the clinic that gives the consumer the power to ”see” is very clear

here. In the other slogan with *you* as the subject, however, the modal *can* functions quite differently:

> LaserVue Eye Center – a LASIK center you can trust.

This slogan cannot be interpreted as describing the abilities or power that the clinic or the service will grant to the consumer, but rather expresses a promise of trustworthiness. This function is thus closer to that suggested by Vestergaard and Schrøder (1985: 68-69): advertisers often use modal verbs in situations where they want to encourage the consumer to act without sounding too directive. In this case, a more directive and therefore less preferable means of persuasion would have been the imperative (i.e. *Trust LaserVue Eye Center!*).

It was also suggested by Leech (1966: 125) that the subject of *can* often refers to either the product or service offered or to the advertising company, in which case the modal *can* expresses the opportunity or possibilities that they offer to the consumer. The other two uses of the modal *can* in the corpus seem to verify this observation:

> If you are considering laser eye surgery, another form of refractive eye surgery or cataract surgery then Grange Eye Consultants can help.
>
> Dr. Drucker can help you change your life

Both of these slogans contain the verbal group *can help.* In the former, it refers to all the possibilities that the clinic offers and in the latter, it attests the clinic's ability to help change the consumer's life. The use of the verb *help* is interesting especially in the latter sentence as it weakens the claim significantly: it is not said that Dr. Drucker can actually change the consumer's life, he may only play a part in it. This is a good example of ”weasel claims”, which are discussed in Sections 3.3 and 5.2.3.

5.1.7 Personal pronouns

It was argued in Section 3.2.7 that pronouns are used in a very distinctive manner in advertising language, because advertisers face the challenge of personalising the message for the mass audience in a way that creates the impression of addressing the consumer individually. Certain pronouns can help compensate for the non-personal nature of advertising by producing a sense of equality and a conversational tone, which is why they are frequently used in advertising. The present data seem to confirm this claim as the pronoun *you,* which is very common in informal, face-to-face communication, abounded in the corpus. The findings are presented in the table below:

	The UK sample	**The US sample**	**Total**
I	0	1	1
you	14	44	58
he	0	0	0
she	0	0	0
it	5	3	8
we	4	4	8
they	0	2	2

Table 7. *Number of pronouns in the corpus (also includes the inflected forms, e.g.* us, our, ourselves*).*

The most common form of the second person singular pronoun was the possessive determiner *your.* The noun following it denoted either the vision or the life of the consumer in the majority of the cases, and they were also frequently juxtaposed:

> See the difference in your lifestyle.
>
> Improve your vision and change your life with Laser Eye Surgery from the UK's No. 1 provider. From only £395 per eye.
>
> Improve your VISION... And improve your... LIFE.
>
> Don't just improve your eyesight. Enhance it.

The use of the pronoun *you* helped create the impression of friendly face-to-face interaction, which was often further strengthened by the use of an imperative construction in the same sentence, as the above slogans demonstrate. Advertisers also utilised *you* in personalising the advertising message in order to reduce the impression that the consumer was only being addressed as part of a mass audience. To illustrate the point, the following slogan seems to be addressing *you* individually by implying that it is specifically *you* whose eyes are special, even though a vast number of consumers may read the same advertisement:

> Your Eyes are Special
> See an Eye Specialist

In addition to *you,* the pronoun *we* can also be used in personalising advertisements and in giving them a conversational tone. It can either include or exclude the person who is spoken to, in this case the consumer. Somewhat unexpectedly, the inclusive use of *we* was found to be completely absent in the data. The possible reasons for this may include the fact that eye surgery is an area where there is a power disparity between the consumer and the service provider: the consumer undergoing laser surgery depends completely upon the experience and expertise of the doctor, who has the ultimate authority over the procedure, the choice of method and post-operative care. The context is thus quite different from the purchase of luxury or commodity products, for instance. This power gap may thus render the inclusive use of *we* impractical in eye surgery advertisements. On the other hand, however, this disparity could arguably be seen as the very reason why advertisers might want to use *we* in an inclusive sense: as stated in Section 3.2.7, it creates a sense of solidarity and equality with the consumer and downplays the role of the advertiser as the authority. This in turn might help alleviate the consumer's impression of power disparity, grant the clinic a less detached image and de-emphasise the medical and possibly dangerous nature of the procedure.

Even though the exclusive sense of the pronoun *we* is not as effective in the

aforementioned respect, Myers (1994: 81) maintains that it can also be used to personalise corporations. In the present data, eight examples of exclusive *we* were found, each referring to the advertising clinic. The personalising function of *we* seemed to motivate its usage in each case, since while the meaning would remain the same if the pronoun *we* was replaced with the name of the clinic, the image projected would become more detached and impersonal:

> We Provide Laser treatment for visual errors
>
> Ask us about LASIK as low as $699 per eye
>
> Your vision is our vision

Had the advertiser decided to use the name of the clinic in the last example, for instance, the resulting slogan would have not only been impersonal but also created a somewhat bizarre impression: *Your vision is the vision of Repine Vision and Laser.*

It was suggested in Section 3.2.7 that third person pronouns (*he, she, it, they*) can also be used to personalise an advertisement, even though they do not involve the reader or the advertiser. This was not the function of third person pronouns in any of the slogans in the present data, however. There were eight instances of the pronoun *it* in the corpus and it was the only third person singular pronoun to occur. It either functioned as a dummy pronoun or referred to a preceding noun:

> The London Vision Clinic It's not for everyone, but you owe it to yourself to see if it's right for you.
>
> Are you still wearing glasses and contact lenses? Why? Isn't it time you see clearly without them? Imagine the possibilities and soon you can see for yourself!

The third person plural pronoun *they* was less common with only two instances in the corpus, where it was used to refer to a preceding noun, as in *The "LASIK Doctor" other Doctors trust with their eyes*.

The corpus also contained one instance of the first person singular *I:*

> Eye am empowered

The pun in the slogan works because the reader can be assumed to be able to infer from the inflected form of the copula *be* that the noun *eye* is to be understood as its homophone, the first person singular pronoun *I*. As was argued in Section 3.2.7, consumers are expected to recognise themselves in the *I* and to accept the underlying assumptions. In this case, it is implied that there is a causal connection between being empowered and eye surgery. Readers are expected to position themselves as the ”eye” of the slogan and to accept the implicit claim that they can become empowered if they undergo laser surgery. This is thus a clever example of combining the wittiness of a pun and the positioning function of the pronoun *I* in the same slogan.

There was an interesting difference in the use of pronouns between the slogans emphasising medical factors and those focusing on the quality of life. The former category contained more instances of the pronoun *we* than the latter (6.5 and 3.7 per cent of the slogans, respectively), whereas the situation was reversed with the pronoun *you:* 18.5 % of the slogans in the former category contained it, as opposed to the 51.9 % in the latter. When the abundance of imperatives in the latter category is taken into account, the difference is even clearer: as was indicated in Section 3.2.1, the subject *you* is often absent in imperative clauses, since the context usually makes is apparent that the omitted subject refers to the listener. Thus, the pronoun *you* is omitted but nevertheless implied in a great number of slogans focusing on the quality of life. It could be argued that the need of emotional appeals to concentrate on the consumer and the attempt of rational appeals to emphasise the positive qualities of the advertiser itself or the advertised product can explain this divergence.

