

The business of turning children into consumers: a diachronic analysis of the symbolic exchange of goods and services in advertisements in a Swedish comic book.

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Abstract

The child as a consumer is not a new concept but a changing one. This paper discusses the development of discourses around Swedish child consumers during the 20th century. The data comprise advertisements from the Swedish comic book *Donald Duck & Co* from the 1940s through the 1980s. The methodology is inspired by the systemic functional linguistic view of basic speech functions; an analysis of how child readers are incorporated in the symbolic exchange of goods and services through the use of commands and offers is presented. One finding is that child readers of early texts are ascribed little power over their own consumption. They are commanded and/or offered a chance to ‘compete’, to ‘win’, and to ‘mail’, but rarely to make direct consumer decisions. In the 1980s, a more competent child consumer can be discerned, commanded to ‘buy’ and to make independent consumer decisions.

1 Introduction

The 20th century involved many changes for young children and for the conception of childhood in the industrial world. One change was that children moved into the public arena of consumption. In fact, children are described as target audiences for many marketing campaigns, and the postmodern consuming child from the 1980s and onwards has received attention from researchers in many academic disciplines. But there are other media images of children from the period before the mid-80s, and those images are the focus of this paper.

In previous research on the history of children’s consumer cultures in North America, the 1950s are described as of great importance (cf. Kline 1993). According to, among others, Pecora (1998) the American history of marketing to children is totally dominated by television advertising, leading up to the well-drilled child consumers of the late 20th century. Kline (1993:107) discusses the role of the comic book in relation to television and concludes: “Comic books illustrated the possibility of a mass children’s culture; the experimentation with children’s films and television programmes made that culture an actuality.”

In Sweden, however, the history of commercial television for children is different from that in countries like the United States. Commercial television did not enter private homes until the 1980s. Even today, TV commercials specifically targeted at children are prohibited by the Swedish Radio and Television Act (1996:844, chapter 7, section 4).¹ The absence of TV advertising to children from the 1950s and onwards increased the commercial importance of printed children’s media such as comic books. *Kalle Anka & C:o (Donald Duck & Co)* in particular can be considered one of the most salient carriers of commercial messages to Swedish children from its first appearance in the late 1940s and onwards. Since its launch in 1948 this publication, featuring Disney characters like Donald Duck, Mickey

¹ It should be noted that the Radio and Television Act is only applicable if the children’s program is broadcast from Sweden, but a number are broadcast from other European Union countries such as Great Britain. In this way a significant number of Swedish children have been exposed to TV advertising through cable and satellite TV since the 1980s until today.

Mouse and Goofy, has been one of the most popular Swedish comic books for young children. It has always contained advertising, which makes it unique in the history of Swedish comic books. The majority of such publications in Sweden have been, and still are, very restrictive when it comes to advertising to their child readers.

The more specific purpose of the paper is to identify diachronic changes in discourses around the Swedish child consumer in the advertisements of *Donald Duck & Co* from the 1940s through the 1980s.² The analysis focuses on one of the micro levels of discourse, the *speech act*, which has been described as ‘the minimum unit that can realize a unit of discursive practice’ (van Leeuwen 1993:195) and the analysis is performed within a systemic functional linguistic framework (cf. Halliday & Matthiessen 2004; Martin 1992; Thibault & van Leeuwen 1996). The analysis is restricted to the verbal parts of the ads, but this is a question of focus rather than anything else; all the ads analysed are more or less multimodal, containing images and other visual representations (cf. Björkvall 2003, 2007 for an analysis of the multimodal construction of consumer identities in Swedish advertising).

The relation between speech acts and grammar has been widely discussed (cf. Martin 1992:31-46).³ Thibault and van Leeuwen (1996) make a distinction between *exporting* and *importing* models of language. The exporting models of language (e.g. Searle 1969; Sperber and Wilson 1986) tend to export a great deal of the analysis of speech acts from grammar to the realm of pragmatics. One of the main reasons for this export is the obvious context dependency of speech acts and the lack of one-to-one relationships between speech acts and their lexicogrammatical realisation. This view is challenged by Thibault and van Leeuwen (1996) highlighting the analytical potential of a systemic functional perspective on the realisation of *speech functions*.⁴ In such an importing and *stratified* model of language the relation between context, discourse, semantics, and lexicogrammar is in focus, allowing for a detailed analysis of motivated choices in, and interconnections between, the different strata. Based on such an analysis, van Leeuwen (1993) presents a description of lexicogrammatical choices in the realisation of speech acts, and shows how speech acts such as confession, accusation, delicately boasting, and recommendation can be realised in the lexicogrammar of English.