5.1.8 Cohesion

The rules of linking textual elements together are often intentionally broken in advertisements, as argued in Section 3.2.8. An important characteristic of the present data that has to be taken into account when studying cohesion is the fact that most of the slogans consisted of only one simple or incomplete sentence. Cohesive devices were therefore not always even needed in the analysed slogans. Indeed, it was found in the analysis that cohesive devices were quite uncommon. Advertisements often consist of many sentences or even large chunks of text, which is why they may have more need for cohesion than the slogans in the present data. Naturally, it is impossible to ascertain whether this finding reflects the lack of cohesive devices in advertising language in general, or whether it was a special characteristic of the present data.

In Section 3.2.8, I presented a classification of cohesive devices that had originally been created by Cook (1992: 148): the repetition of lexical items, lexical items or phrases with some sense relation, referring expressions (especially pronouns) understood by reference to a unit in another sentence, ellipsis and conjunctions. I will follow this classification in my analysis, and will also take into consideration the three different methods of coordinating elements that were discussed by Leech (1966: 142-150): linking, parataxis and apposition.

The repetition of lexical items was one of the most common methods of creating cohesion in the slogans, even though there were only ten instances of this cohesive device in the data:

> Improve your VISION... And improve your... LIFE.
>
> Better vision for a better life
>
> Your vision is our vision

As can be seen from the examples above, lexical items were often repeated in a manner that insinuated that there is a connection between improving one's vision and improving one's life.

The repetition of the noun *vision* in the third example functions somewhat differently, however: it creates the impression that improving the customer's vision is a project to which both the customer and the clinic are fully committed.

There were also plenty of instances of creating cohesion through lexical items or phrases with some sense relation. The following slogans make a connection between two sentences by using synonyms:

Yorkshire Eye Hospital: A leading laser eye treatment centre

Don't just improve your eyesight. Enhance it.

The first example is quite straightforward: by using the compound noun *eye treatment centre* in the second sentence, the advertiser has no need to repeat its synonym *eye hospital*, which was used in the first sentence. This is also the case with the latter example, as the verbs *improve* and *enhance* can be regarded as synonyms. It is clear, however, that creating cohesion was not the advertiser's only objective here. The slogan suggests that the verbs *improve* and *enhance* are actually not synonyms, but near-synonyms, with the implication that enhancing one's eyesight is preferable to merely improving it, and that this enhancement is only possible with the help of the advertising clinic. In addition to synonyms, there were also examples of antonymy. For instance, the nouns *shackles* and *freedom* in the slogan *Set yourself free from the shackles of glasses and contacts. Enjoy the freedom of clear vision.* present an interesting contrast: the noun *shackles* can be seen as a prison metaphor and has a very strong negative connotation, which helps to strengthen the positive one that its antonym *freedom* has in the subsequent sentence.

Referring expressions understood by reference to a unit in another sentence were also found in the data, albeit not in great numbers. Since the slogans most often consisted of only one or two sentences, pronouns were seldom used to create cohesion. The following slogans contain examples of pronouns referring anaphorically to a noun in a previous sentence (the

pronouns in question are underlined for the sake of clarity):

> Are you still wearing glasses and contact lenses? Why? Isn't it time you see clearly without them? Imagine the possibilities and soon you can see for yourself!
>
> The London Vision Clinic
> It's not for everyone, but you owe it to yourself to see if it's right for you.

Advertisers seldom used ellipsis in the slogans in the present corpus, probably for the same reason why they rarely used pronouns. Ellipsis is a cohesive device in which an omitted unit is recoverable from a previous sentence, as in the slogan *What makes Centre for Sight special? LEADERSHIP, EXPERIENCE, EXPERTISE and REPUTATION*. The omitted unit at the end of the second sentence is *make Centre of Sight special.* The use of ellipsis in the second sentence makes it unnecessary to repeat part of the first sentence, which would make the slogan quite cumbersome.

Conjunctions, which according to Cook (1992: 148) mean words and phrases which indicate a logical, temporal, causal or exemplifying relationship, were also rare in the present data. *And* was the most common conjunction, but there were also some examples of *but* and *or.*

> The London Vision Clinic
> It's not for everyone, but you owe it to yourself to see if it's right for you.
>
> Home of 20 / 20 vision... or your money back!
>
> Improve your VISION... And improve your... LIFE.

In the first slogan, the conjunction *but* is used to present a contrast that is unexpected in the light of the previous clause. The conjunction *or* in the second slogan suggests that only one of the two possibilities can be realised, excluding the other. However, it also acts as a promise as it implies that one of the two possibilities will be realised regardless of the circumstances. The third slogan contains the conjunction *and*, which links the two sentences together without contrasting them. It creates the impression that the outcome implied in the second sentence is

dependent on the action suggested in the first sentence.

Leech's (1966: 143-150) classification of cohesive devices is somewhat different from that of Cook (1992: 148). Leech argues that dependent clauses are quite infrequent in advertising English and mainly focuses on three types of coordination: linking, parataxis and apposition. The two slogans presented above which contained the conjunctions *and* and *or,* respectively, can be seen as examples of linking. According to Leech (1966: 146), the most obvious function of linking is listing the various properties or uses of the product, as in the following examples drawn from the corpus:

> Personal service and quality care in Chicago, Illinois
>
> freedom from poor vision, glasses and contact lenses is possible now!
>
> What makes Centre for Sight special? LEADERSHIP, EXPERIENCE, EXPERTISE and REPUTATION

Parataxis is semantically equivalent to linking, but differs from linking in that no conjunction is used to connect the listed items together. This was found to be a very common method of coordinating phrases and single words in the data.

> Affordable. Dependable. Experienced.
>
> Unrivalled care. Ultimate service.
>
> The right doctor. The right technology. The right time. No money down. 0 % interest. Less than $5.50 per day!

By using parataxis instead of a single sentence connected with conjunctions, the advertiser is able to create several separate information foci and mimic face-to-face interaction, which is characterised by pauses and short sentences.

Apposition is another common method of coordinating elements in a sentence. According to Leech (1966: 147), the term refers to the practice in which two noun groups are placed side by side, with one element serving to define or modify the other, which is most commonly the name of the product or the service provider. A few instances of apposition were found in the

corpus. The defined or modified noun group was most commonly the name of the clinic or the doctor and less often the product:

Yorkshire Eye Hospital: A leading laser eye treatment centre

Stephen Turner, M.D., official LASIK surgeon of the Golden State Warriors

LaserVue Eye Center – a LASIK center you can trust

BLADE-FREE CUSTOM LASIK: The Safest LASIK Yet

In each of these sentences, the use of apposition enables the advertiser to give a definition of the product or the service provider. In most cases, the defining or modifying noun group helps to differentiate the product or the service provider from others and to give the impression that they have a unique quality. To illustrate this, the words *leading, official* and *safest* indicate that the advertising clinic is special in some way and that other advertisers do not share that quality.

5.2 Lexical features

5.2.1 Verbs and adjectives

The objective in analysing the most common verbs and adjectives in refractive surgery advertisements was twofold: first, to compare them with the list made by Leech in the 1960's to see whether there would be some variation caused by time and other factors, and second, to reflect on potential differences in the distribution of verbs and adjectives between the register of advertising and other registers. The most common verbs and adjectives in the corpus are presented in Table 8 below.

	Verbs	Adjectives
1.	see (24)	clear (18)
2.	change, trust (7)	good / better / best (13)
3.		new (7)
4.	improve (6)	free, first, safe, advanced, affordable, high (4)
5.	take, help (5)	
6.		
7.	experience, bring, enjoy (4)	
8.		
9.		
10.	get, imagine, wear (3)	special (2)

Table 8. *The ten most popular verbs and adjectives in the data.*

Considering that the analysed slogans were created to advertise eye surgery, it was not surprising that the most common verb in the data was *see* (24 instances altogether). The other most frequently used verbs were *change*, *trust* and *improve*. Interestingly, the verbs *see* and *get* were the only ones to feature on Leech's (1966: 154) list of the most common verbs in advertisements, and the verbs *see, get* and *take* on Biber et al's (2002: 110) list of the most common verbs in English in general. As noted in Section 3.3, Leech's list was very similar to that compiled by Biber et al., which is why it is quite surprising that my own findings had little in common with either of theirs. This might suggest that it is not possible to treat advertising English as a single entity and compare the most common verbs in advertising with those in English in general, as there seems to be plenty of variation in this respect between different fields of advertising. While that is probably at least partly true, however, it is not inconceivable that time and changes in Western culture may have distanced advertising

language from general English by making the former more abstract, for instance. That would explain why the verbs in Leech's list correspond to that of Biber et al. while mine do not, as the most common verbs overall tend to be quite concrete in meaning according to Biber et al.

The reasons for the differences between Leech's list and mine may also include the fact that Leech studied advertisements of products that were quite tangible by nature, which probably explains why many of the verbs on his list have to do with ownership (*get, have, buy, keep*). The product advertised by eye surgery clinics, on the other hand, is not something that one can own, but rather a means to achieve a certain objective, that is, a better vision. This is why verbs such as *change, improve* and *help* are more common in refractive surgery advertisements. Another factor that may explain the discrepancies is that it is not as usual for advertisers to urge the consumer into action by using verbs such as *buy, come* or *look* nowadays as it was in the 1960's. On the contrary, advertisers often try to avoid such verbs as they create the impression of a ”hard sell advertisement”, and consumers often find those advertisements unappealing nowadays. Additionally, the fact that verbs with a rather abstract meaning such as *experience, enjoy* and *imagine* were very common in the data demonstrates that many clinics wish to downplay the medical nature of the procedure while focusing on the improvement of the quality of life and the new opportunities that the procedure provides.

Unlike verbs, the most common adjectives were found to be somewhat similar to those on Leech's list. The adjectives *new, good / better / best* and *free* were prevalent in both corpora, and *special* was also among the ten most common adjectives. In the present corpus, the adjective *new* usually modified a noun denoting a technology or the results of the surgery:

> Ride the wave of technology with the new custom cornea lasik
>
> Enjoy life with a clear new outlook
>
> a New Vision with Laser

Interestingly, the adjective *new* always had a positive connotation, as if being new was a good

trait per se. For example, the slogan *The new look of LASIK* seems to carry the implication that this new look is also a better or improved one, even though that has not been directly stated. This kind of a positive connotation is not always present in the other registers of English, in which the use of *new* is often neutral (e.g. *He has a new wife* or *The university faces new challenges in 2011*), which is why it rather seems to be a distinctive feature of advertising language. It is also worth noting that all the instances of *new* were found in the American corpus, but it is impossible to determine on the basis of this limited sample whether the concept of newness appeals more to the public in the United States than in the United Kingdom.

The most notable difference between the lists was the absence of *clear* on Leech's list, as it was the most common adjective in the present corpus. *Clear* most often collocated with the noun *vision*, which is why it is understandable that it is more often used to advertise eye surgery than other products or services. There were also other verbs which are characteristic of medical marketing and were therefore missing from Leech's list, namely *safe* and *advanced.* The adjective *high* is common in medical marketing, as well. In the present data, it almost always collocated with either *standards* or *quality*, as in the following examples:

Affordable high quality laser eye surgery

Committed to Highest Standards of Care

Some adjectives, such as *fresh, delicious* and *clean,* were present on Leech's list but absent on mine. These adjectives are more suitable for advertising food and household products than refractive surgery.

Many differences were also found when comparing the most common adjectives in the present corpus with the findings of Biber et al. (1999: 512-513, 517). Their lists of the most common adjectives in conversation, news and academic language were consulted for the purposes of comparison. The adjectives *new, good* and *high* were among the most common in

both the present data and theirs, but otherwise the findings did not coincide. The adjectives on Biber et al's lists were usually more concrete and commonplace in meaning than those on mine: for instance, while abstract adjectives such as *advanced* and *affordable* were frequent in the present data, *big, old, sure* and *same* were among the most popular adjectives on Biber et al's lists. Leech's list did not correspond to Biber et al's findings to a great extent, either, which is why it might be possible to argue that adjectives are used differently in advertising language from other registers.

5.2.2 Comparative reference

Comparative reference is a linguistic construction that is very common in advertisements. As discussed in Section 3.3, comparative references in advertisements tend to differ in one interesting respect from standard practice: advertisers often omit the comparative item but retain the basis for comparison as they try to avoid comparing their product directly with others by referring to their rivals (Goddard 1998: 103). These so-called unqualified comparisons were abundant in the present data, as well:

> Want ”Sharper Vision” without glasses?
>
> Seeing your world more clearly
>
> VISX LASIK Technology - For safer more precise results approved for use by NASA and the US Airforce
>
> With LASIK... Better vision in minutes.

In these examples, the advertising clinic uses a positive adjective (e.g. *sharp, safe, good*) to compare either the present situation with an improved situation made possible by eye surgery or to compare their product with their rivals' products. In some cases, it was easy to distinguish what the comparative item was, but in others, the ambiguity of the slogans permitted two different readings. In the last slogan, for example, it is impossible to ascertain

whether the advertiser meant *better vision than before* or *better vision than what other clinics can offer.*

The practice of using unqualified comparisons was so common that only two instances of ”normal” comparative references were found in the entire corpus:

Now better than ever

See your life more clearly than ever

Interestingly, the comparisons were made between the current product and an earlier product or between the present situation and an improved situation, respectively, and not between the advertising clinic and their rivals. Therefore, these findings support Goddard's (1998: 103) argument that advertisers avoid making specific comparisons between their product and others by referring to their rivals.

5.2.3 Weasel claims

As stated in Section 3.3, the term *weasel claim* refers to a ubiquitous practice in advertising whereby advertisers use certain words or phrases that mislead the consumer by creating the fallacious impression that something specific and meaningful has been said. Unsurprisingly, this corpus of slogans did not prove to be an exception. Medical marketing is a field in which advertisers need to be particularly careful with their claims, since it is more strictly controlled by the authorities than some other areas, due to the potential risks and complications of surgical procedures. With the help of weasel words and phrases, advertisers are able to make positive claims about their products without the risk of these claims being considered fallacious or deceptive by the authorities.