In the analysis presented in this paper the systemic functional linguistic view of stratification is used to describe changes in the discourses in the ads of *Donald Duck & Co*. The starting point for the analysis is the contextual configurations of *tenor*, i.e. contextual factors tied to the social relations of the participants in an interaction, in this case in the genre of advertising. Whether or not the target group for advertising consists of adults or children, the interaction always involves someone trying to get someone else to consume a product or service. The most direct semantic interpersonal, resources for performing this task are the basic speech functions in the realm of exchanging goods and services: *commands* and *offers* (Halliday & Matthiessen 2004:107-108). As mentioned, these speech functions are primarily identified “from above”, i.e. from the vantage point of context. A basic assumption within systemic functional linguistics (henceforth SFL) is however that all strata add meaning, and the lexicogrammatical realisation of the speech acts has discursive functions. It will be argued that such realisation patterns (primarily choices of *mood* and *modality*) are relevant to the analysis of discourses around the child consumer.

²The study was financed by a research grant from Ridderstads stiftelse för historisk grafisk forskning [Ridderstad’s foundation for historic graphic research].

³Hellberg (1990) is a description of the syntax and meanings of commands and other types of directives in Swedish, however not from an systemic functional linguistic perspective.

⁴Speech function is used more or less synonymously with speech act in this paper.

2 Data

The advertising texts included in the present study are from *Donald Duck & Co* issued in 1948, 1959, 1969 and 1984. The number of texts from each year is listed in TABLE 1.

TABLE 1 Texts analysed⁵

Year of publication and issue	Number of texts
1948, 1--4	4
1959, 1--8	14
1969, 1--8	27
1984, 1--8	44
Total	89

The total number of texts is 89. Identical texts that have been published several times are listed as one in TABLE 1. The first 8 issues of each year have been analysed with the exception of 1948; *Donald Duck & Co* was only issued four times during the inaugural year with only 4 published ads, all for subscriptions to *Donald Duck & Co*. Even considering that only 4 issues from 1948 were analysed, the trend shown in TABLE 1 is that the number of ads in *Donald Duck & Co* has increased from 1948 through 1984.

The year 1948 was selected simply because it was the first year of publication. In 1958, *Donald Duck & Co* started to publish externally financed ads for products not directly associated with Disney (Mauthe 1996:20-21). This external advertising increased during 1959, and this year is included in the study. The first 8 issues from 1969 are analysed basically because 10 years have elapsed since 1959. In 1984, the first reliable statistics on children's media habits were published in Sweden (Ungdoms-Orvesto 1984), so for that year we know for a fact that *Donald Duck & Co* was by far the most widely read magazine by 10-14-year-olds (and we can guess that the same is true for even younger children). The fact that children's media habits had for the first time become the object of detailed and commercially driven analysis is a sign of the times, and 1984, possibly at the beginning of the late or postmodern era, is the final year included in the study.

The distinction between what is an advertisement and what is not is far from clear-cut, especially when it comes to texts that deal with Disney products that are for sale or that can be won in contests. All texts that are not part of the narrative comics in the comic books, and where commercial products or services of any kind are presented, are listed in TABLE 1. This selection includes contests where Disney products can be won, but leaves out contests such as crosswords where the children taking part can win cash, but nothing else.

3 Methodology: to analyse speech functions in advertising

As already touched upon, the methodology in this study is inspired by SFL and, in particular, by its view of the semantics and lexicogrammatical realisations of speech functions (cf. Halliday & Matthiessen 2004:106-111; Martin 1992:31-35). In SFL, the basic speech roles in discourse are assumed to be *giving* and *demanding*. These combine with the nature of the commodity being exchanged: *goods and services* or *information*. The combinations yield four basic speech functions that are presented in FIGURE 1 (Halliday & Matthiessen 2004:107).