One of the most striking features of weasel claims in the data was the propensity of advertisers to create the impression of excellence or leadership without substantiating their

claims, as exemplified by the following slogans:

New York's Premiere LASIK Surgeon

Yorkshire Eye Hospital: A leading laser eye treatment centre

Dr. Goosey is named one of the best LASIK doctors of Houston.

In the first example, the adjective *premiere* is very vague, and while it implies that the surgeon in question is better in some respect than the other surgeons in New York, the advertiser avoids justifying and specifying this claim. The two other examples contain equally vague claims: the advertiser has created an impression of leadership in both slogans, but mitigated the claim in order to avoid making a possibly fallacious claim. The use of an indefinite article before the adjective *leading* depletes the slogan *Yorkshire Eye Hospital: A leading laser eye treatment centre* of much of its meaning, and the phrase *one of* in the slogan *Dr. Goosey is named one of the best LASIK doctors of Houston* has the same effect. Indeed, the latter claim would not be deceptive even if there were only five lasik doctors in Houston and Dr. Goosey had been named the fourth most skilled of them.

The following two slogans also have relatively little meaning in spite of creating a similarly positive impression:

THE USA'S FIRST REFRACTIVE SURGEON

”In Pursuit of Excellence”
TRUST YOUR SIGHT TO THE PROFESSIONALS

The use of the ordinal numeral *first* in the former slogan is ambiguous: it is not possible to infer from the context whether it means that the surgeon in question was the first to perform refractive surgery in the United States or whether they have been ranked first in some other category. The latter option seems more probable, and the reader is led to believe that it is a ranking of skills, competence or some other positive quality. It is worth noting, however, that this ranking could equally easily be something negative, such as the mortality rate of the patients, or something irrelevant, such as the golf skills of the surgeon. This is naturally not

the inference that the advertiser wants the reader to make.

The latter slogan can also be seen to be devoid of meaning. By using the noun *professionals,* the advertiser attempts to create the impression that the surgeons in question are somehow more professional or skilled than other surgeons. However, the noun *professional* can also simply refer to someone qualified to perform eye surgery, in which case the slogan does not differentiate the advertised clinic from any other clinic in the United States.

Weasel words and phrases are often used when the advertiser wishes to convey the impression of a promise without in fact making one. A common method is to use the verb *help*, as illustrated by the following examples:

> Helping patients achieve visual freedom
>
> Dr. Drucker can help you change your life

The objective of the advertiser is to lead the consumer to think that the clinic in question has an integral part in the process, while that has not in fact been directly promised. The verb *help* indicates that it is ultimately the consumer who either achieves visual freedom or changes his or her life, whereas the clinic may only offer some kind of support. In the latter example, the use of the modal auxiliary *can* mitigates the claim even further, as it only expresses the doctor's ability to help and does therefore not convey a promise.

A similar method of avoiding making a direct claim is to describe the process of achieving the desired result as a journey:

> Your first step to clear vision
>
> Tired of wearing glasses or contact lenses? Take your first step towards natural vision today.
>
> Great eyecare starts with Dr. Gualtieri!

These three slogans do not directly promise that potential customers will eliminate their dependency on glasses by undergoing refractive surgery, even though the slogans do create that impression. In theory, these slogans could not be considered fallacious or deceptive even

if refractive surgery would only minimally improve one's vision. The adjective *natural* in the second example can also be regarded as a weasel word: the objective of the advertiser has probably been to create the impression that natural vision refers to the improved, post-operative vision, while it might more accurately be defined as the vision with which one was born.

There were further instances of slogans in the data that could be seen as containing a weasel claim. The following slogans, for example, convey the impression that a promise has been made, while that is not the case in reality:

> Want ”Sharper Vision” without glasses?
>
> freedom from poor vision, glasses and contact lenses is possible now!
>
> Clearer vision is waiting

The first slogan creates the impression that the clinic is able to give its customers sharper vision without glasses, even though that has not been directly stated. Because the slogan is in the form of a question, it could be understood as merely inquiring about the consumer's wish to have better vision. The next two slogans function quite similarly: their message is that it is possible to eliminate one's dependency on glasses and to have clearer vision, respectively, with the implication that the advertising clinic can help the consumer to achieve that desired state. Nevertheless, the advertisers have refrained from making a direct claim in order to avoid responsibility if the results of the surgery do not always prove to be optimal.

5.2.4 Other lexical features

Technical and scientific terms can be very useful when the advertiser wishes to create the impression that the service provider or the product is particularly modern, professional, technologically advanced or based on some scientific principle, for instance. Advertisements

for medical services thus often include plenty of technical and scientific terms, and the present corpus proved to be no exception. Terms such as *LASIK, LASEK, excimer laser* and *20/20 vision* abounded in the data. There were significantly more technical and scientific terms in slogans emphasising medical factors than in those focusing on the quality of life. In fact, the only frequently used technical term in the quality of life category was *LASIK*, which can nowadays be regarded as quite a commonplace and ordinary word, and few people using it even know what it is an abbreviation of.

Interestingly, the boundary between technical terms and product names is often blurry in refractive surgery advertisements. Clinics regularly use the name of a technology as the name of the product that they are selling, as the following examples demonstrate:

> VISX LASIK Technology - For safer more precise results approved for use by NASA and the US Airforce
>
> Experience New Freedom with L.A.S.I.K.

There was also one example in which the advertiser seemed to be treating the name of the clinic as the name of the product:

> Imagine life without glasses. See the world differently with Visualase.

In the above slogan, the name *Visualase* refers to the clinic, but the sentence is formulated in such a manner that consumers could also understand it as referring to the service that the clinic provides. This gives the product a somewhat unique feel and creates the impression that only the clinic in question sells this particular product, as no other clinic naturally uses the name *Visualase* for their eye surgery. A similar technique has been used in the slogan *The Tylock Advantage*. By using his surname as a premodifier to another noun, Dr. Tylock has "productised" himself, that is, converted himself into a marketable and salable product. This is not a mere coincidence but seems intentional, as he uses his name in a similar fashion in other slogans on his website, as well (e.g. *Experience Tylock Custom Lasik*).

Apart from the examples presented above, there were no other instances of product

names in the data. Therefore, it seems that the clinics in question use their own names or their owners' names for advertising purposes, instead of inventing a unique name for the service that they offer. There were numerous examples of this in both corpora:

> Yorkshire Eye Hospital: A leading laser eye treatment centre
>
> Dr. Goosey is named one of the best LASIK doctors of Houston.
>
> What makes Centre for Sight special?
> LEADERSHIP, EXPERIENCE, EXPERTISE and REPUTATION

Intentional and creative deviation from lexical, orthographic, semantic, grammatical and structural rules is common in advertisements, and it was present in these corpora, as well. Incomplete clauses were discussed in Section 5.1.4, and lexical deviation found in the slogans will be examined here. Neologism, meaning the invention of new words or new senses of existing words, is usually the most common manifestation of lexical creativity, but was surprisingly not found in the present data. Another common kind of lexical violation, unorthodox combination of lexical items, was present in two slogans:

> Ride the wave of technology with the new custom cornea lasik
>
> See better, play harder

In the former slogan, there is an unusual juxtaposition of the noun *technology* and the surfing idiom *ride the wave*. This combination does not make sense unless the reader understands that it is meant to be read as a metaphor. This kind of deviation, and figurative language in general, may catch the potential customer's attention more easily and enhance the memorability of the slogan. The choice of a surfing term is probably not accidental here, either: as Leech (1966: 176) argues, linguistic violations have the ability to establish ”symbolic connections between the product and the ideals and emotive urges of the consumer”. In this case, the connection is between eye surgery and the ability to surf, which the former supposedly grants to the customers, as surfing and most other watersports are almost impossible with eyeglasses. Therefore, the juxtaposition of a surfing idiom and

technology may symbolise the freedom to be engaged in any exciting hobby or even the ability to lead an active and adventurous life with the help of eye surgery.

The latter slogan combines the phrase *see better* with the phrase *play harder.* This is an unusual collocation, since the phrase *play harder* is normally combined with the phrase *work hard* (as in *Work hard, play harder!*). Therefore, deviating from the normal collocation in this way implies that there is a connection between playing and seeing. This symbolic connection is similar to the one discussed above: the slogan implies that life becomes more exciting after eye surgery. It is possible, however, that the verb *play* also has a slightly more concrete meaning. Like surfing, many sports (including football, ice hockey and baseball) are quite difficult or even dangerous with eyeglasses, which is why the slogan may particularly appeal to sports enthusiasts. The choice of words is thus very clever, as it makes the slogan meaningful for both a specific audience (sports enthusiasts) and a larger audience (people who want to have more fun). Furthermore, by substituting the phrase *work hard* with *see better,* the advertiser also insinuates that working hard is not a prerequisite for playing, but seeing better is, which may also appeal to some potential customers.

As could be expected, the medicalisation of refractive surgery was most distinctively seen in the lexis of the analysed slogans. Medical words and phrases such as *solution, treatment, advanced diagnostics, procedures, vision correction, visual errors* and *clear vision* abounded in the slogans. The choice of these words signals to the reader that myopia and hyperopia are not normal variation in eyesight but deviation from the norm and a distinct and diagnosable medical problem which can and should be treated with an appropriate medical intervention, that is, refractive surgery. The use of medical words was unsurprisingly most common in the slogans containing a rational appeal (i.e. those focusing on medical factors)

Similarly to medicalisation, the commodification of the medical procedure, which is often a natural consequence of medicalisation, could also be clearly seen in the slogans advertising

refractive surgery. The commodification of this medical procedure was most evident in slogans emphasising financial factors:

> The right doctor. The right technology. The right time. No money down. 0 % interest. Less than $5.50 per day!
>
> Limited time only $1000 OFF LASIK

In both examples above, the advertiser creates the impression that refractive surgery is a commodity which anyone with imperfect eyesight can easily obtain by merely paying a certain amount of money. As Imershein and Estes (1996) argue, some of the most distinctive characteristics of the commodification of a medical procedure are the organisation of the services into product lines with attached payment schemes, emphasising the market-based approach to exchange.

Similarly, many slogans with an emotional appeal also seemed to treat refractive surgery as a commodity by describing it as a simple way to change one's vision and life, as the following examples illustrate:

> Change your outlook for 2010! Why Wait?
>
> Enjoy life without glasses.

These slogans deliberately downplay the fact that purchasing a perfect vision by undergoing refractive surgery may not be as unproblematic as buying an umbrella, for example.

6 Regulations and reality

Different government bodies and organisations oversee and regulate refractive surgery advertising in both the United Kingdom and the United States, as mentioned in Section 2.1. The objective of advertisers is to present the service that they provide in the best light possible, while the regulatory bodies attempt to ensure the truthfulness and lawfulness of advertisements in order to protect the consumer. According to FTC (1997), an advertisement is deceptive and therefore unlawful if it represents or omits a fact in a manner that may mislead consumers and affect their choice or use of the service. This definition applies both to claims that are expressly stated in the advertisement as well as to those that are merely implied. In the United Kingdom, similar definitions of deceptive advertisements have been published by different regulatory bodies and organisations. In this section, the objective is to examine the slogans with these definitions in mind in order to see how well they correspond with the requirements for a lawful advertisement. As the standards are so similar in both countries, there was considered to be no need for the slogans to be analysed separately.

A surprisingly great number of the slogans were found to make deceptive or unsubstantiated claims: approximately half of them could be argued to contain a potentially misleading representation or omission of a fact. Most commonly the misleading slogans implied the effectiveness of the procedure, usually by promising freedom from glasses and contact lenses or alternatively clear or perfect vision, without substantiating the claim or clarifying what their definition of clear or perfect vision was:

> Set yourself free from the shackles of glasses and contacts. Enjoy the freedom of clear vision.
>
> Enjoy life without glasses.
>
> The only solution for perfect vision

First of all, these slogans are misleading, since consumers can infer from them that they will

be permanently free from glasses or contact lenses or have permanently perfect vision as a result of the surgery. The slogans also imply that all patients will have the same optimal results and that factors such as presbyopia or the initial vision of the customer will not affect the results or the potential need for glasses for some activities postoperatively. This would be a fallacious claim, which is why these slogans might be regarded as deceptive by authorities. This group of potentially misleading slogans would be classified as either efficacy or permanence and predictability claims by AAO (see Section 2.1).

Another ubiquitous type of possibly deceptive claims in refractive surgery advertising seemed to be comparative efficacy claims. These are unsubstantiated claims about the superiority of the clinic, its surgeons or the methods or technology that the clinic uses, as the following examples demonstrate:

> Southern California's best for lasik, all laser lasik & custom lasik
>
> Best Doctors
>
> Leaders in Advanced Vision Correction
>
> Birkdale Pure Sight... an array of unrivalled specialist options

Whether the claim is deceptive naturally depends on the ability of the advertiser to prove it in an objective manner, which is often impossible. Using comparative references by omitting the comparative item but nevertheless retaining the basis for comparison was found to be a common method of circumventing the requirement of having objective evidence for a comparative efficacy claim in the present data:

> Seeing your world more clearly
>
> VISX LASIK Technology - For safer more precise results approved for use by NASA and the US Airforce

The former slogan could be complemented with the comparative item *than other clinics,* for example, and the latter with *than what other clinics can offer*, but then it would be necessary for the advertiser to substantiate the claim in a scientific, statistical or some other reliable

manner.

Claims about safety and painlessness were less common, but several examples could still be found in the data:

> no more glasses
> pain free procedure
>
> Laser Vision Correction
> SAFE. AFFORDABLE. WORLD CLASS TEAM
>
> The only LASEK center in NYC that doesn't cut flaps.

The problem with asserting the painlessness of refractive surgery is that even though it is generally a relatively easy procedure for the patient, it nevertheless often involves discomfort or even pain both during and after the surgery. This is also the case with claims about the safety of LASIK or any other method of surgical vision correction: there are some significant risks associated with eye surgery, and any advertisement containing an argument about the safety of the procedure should also include these potential complications. The third example above, while not expressly making a safety claim, is not congruent with the recommendations, either. By emphasising the fact that the surgeons in question do not cut a flap in the eye during the surgery and failing to mention that the alternative method used at this clinic is equally risky and perhaps even more painful, the advertiser is able to imply that their method is superior and less invasive than those of other clinics. Another typical method of downplaying the possibly risky nature of refractive surgery was to use euphemisms, such as *treatment* or *vision correction* instead of *surgery, centre* instead of *clinic* and *experts* or *specialists* instead of *surgeons*. According to AAO (2008: 5), it is not appropriate to suggest through the use of euphemisms that refractive eye surgery is not an invasive surgical procedure.