⁵All the issues of *Donald Duck & Co* have been available at the Royal Library in Stockholm. The editions from 1948 and 1959 are reprinted and easily accessible whereas the 1969 and 1984 editions are not. Thus, the original editions from the latter years, that are part of the protected collection of the Royal Library, have been used. The reprinted editions have been thoroughly compared with their originals from 1948 and 1959.

Role in exchange	Commodity exchanged	
	goods and services	information
giving	<i>offer</i>	<i>statement</i>
demanding	<i>command</i>	<i>question</i>

FIGURE 1 Basic speech functions

The basic speech functions are *statements* and *questions* for giving and demanding information (grouped together as *propositions*) and offers and commands for giving and demanding goods and services (*proposals*).

The “from above” analysis in this paper requires that the proposals are singled out from the propositions in the ads. Here the distinguishing criterion was simply the commodity exchanged: information gives propositions and goods and services give proposals (cf. FIGURE 1). Further, in order to distinguish the offers from the commands, the giving vs. demanding aspects of speech functions presented in FIGURE 1 were elaborated. It can be argued that speech functions of giving tend to put more responsibility for the exchange on the speaker whereas demanding puts more responsibility on the other person in an interaction, here the reader of the ad. This type of speaker or other orientation was the first criterion used to separate commands from offers. More precisely, commands lack obligations from the speaker to provide goods or services, and the reader is told what to do, as in (1) and (2):

(1) *Läs om Mowgli* (Disney book ad, *D. D. & Co*, No. 2, 1969:34.)

Read about Mowgli

(2) *SÄND IN SVAREN NU!* (Super-8 film camera contest, *D. D. & Co*, No. 3, 1969:34.)

MAIL IN THE ANSWERS NOW!

Offers, on the other hand, highlight the opportunity for someone, directly or in the future, to gain access to goods or services from the speaker, e.g. to get drawing equipment for free as in (3):

(3) *HÄR FÅR DU RIT-GREJOR GRATIS* (Ad for Åke Skiöld’s drawing course, *D. D. & Co*, No. 1, 1969:outer back cover.)

HERE YOU CAN GET THINGS TO DRAW FOR FREE

The second main criterion for distinguishing commands from offers is preferred response from the point of view of the speaker. For commands, like (1) and (2), the preferred response is some kind of undertaking: ‘yes, I will read about Mowgli’ and ‘yes, I will mail my answers to you’. Offers such as (3) have an acceptance as preferred response: ‘okay, thank you’ (cf. Halliday & Matthiessen 2004:108--111).

In the analysis of lexicogrammatical realisation, the main focus is on mood which is the system most closely connected to the realisation of speech functions. The mood system consists of the subsystems of *imperative* and *indicative* (Halliday & Matthiessen 2004:114-115). The imperative is the *congruent*, or most direct mood for the exchange of goods and services (Halliday & Matthiessen 2004:138), but much less so for offers than for commands. As a matter of fact, for offers just about any, or no, mood is congruent, cf. ‘Here is your glass of milk’, ‘Do you want a glass of milk?’, or ‘Please, have a sip of this milk’. The indicative is the grammatical category for the congruent realisation of exchange of information. Within

indicative, the *declarative* is the preferred category used for statements and *interrogative* is the category for questions (Halliday & Matthiessen 2004:114).

In addition, an analysis of *modalisation* and *modulation* was carried out in which the continuum between the positive and negative poles of the speech functions were analysed (Halliday and Matthiessen 2004:146-148), e.g. ‘You must drink this milk’ in relation to the positive ‘Drink this milk’ and the negative ‘Don’t drink this milk’. Finally, a qualitatively oriented analysis of ideational aspects of the clauses realising proposals was performed: What are the readers of the ads commanded to do or offered? And are there participants other than speakers and readers in the commands and offers?

4 The exchange of goods and services

The number of major clauses realising offers and commands in the texts analysed is presented in TABLE 2.

TABLE 2 Clauses realising commands and offers⁶

Year of publication	Commands		Offers		Total	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
1948	9	75 %	3	25 %	12	100 %
1959	59	84 %	11	16 %	70	100 %
1969	73	69 %	33	31 %	106	100 %
1984	130	71 %	52	29 %	182	100 %
1948--1984	271	73 %	99	27 %	370	100 %

As indicated in TABLE 2, the exchange of goods and services in the ads in *Donald Duck & Co* is primarily performed through commands; out of the 370 commands and offers in all the ads from 1948 through 1984, 271 (73 %) are commands. The comparatively low number of commands and offers in the 1948 publications is, of course, partially explained by the fact that only four ads were published that year. The chronological increase in number of commands and offers can roughly be explained in the same way, i.e. by an increasing number of ads in *Donald Duck & Co*.

From the quantitative analysis of realisation in mood, presented in TABLE 3, it becomes clear that the majority of the commands are congruently realised in the imperative mood.

TABLE 3 Mood choices in clauses realising commands

Year of publication	Imperative		Indicative-declarative		Total	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
1948	8	89 %	1	11 %	9	100 %
1959	53	90 %	6	10 %	59	100 %
1969	69	95 %	4	5 %	73	100 %
1984	111	85 %	19	15 %	130	100 %
1948--1984	241	89 %	30	11 %	271	100 %

⁶ In TABLE 2 and in the following tables, realisations of speech functions from identical ads that have been published several times are listed as one instance. Also, the commands and offers listed in TABLE 2 are from 73 out of the 89 analysed texts. The 16 ads that contained neither commands nor offers (in the way these speech functions are defined here) were short, consisting usually of only one or two statements.

A vast majority of the commands, 241 (89 %) out of 271 from 1948 through 1984, are congruently realised in the imperative. There are no major differences between the years included in the study: between 85 % (in 1984) and 95 % (in 1969) of the commands are realised in the imperative. The commands in these ads are exemplified in (4) and (5):

(4) *Skriv redan idag till "Kalle Anka-pärmen", Hemmets Journal, Malmö 3. Glöm inte att tydligt ange namn och adress!* (Donald Duck collection folder ad, *D. D. & Co*, No. 1, 1959:outer back cover.)

Write straight away today to "the Donald Duck folder", *Hemmets Journal*, Malmö 3.
Don't forget to state your name and address clearly!

(5) *Läs den helfestliga historien och ha jätteroligt!* (Disney book ad, *D. D. & Co*, No. 7, 1969:34.)

Read the hilarious story and have great fun!

From TABLE 4 it can be seen clearly that the realisation pattern for offers is quite different from that for commands.

TABLE 4 Mood choices in clauses realising offers

Year of publication	Imperative		Indicative-declarative		Indicative-interrogative		Total	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
1948	-	-	3	100 %	-	-	3	100 %
1959	1	9 %	10	91 %	-	-	11	100 %
1969	5	15 %	27	82 %	1	3 %	33	100 %
1984	14	27 %	38	73 %	-	-	52	100 %
1948--1984	20	20 %	78	79 %	1	1 %	99	100 %

The indicative-declarative is the preferred mood for realisation of offers, quantitatively speaking. As many as 78 (79 %) out of the 99 offers between 1948 and 1984 are realised in the indicative-declarative. The reader of the ads can, for example, be offered a fantastic reading experience in the quantitatively dominating indicative-declarative mood, as in (6):

(6) *och varje månad kan ni få läsa om hans fantastiska upplevelser i denna nya, färgstrålande tidning för barn och vuxna.* (*Donald Duck & Co* subscription ad, *D. D. & Co*, No. 3, 1948:outer back cover.)

and every month you can get to read about his fantastic experiences in this new, colourful magazine for children and grown-ups.

An example of realisation in the imperative mood is presented in (7), where the reader is offered a prize in a contest:

(7) *VINN en "Lyckodag"* (Kolmården zoo contest, *D. D. & Co*, No. 5, 1984:inner back cover.)

WIN a "Lucky Day"

When the offers in the ads are modalised, and 22 of the 99 offers are, they tend to be so at the possibility end of a probability spectrum (Halliday and Matthiessen 2004:147):

(8) *Den här kan bli din!* (Ad for oranges, *D. D. & Co*, No. 6, 1969:outer back cover.)