While there were plenty of slogans that were clearly against the regulations and recommendations in the data, there were also many examples where structural, grammatical and lexical choices have helped the advertiser to circumvent the ethical problem of making

direct claims for which there is no evidence. The use of so-called weasel words and claims (see Sections 3.3 and 5.2.3), for example, enables advertisers to mislead consumers by creating an impression of something specific and meaningful while being vague and ambiguous enough in order not to raise any concerns about the truthfulness of the claim. During the analysis of the slogans, it was also noticed that some seemingly innocuous choices, such as using imperative and interrogative verb forms, could also be used to strengthen the advertising message without directly opposing the regulations. Cases in point are the following slogans, in which the advertiser uses presupposition to avoid making a direct claim:

view LIFE with clear VISION

Want ”Sharper Vision” without glasses?

Both of the examples above imply that refractive surgery is the key to accomplishing what is either urged or inquired about in the slogans, respectively, but no promise of this desired outcome is made in either slogan.

While there were plenty of potentially deceptive slogans in the rational appeals category, the slogans containing an emotional appeal were found to be particularly questionable, which was not surprising considering the nature of emotional appeals. As the objective of using them in refractive surgery advertising is to move the focus away from the unpleasant and potentially dangerous medical procedure, none of the slogans with an emotional appeal contained any mention of the risks and requirements of the surgery. Achieving clear, perfect vision was most often portrayed as simple, quick and effortless, as if the surgery was only a minor inconvenience that hardly even deserved mentioning and as if the result, namely clear vision and a better life that clear vision allegedly grants, was guaranteed to all customers. The slogans also contained plenty of words with very positive connotations, such as *better, confident, freedom* and *enjoy.* The following examples illustrate this:

> Wake up and see clearly.
>
> Vision for a better life
>
> Are you still wearing glasses and contact lenses? Why? Isn't it time you see clearly without them? Imagine the possibilities and soon you can see for yourself!
>
> ENJOY LIFE WITH THE VISION YOU'VE ALWAYS WANTED
>
> Feel more confident.
>
> Freedom to live your dreams
>
> Get the most out of life!

It is understandable that it is beneficial for the advertiser to portray the procedure in this manner to attract customers who are afraid of medical procedures but who nevertheless want to improve their life, but it would not be entirely acceptable from an ethical point of view. It is, however, very challenging for the authorities to intervene in this kind of indirect violation of the regulations and recommendations: as the slogans make no mention of the surgery itself, the advertiser has no need to make any potentially fallacious claims about the safety or other aspects of the procedure in order to attract customers, which is why the slogans cannot easily be regarded as deceptive and therefore unlawful by the authorities.

7 CONCLUSIONS

7.1 Summary and discussion of the results

One of the most central research questions set in the Introduction was finding out whether the most distinctive linguistic features of the analysed slogans would be congruent with Leech's Standard Advertising English and the findings of other scholars studying the language of advertising. In order to answer the question, several different syntactic, structural, grammatical and lexical features of the slogans were analysed. The chosen features were those that Leech and several other scholars of advertising English regarded as the most distinctive characteristics of advertisements.

The first feature to be analysed was the use of imperative constructions. They are frequently used in advertisements and were found to be plentiful in the present data, as well. Similarly to Leech's Standard Advertising English, imperative clauses were not accompanied by politeness markers and were seldom employed to issue prohibitive warnings. On the other hand, the division of imperative verbs into the three semantic categories designed by Leech was not applicable to the present data without some adjustments, which can probably be explained by differences in the corpora used and the changed conventions of advertising since the 1960's (especially the current predominance of soft-sell advertisements over hard-sell ones).

Similarly to imperatives, interrogative constructions are often argued to be common in advertisements. The present data contained a rather low number of interrogatives, however, which was somewhat unexpected as this clause type can be used to give a conversational quality to an advertisement as well as to influence consumers' attitudes with the help of presuppositions. It would be interesting to know whether the scarcity of interrogative clauses was a unique characteristic of refractive surgery slogans or whether it applies to other areas of

advertising, as well. Likewise, exclamative clauses were completely absent and exclamations very rare in the data, despite the fact that many scholars have found them to be plentiful in advertisements because of their ability to suggest personal and interactive communication.

In contrast, however, incomplete clauses abounded in the data, with the noun phrase being their most typical manifestation. Disjunctive syntax is also listed by Leech as one of the most distinctive features in advertising, in particular when there are different spatial or financial constraints shaping the advertisement. Spatial constraints and the four other reasons suggested by Delin were found to motivate the frequent use of incomplete clauses in advertisements at least to some extent in the present study, as well.

According to Leech and other scholars, noun phrases with heavy pre-modification are exceptionally frequent in the discourse of advertising. The present study showed, however, that while complex noun phrases were abundant in the data, simple noun phrases were also common and there were plenty of slogans solely consisting of unmodified noun phrases in the corpus. Hence, the theory of the ubiquity of heavy pre-modification in advertisements does not seem to be completely valid in all areas or channels of advertising. Some potential reasons for this discrepancy were suggested in Section 5.1.5, but those hypotheses would naturally need more evidence to be proved conclusively. Furthermore, post-modification proved to be another common method of modifying nouns, even though it has received surprisingly little attention from linguists discussing advertising English. It might thus be worthwhile to study post-modification in other areas of advertising in order to see whether medical marketing differs from the other subfields of advertising in this respect.

While the noun groups in the present data were not completely consistent with Standard Advertising English and the observations of other scholars, the verbal groups were. Leech's argument that simple verb forms are preferred to marked ones in advertisements also proved to apply to the present study. In this respect, my results were thus congruent with those of

other studies. The same can partly be said about the use of pronouns: the pronoun *you* was very common in the data, which seems to confirm the claim that advertisers need to personalise the message for the mass audience in order to create the impression of addressing the consumer individually and to produce a sense of equality and a conversational tone. Nevertheless, some other distinctive uses of pronouns in advertisements were absent from my data. For instance, the slogans contained no inclusive use of the pronoun *we,* and third person pronouns were not used to personalise advertisements. Similarly, the use of cohesive devices mostly conformed to the standard practice proposed by Leech and other linguists: the standards of explicit textual linkage were often intentionally neglected in advertisements and lexical cohesion was preferred to pronominalisation and other structural cohesive devices.

Several lexical features of the slogans were also examined. One of the most interesting findings was the fact that Leech's list of the most common verbs in advertisements did not correspond with mine. This finding might be seen as an indicator that advertising English as a uniform, homogeneous entity does not exist and should not be treated as such, as the use of different corpora of advertisements and different publication channels may alter the results. On the other hand, this discrepancy might also be due to changes in advertising language during the past decades, as lexical features may be more prone to change in a relatively short term than grammatical or structural ones. Nevertheless, several other lexical features, including the use of weasel claims, unqualified comparisons, technical and scientific terms, product names and creative deviation from lexical rules were employed in the data in a similar manner to that described by Leech and other linguists.

In conclusion, the framework of Leech's Standard Advertising English and the descriptive studies of other linguists used in this study are principally still applicable today and to this kind of data. There is, however, plenty of variation both within a certain area and channel of advertising (e.g. among refractive surgery slogans published on the Internet) and between

different fields of advertising (as indicated by the discrepancies between the present corpus of slogans that were used in medical marketing and those in Leech's corpus that were used to advertise tangible goods). Thus, because of the apparent heterogeneousness of advertisements, it seems important not to treat any single study of advertising English (e.g. Leech's concept of Standard Advertising English) as a definite norm or standard to which the advertisements under analysis are compared, nor should any advertisements not following a general pattern be necessarily deemed ”bad” advertising.

The second research question formulated in the Introduction was investigating whether the results of the linguistic analysis support the hypothesis that refractive errors have been medicalised and whether refractive eye surgery has become a commodity, as often happens following the medicalisation of a problem. The hypothesis proved to be correct: as argued in Section 5.2.4, medical words and phrases suggesting that imperfect eyesight is a diagnosable and treatable medical problem were frequently used in the data. Similarly, the commodification of refractive surgery procedures could be seen particularly clearly in the slogans focusing on financial factors, as they implied that refractive surgery is a commodity which anyone can easily obtain.

Another objective of the thesis was to evaluate whether the analysed slogans were compatible with the regulations and recommendations issued by the authorities. It was hypothesised in the Introduction that advertisers have a tendency to use different syntactic, structural, grammatical and lexical choices to circumvent the ethical problem. This hypothesis proved to be true as the corpus contained plenty of examples where weasel claims, unqualified comparisons and presuppositions were used to avoid making direct, potentially fallacious claims, for instance. Interestingly, however, a large number of slogans also incorporated an unsubstantiated claim that could be regarded as misleading or deceptive by the authorities. This finding seems to suggest that the restrictions and recommendations issued

by different regulatory bodies are considered mere guidelines, as refractive surgery advertisers do not seem to think it necessary to abide by them. Alternatively, authorities may not have succeeded in spreading awareness of the existence of these regulations and in reinforcing them with sanctions. Naturally, one would need to examine the whole websites in order to see whether the advertisers have provided clear accounts of all the risks, potential complications and requirements somewhere else on the page in order to decrease the deceptiveness of the claims in the slogans.

Finally, the thesis set out to investigate whether the slogans could be divided into two categories, those emphasising medical factors and those focusing on the quality of life. As explained in Section 4, these two categories were found to correspond with the division of slogans into those containing a rational or an emotional appeal, respectively. The objective was to find out whether there would be any differences between these two groups, and this indeed proved to be the case. For instance, imperative constructions occurred very frequently in slogans appealing to emotions, whereas they were very rare in slogans containing a rational appeal. The dissimilarity of the two groups was also clear in the use of pronouns: the pronoun *we* was more common in the slogans focusing on medical factors than in those focusing on the quality of life, whereas the situation was reversed with the pronoun *you*. Similarly, the analysis of noun phrases revealed many interesting differences between the two groups. First, there was a significantly greater number of complex noun phrases in the slogans emphasising medical factors than in the other category. Second, nouns and participials seldom functioned as pre-modifiers in the quality of life category. That category also contained relatively few noun phrases with attributive adjectives and none containing both attributive and designative pre-modifiers. Several further differences were found in the lexical analysis of the slogans, for instance in the distribution of technical and scientific terms and verbs. The different functions of rational and emotional appeals can presumably explain these differences: advertisers using

an emotional appeal in their slogans wish to downplay the medical nature of the procedure by adopting a conversational tone and concentrating on the quality of life, while those choosing a rational appeal focus on medical factors and use more formal, scientific language in an attempt to sound authoritative and professional.

On the basis of these findings, it can justifiably be argued that there indeed exist two quite discernible and clear-cut approaches to advertising refractive surgery. Despite the differentiating influence of the two opposed approaches, however, the slogans also shared many characteristics as instances of the language of advertising. In consequence, there was sometimes little syntactic, structural, grammatical or lexical difference between the slogans that emphasised medical factors and those that focused on the quality of life.

It was also hypothesised in the Introduction that regardless of the emphasis on either medical factors or the quality of life, the focus in the slogans would be on change (i.e. on the improvement of either vision or life), and not strictly on the procedure itself. This would have been in accordance with the motto claiming that ”nobody wants eye surgery, everybody wants perfect vision”. Interestingly, while the hypothesis was mostly right (as evidenced by the use of the noun *correction* in many slogans with a rational appeal, for example), there were also some slogans that concentrated on the surgery and techniques without a reference to the desired outcome, the improvement of the customer's vision. It is worth noting, however, that even those advertisers ignored the potentially dangerous and painful character of the procedure and highlighted positive aspects, such as advanced technology or affordable price (e.g. *Affordable high quality laser eye surgery)*.

7.2 Evaluation and suggestions for further research

As hypothesised in the Introduction, refractive surgery slogans proved to be fruitful and meaningful data for analysis. The present study mostly used qualitative methods of analysis,

which was found to suit the purposes of this thesis well. It has to be borne in mind, however, that the inherent challenge in qualitative studies is the risk of subjectivity. While it is naturally impossible to ensure complete objectivity in a study, some quantitative variables were also used in the present thesis for the purposes of countering the risk of subjectivity.

The size of the corpus was also mostly sufficient. Some areas, such as the study of interrogative clauses or exclamations, would nevertheless have benefited from the use of more material, as those features were too infrequent in the data for any definitive generalisations. Similarly, features pertaining to the style and layout of the slogans were mostly excluded from the thesis, regardless of the fact that they may also influence the consumer's perception of the advertisement. The exclusion of these aspects was considered necessary due to the limitations on the scope of the thesis. On the other hand, the various syntactic, structural, grammatical and lexical features analysed proved to be appropriate and adequate for answering the research questions and ensuring the comprehensiveness of the variables used. Stylistic and extra-linguistic factors in slogans advertising refractive surgery or another medical procedure would nevertheless provide a fruitful topic for further research. For instance, examining the use of metaphors, euphemisms or humour might provide interesting insights into this subfield of advertising.

As the corpus only contained slogans used by refractive surgery clinics, it is impossible to make any conclusions about medical marketing in general without further analyses of slogans created for advertising other medical procedures and services. Such studies would show whether medical marketing is a uniform and homogeneous subfield or whether slogans advertising refractive surgery possess some unique characteristics. Nevertheless, on the basis of the finding that refractive surgery advertising itself exhibits a remarkable amount of heterogeneity, it is plausible to assume that while most advertisements for medical services probably possess some common characteristics, medical marketing is not a monolithic entity

and there exist plenty of different approaches to promoting medical services.