This can become yours!

(9) *Då kan du vinna Stiga ishockeyspel.* (Stiga miniature ice hockey game contest, *D. D. & Co*, No. 5, 1984:34.)

Then you can win a Stiga ice-hockey game.

In examples (8), (9), but also in (6), the modal operator ‘can’ (*kan*) opens up a possible future benefit to the readers if they visit the shop (8), participate in contests (9) or subscribe to *Donald Duck & Co* (6).

The basic quantitative analysis of commands and offers shows that the child readers, during all the years included in the study, tend to be commanded rather than offered something. The discursive implications of this result are more tied to the non-preferred, or discretionary, responses to commands and offers than to the preferred responses. The non-preferred response to a command would be a *refusal*, e.g. ‘I won’t’ in relation to (4). To an offer the non-preferred response would be a *rejection*, e.g. ‘no thanks, I don’t need it’ in response to (8) and (9) (Halliday and Matthiessen 2004:108-111). Arguably, because of the responsibility for the exchange placed on the reader, it is harder to withdraw from proposed exchanges of goods or services that are performed through commands than from exchanges that are performed through offers, where most of the responsibility is placed on the speaker. In other words, it is socially less demanding to reject an offer than to refuse to comply with a command. In sum, in the realm of speech functions for the exchange of goods and services, the tendency to prefer commands to offers draws on more authoritarian discourses and allows the reader less social scope for withdrawal from the exchange than would have been the case if the tendency had been to offer rather than to command.

In addition, the commands are usually realised congruently and rather directly in the imperative mood, whereas a metaphorical realisation of commands, in the indicative-declarative, would have allowed for more negotiation between speaker and reader. The congruent realisation of the commands minimises the distance between the semantic stratum of the speech function and the lexicogrammatical stratum, thus also minimising the scope for social negotiation between speaker and the reader (Halliday and Matthiessen 2004:632-633). In other words, in the ads analysed it is socially acceptable for the speaker to command the child reader without being very willing to open up for negotiations or for rejections or refusals on behalf of the reader.

Even in the cases where the commands actually are metaphorically realised in the indicative-declarative, thus opening up a little for negotiation, the scope for such negotiation is often reduced by modalisation for obligation, partially outweighing the negotiation potential of the metaphorical realisation:

(10) *Du ska göra en egen liten serie om sport och godis.* (Fazer candy ad, *D. D. & Co*, No. 4, 1984:inner front cover.)

You have to make a little comic strip of your own about sport and candy.

Out of the total of 271 commands, 17 are modulated; 14 of them are modulated for obligation of the required to type (Halliday and Matthiessen 2004:147), e.g. through the modal operator ‘have to’ (*ska*) as in (10).

5 The ever-competing child consumer

If we dig further into how combinations of commands and offers form sequences, or *stages* (van Leeuwen 1993:197-203), in the generic structure of the advertising texts, contests stand out as a stage often consisting of an exclusive combination of offers and commands.⁷ Contests are salient during all the years included in the study, with the exception of 1948. These stages typically consist of the following combination of proposals: a) offer(s) and/or command(s) to participate in the contest or offers to win something; b) command(s) to perform a practical task; c) offer(s) to win something, sometimes repeated from a); d)

⁷Hasan (1979) and Ventola (1987) are studies of text structures in service encounters, a genre where the exchange of goods and services is salient, perhaps even more directly so than in the genre of advertising.

command(s) to mail the result of the task to the company behind the ad. This type of contest stage is exemplified in (11) from a Monark bicycle ad (*D. D. & Co*, No. 6, 1959:inner front cover):

- (11) a) *I så fall - var med och tävla!*
In that case - join the contest!
- b) *Du skall bara dra ett streck från varje barn till den cykel du tror han eller hon åker på. Rita sedan en ring runt den cykel du själv drömmer om och tala om varför du vill ha just den. Börja så här! "Jag vill ha den här Monarkcykeln, därför att..."*
You just have to draw a line from each child to the bike you think he or she rides. Then draw a circle around the bike that you dream of and say why you want that one particularly. Start like this! "I want this Monark bike, because..."
- c) *Den pojke eller flicka, som skickat in de trevligaste svaren och löst uppgiften rätt får var sin cykel i pris.*
The boy or girl who has sent in the nicest answers and has given the right answers will each get a bike as a prize.
- d) *Skicka in lösningen tillsammans med uppgift om namn, adress, och ålder till "Monark - drömcykeln", AB Cykelfabriken Monark, Varberg, senast den 1/8 1959.*
Send in your solution together with information about your name, address, and age to "Monark - the dream bike", AB Cykelfabriken Monark, Varberg, by 1/8 1959.