The thesis also contained some remarks on the ethicalness of refractive surgery slogans and the medicalisation of this surgical procedure. The objective of this paper was to be classificatory and descriptive rather than prescriptive, which is why the discussion on these aspects remained on a fairly general level. Therefore, a critical discourse analytic approach, for instance, might be more suitable for studying medical marketing from this perspective. Such a study could approach this kind of data by examining power relationships, different positions and roles given to the customer and the clinic, and whether advertisements support or contribute to the medicalisation of refractive surgery.

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Appendix: analysed slogans

The United Kingdom

Don't just improve your eyesight. Enhance it.

See the world more clearly.

Birkdale Pure Sight... an array of unrivalled specialist options

Laser Eye Surgery - Freedom from glasses and contact lenses

Laser vision correction
the answer to so many dreams...

What makes Centre for Sight special?
LEADERSHIP, EXPERIENCE, EXPERTISE and REPUTATION

"Laser Vision Correction at its Best"

Affordable high quality laser eye surgery

Vision correction surgery a clear picture

Provide the highest standard of care with laser eye surgery

Your Eyes are Special
See an Eye Specialist

Enjoy life without glasses.

Tired of wearing glasses or contact lenses? Take your first step towards natural vision today.

Tired of wearing glasses or contact lenses? Get laser eye surgery in November or December and take advantage of our 10% offer

view LIFE with clear VISION

Congratulations on your decision to explore this life changing procedure

Yorkshire Eye Hospital: A leading laser eye treatment centre

UK Leaders of Laser Eye Surgery

Laser Vision Correction
SAFE. AFFORDABLE. WORLD CLASS TEAM

Unrivalled care. Ultimate service.

Your Vision, Our Focus

Imagine life without glasses. See the world differently with Visualase.

experienced surgeons - more than 25,000 laser eye procedures carried out in the last 15 years

Improve your vision and change your life with Laser Eye Surgery from the UK's No. 1 provider. From only £395 per eye.

Vision for a better life

Over 20,000 eyes chose one centre of excellence
When making your choice, see, hear and talk to the professionals first

We Provide Laser treatment for visual errors

no more glasses
pain free procedure

The only solution for perfect vision

If you are considering laser eye surgery, another form of refractive eye surgery or cataract surgery then Grange Eye Consultants can help.

reputation - care - excellence

The way to clear vision

Advanced vision correction techniques

Committed to Highest Standards of Care

Internationally Renowned Excimer Laser Experts

Ireland's leading laser eye clinic

Lifetime care commitment

The London Vision Clinic
It's not for everyone, but you owe it to yourself to see if it's right for you.

Refractive surgery for vision correction

Cork's Premier Laser Eye Clinic
10 Years of Sharpening your VISION

”In Pursuit of Excellence”
TRUST YOUR SIGHT TO THE PROFESSIONALS

Laser eye surgery directed by surgeons, not corporations, overseen by the Leeds Teaching Hospitals NHS Trust

Expertise - Advanced Diagnostics - Latest Treatments - Choice

Our investment in technology
The safest, most advanced laser technology available worldwide - meaning better vision for you

A lifetime warranty on laser eye surgery

Freedom - Experience - Convenience - Dedication - Vision - Reassurance

Freedom from contact lenses.

Feel more confident.

Wake up and see clearly.

Lifetime Aftercare Guarantee.

The United States

Take the first step to clear vision: Call 949-251-0229 for a free consultation

Stephen Turner, M.D., official LASIK surgeon of the Golden State Warriors

California's choice for lasik and eye care

Seeing your world more clearly

Laser vision correction for peak performers

Want ”Sharper Vision” without glasses?

See the clear advantage

See what you've been missing

Experience the difference

Life in Focus

Leaders in Advanced Vision Correction

Innovation. Leadership. Passion for perfection.

Bringing your world into focus

A personalized approach to vision correction

Providing quality eye care

Committed to excellence in vision care

freedom from poor vision, glasses and contact lenses is possible now!

Wake up to clear vision Southern California!

Enjoy life with a clear new outlook

Southern Califonias's best for lasik, all laser lasik & custom lasik

Top technology at an affordable price

Specializing Exclusively in Lasik Laser Vision Treatment

Latest procedures and state-of-the-art technology

Quality Worth Experiencing

Eye am empowered

Home of 20 / 20 vision... or your money back!

See why we're clearly different

Clearer vision is waiting

a New Vision with Laser

Great eyecare starts with Dr. Gualtieri!

Your pathway to visual freedom

Affordable. Dependable. Experienced.

LASIK eye surgery for $499 per eye

The Premier San Francisco LASIK Laser Vision Correction Center

Bring your world into focus

Trust the Doctors the Doctors Trust

see the difference

See the best that you can see.

Clarity. Comfort. Confidence.

See better, play harder

Freedom to live your dreams

Your vision is our vision

Take your vision to higher places

Ride the wave of technology with the new custom cornea lasik

The professional standard in laser vision correction

State of the Art Laser Vision Correction from Delaware's Leader

EXPERIENCE PRECISION VISION

Experience New Freedom with L.A.S.I.K.

Helping patients achieve visual freedom

VISX LASIK Technology - For safer more precise results approved for use by NASA and the US Airforce

Trust your vision only to CORRECTVISION

Improving your outlook on life

Your first step to clear vision

Better vision for a better life

Now is the time to get LASIK!

See your life more clearly than ever

Helping you to see what matters most!

Ask us about LASIK as low as $699 per eye

You won't believe your eyes

Seeing is believing

Accuracy, comfort & safety. You deserve the best.

LaserVue Eye Center – a LASIK center you can trust.

Now better than ever

Open your eyes to new horizons with laser vision correction

Best Doctors

SEE the life you've been missing

Dr. Drucker can help you change your life

Improve your VISION... And improve your... LIFE.

Bringing your world into focus....

The ”LASIK Doctor” other Doctors trust with their eyes

The right doctor. The right technology. The right time. No money down. 0 % interest. Less than $5.50 per day!

New York's Premiere LASIK Surgeon

Expertise. Experience. Excellence.

We bring YOUR life back into FOCUS

Focus on experience

Mandel Vision, helping you see your world clearly.

Set yourself free from the shackles of glasses and contacts. Enjoy the freedom of clear vision.

The only LASEK center in NYC that doesn't cut flaps.

Imagine opening your eyes in the morning to a clear new day.

Vision for the way you live

THE USA'S FIRST REFRACTIVE SURGEON

Changing your vision

Your laser specialists

Get the most out of life!

It's not just about improving your vision. It's about changing your life.

Are you still wearing glasses and contact lenses? Why? Isn't it time you see clearly without them? Imagine the possibilities and soon you can see for yourself!

See the difference

Change your outlook for 2010! Why Wait?

Serving the West Houston & Katy Areas for over 25 years

The new look of LASIK

Limited time only $1000 OFF LASIK

With LASIK... Better vision in minutes.

Take control of your vision. Call Today!

Dr. Goosey is named one of the best LASIK doctors of Houston.

Local eye doctors you know and trust.

ENJOY LIFE WITH THE VISION YOU'VE ALWAYS WANTED

BLADE-FREE CUSTOM LASIK: The Safest LASIK Yet

The Tylock Advantage

Where patient's care is top priority

Change the way you see the world!

Excellence in Eye Care

Personal service and quality care in Chicago, Illinois

See the difference in your lifestyle.