Sometimes the contest stages form one of several stages in the ad, which is the case with (11), but the entire advertisement also consists of nothing more than a contest stage.

The play aspect of consumer culture is, to some extent, what makes it so appealing to children: "Children's commercial culture appeals so much to children because it takes children's play, pleasure and desire seriously. Clearly it helps to construct their play, pleasure and desire, but it also seeks to understand and tap into them" (Kenway and Bullen 2001:46). Through the recurrent contests in *Donald Duck & Co*, children are introduced to the companies and their products by performing tasks that they enjoy since they are closely linked to play and entertainment. This is probably one explanation for the persistence of the contests in *Donald Duck & Co*, which has also been noted by Mauthe (1996:32-33).

6 The changing independence of the child consumer

The analysis of offers and commands also reveals changes in the degree of control over consumption that is being ascribed to, and assumed from, the child readers. In the texts from 1948, 1959 and, to a lesser extent, 1969, the children being offered something or commanded tend to have no direct control over their personal spending. It is their mothers that possess the power to consume, and so the children are commanded to influence them:

- (12) *Be mamma bjuda på EKSTRÖMS chokladpudding* (Ad for Ekströms chocolate pudding, *D. D. & Co*, No. 2, 1959:inner back cover.)
Ask your mother to serve EKSTRÖM'S chocolate pudding
- (13) *Be mamma att hon köper en Jordantandborste och visar hur du ska borsta dina tänder riktigt fina!* (Jordan toothbrush ad, *D. D. & Co*, No. 2, 1969:outer back cover.)
Ask your mother to buy a Jordan toothbrush and show you how to brush your teeth to make them really nice!

One image of the child consumers in the early years examined in the study is thus that they had no direct control over their personal consumption but could influence the purchases made by their mothers. However, in the vast majority of the ads from 1984 and in some of the ads from 1969, the exchange of goods and services has become an activity that exclusively involves the commercial companies and the child readers of the ads.⁸ Their assumed power to consume is often obvious in the semantics of the verbs used in the commands:

- (14) *Köp en påse Baloo.* (Mazetti candy ad, *D. D. & Co*, No. 7, 1969:inner back cover.)
Buy a bag of Baloo.
- (15) *Köp själv* (Panda candy ad, *D. D. & Co*, No. 8, 1984:inner front cover.)
Buy it yourself
- (16) *Sänd inga pengar nu! Betala när inbetalningskortet kommer.* (*Donald Duck & Co* Fun Shop text, *D. D. & Co*, No. 1, 1984:inner back cover.)
Don't send any money now! Pay when you get the payment voucher.

One of the discursive implications of examples like (14) and (15) is that the child reader can be congruently and directly commanded to 'buy' because he or she has the financial power to do so. Example (16) is a little more complicated. The two commands are part of an advertising text from Disney where Donald Duck products are on sale. The text as a whole is apparently targeted at child consumers, for example requiring the signature of an adult when the products are ordered: *Målsmans underskrift om du är under 18 år* ('Parents' or guardians' signature if you are under the age of 18'). So, in the commands in (16), it is presumably the child who is commanded not to send money right away and to pay later on, even though a signature from the parent is required to complete the transaction.

It should also be mentioned that commands to buy are not totally absent in earlier texts. One such command is repeated in three of the ads from 1948:

- (17) *Köp Kalle Anka & Co. varje månad* (*Donald Duck & Co* subscription ad, *D. D. & Co*, No. 2, 3, and 4, 1948:outer back covers.)
Buy Donald Duck & Co. every month

This command is apparently directed at a child consumer with some control over his or her money. It is, of course, no surprise that children had allowances even in 1948. Kline (1993) has described the emerging child consumer in the immediate post-war period as someone who could afford to buy a comic book with his or her own allowances.

In some cases in 1984, paying or buying is not even explicitly part of the command. The child is just simply commanded to 'get' (*skaffa*) the product, in (18) and (19) a toy:

- (18) *Skaffa det allra senaste, och upptäck nya, helt okända världar.* (LEGOLAND Space ad, *D. D. & Co*, No. 6, 1984:outer back cover.)
Get the absolutely latest, and discover new, totally unknown worlds.
- (19) *Skaffa den alldeles nya MC-shoppen och förnya din LEGOLAND Stad samling.* (LEGOLAND City ad, *D. D. & Co*, No. 7, 1984:outer back cover.)
Get the brand new MC-shop and renew your LEGOLAND City collection.

It should be noted in (18) and (19) that the Swedish verb *skaffa* is more active than the English translation 'get'; *skaffa* exclusively realises active material processes whereas 'get' can also realise the less active process 'to receive'.

⁸ Perhaps as a result of this, a number of full length ads in *Donald Duck & Co* from 1984 are explicitly targeted at the parents, e.g. ads for certain exclusive Disney books that the parents can buy for their children.

Finally, 1984 stands out as the first year of the study when the offers and commands are directed at a hedonistic child consumer, as in (20) and (21):

- (20) Smaka och njut! (...) GÖR DIN EGEN NEW YORKER MED DEN RÄTTA AMERIKANSKA SMAKEN! (Kavli dressing ad, *D. D. & Co*, No. 1, 2, 3, and 4, 1984:inner front cover, outer back covers respectively.)
Taste and enjoy (...) PREPARE YOUR OWN NEW YORKER WITH THE GENUINE AMERICAN TASTE!
- (21) *Njut Panda-godis (...) och Du får läckra smakfavoriter, som också kan ge Dig verkliga storvinster i årets Panda-tävlingar.* (Panda candy ad, *D. D. & Co*, No. 8, 1984:inner front cover.)
Enjoy Panda-candy (...) and You get delicious taste favourites that can also give You really major prizes in this year's Panda contests.

The *phenomena* in the ideational mental processes of 'tasting' and 'enjoying' in (20) and (21) are food products (cf. Halliday and Matthiessen 2004:170-178), which is common in 1984.

7 Discussion

One of the basic results of the speech function approach to the analysis of discourse adopted in this paper was that commands quantitatively dominate over offers in the advertisements from 1948 through 1984. This result has implications for the images of the consuming child in *Donald Duck & Co*. In particular, it can be discussed in terms of a somewhat authoritarian discourse present in the ads. In this paper, it has been argued that an offer, more than a command, orients the obligation of the exchange of goods and services toward the speaker, which gives wider possibilities for the other person in the interaction to withdraw from the proposed exchange of goods or services. In the texts analysed it would have been possible to opt for offers rather than commands, but the domination of reader-oriented commands sets up a more authoritarian relation between the speaker, in this case the person behind the ad, and the other person, in this case the child reader. The former assumes a sort of power position from which the latter can be told what he or she should do.

The mood choices in the lexicogrammatical stratum also contribute to the meanings of the clauses analysed. The quantitative analysis showed that the commands from all the years studied tend to be congruently realised in the imperative mood, even though there is a restricted number of metaphorical realisations in the indicative-declarative. Through the congruent and thus more direct realisations in the imperative, it is potentially more difficult for the person commanded to reject the command. Another discursive implication of this is that the speakers of the ads assume a position from which they do not feel the need to get involved in negotiations with the child reader. In the few cases where commands are incongruently realised in the indicative, thus somewhat opening up the command for negotiation, they tend to be modulated for obligation, outweighing the negotiation potential and enforcing the compliance of the child reader with the commands.

The authoritarian discourse described here is however partially outweighed by the development of a more competent and independent child consumer in the ads from 1969 and above all in those from 1984. This changing image of the child consumer of the 20th century is recognised by Olesen (2004:277-288) who points to the fact that children historically have been quite distanced from the consumer markets and that parents and other adults have acted as a link between children and the market, providing them with the consumer goods they need. Through the commercialisation of childhood in the second half of the 20th century this has

changed and children's subjective consumer preferences have gradually come into focus (cf. Wintersberger 2005:204).

In the symbolic exchanges of goods and services of the early texts the child reader is ascribed little or no power over its own consumption. As mentioned, the child readers of *Donald Duck & Co* are commanded and offered an opportunity to 'compete', to 'win', and to 'send in', but they are rarely commanded to 'buy' something (except subscriptions to Disney publications and issues of *Donald Duck & Co*). Also, the enjoyments they are offered mostly concern the recurrent contests. In this ways, the children of the late 1940s and 1950s seem to be perceived as belonging to a group to whom no major power to consume is attributed. However, through the commands and offers of the contests and other practical activities tied to a certain brand or company, a seed of brand recognition is potentially planted in the children's minds.

Another apparent reason for introducing brands and companies to the children of the earlier years of the study is the influence they can exert on their mothers. The point that consumption has been an activity negotiated between commercial companies, children, and mothers during a large part of the 20th century has been made by Seiter (1993:21) in her discussion of the mother-child relation in consumption: "Children go shopping because mothers go shopping, and mothers have few alternatives but to take them along. Young children could never have been exploited as a market if they were not already visiting stores with their mothers." Especially in 1959, the child readers of *Donald Duck & Co* are explicitly commanded to work on their mothers in order to get them to buy a certain product.

In 1984, and to some extent in 1969, the children no longer need their mothers in consumption matters, at least not as much as before. The children are envisaged consuming as independent individuals who make their own consumer decisions. Hand in hand with the independent child consumers of 1984 come the hedonistic child consumers who are commanded to satisfy their subjective, hedonistic, needs through consumption. Children are, for instance, commanded to 'buy' and 'taste' a number of food products.

The diachronic changes in how child readers are incorporated in the symbolic exchange of goods and services in *Donald Duck & Co* can be related to Qvortrup's (2005) discussion of conceptualisations of childhoods, partly drawing upon Ariès (1962). In pre-modernity, children were not singled out as a separate group in society and they were, for good or ill, included in public life, e.g. they worked. Basically, children were viewed as small adults. In modernity, the role of children in the public sphere was weakened whereas their role in private life, within the family, was strengthened. Children's needs were perceived as special and different from those of adults. In the transition from pre-modernity to modernity the social definition of children moved from human *beings*, i.e. being just like adults, to human *becomings*, in the process of becoming adult human beings (Qvortrup 2005:5).

The human *becomings* of modernity, with strong positions in the realm of private life but weaker in the public realm, are recognisable in the child readers of *Donald Duck & Co* ads from 1959 and to some extent from 1948, commanded to try to influence the consumption of their mothers. These child readers are not directly commanded themselves to consume, i.e. to become involved directly in the presumably public realm of consuming goods and services. Instead, they could be viewed as *consumer becomings* who are introduced to brand names and commercial products through contests and other activities for future use in the adult world of consumption.

The competent and financially more independent child consumers of 1969, and especially 1984, cannot be described as consumer *becomings*. One interpretation is that the child readers of those years are no longer confined to the private domain of the family, but have (re)entered the public sphere, at least the public arena of consumption. They could rather

be defined as *consumer beings*, capable of making their own decisions in consumption matters.

Finally, a few remarks can be made on the results of the “textually oriented discourse analysis” (Fairclough 2003:2-3) presented here in relation to other analyses of similar texts. Images of subordinate children in relation to adults as well as the competent consuming children of the 1980s and 1990s have been discussed in ethnographic research (e.g. Brembeck, Berggren Torell, Falkström and Johansson 2001). However, the analysis of speech functions can provide a fuller picture of how this is actually enacted in specific units of discourse. Such an analysis highlights the interconnection between socio-cultural developments and changes in micro levels of discourse; how we think about children and consumption is reflected in how goods and services are symbolically exchanged in the lexicogrammatical choices used in ads targeting children. The other side of that coin is how changes in the symbolic exchange of goods and services have affected the way children have actually acted as consumers during the 20th century, but that discussion, of course, requires methodologies other than the one presented in this paper.

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