# Communication's functions in advertising speech

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**Résumé:** Notre article propose au public quelques techniques d'analyse linguistique des réclames. Le discours de la publicité, accompagné par un texte et une image, est décodé par une application aux fonctions de la langue: expressive, impressive, phatique, référentielle, métalinguistique et poétique. La publicité est un art, une poésie du langage et des formes visuelles.

Motto: *"Don't search for the meaning of one word, but for his usage manner"*
(L. Wittgenstein)

## 1. Advertising speech

In the century of "word's tyranny", in which the contemporaneousness uses the strategies of the discursive acts globally in order to have efficiency in communication and action, the advertising speech imposes itself as the most comprehensive, unavoidable and influential speech of our century.

A general analysis of the speech would pressume the extension of the techniques of linguistic analysis beyond the sentence level, because the speech is a structured event and manifested by a specifically and orientated[1] linguistic behaviour.

In Umberto Eco's opinion, "symptomatic for the analysis of a text isn't its structure, but the impact that it makes towards the

[1] Cf. W. Edmond, *Spoken Discourse. A Model for Analysis*, Longman, London, 1981, p. 4.



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receiver"[2]. As receivers of the advertising speech, we should cognitively engage into discovering and assimilating the codes with wich it operates: the text and the image. In order to discover qualities of pertinence, verisimilarity and their adequation, it is imposed a semiotic analysis of the advertising speech.

Being one syncretic and extremely complex, the advertising speech integrates itself, next to the propaganda's language, in the field of *persuasive*[3] speech, being dominated by the connotative function of the expression, of influencing the recipient, aiming to modify the behaviour, his attitudes or beliefs by linguistic and/or non-linguistic means.

Located at the intersection between communication and symbolic representation of the reality, the advertising speech must be art and technique for captivating, convincing and forming attitudes. In fact, by its finality and by some discursive techniques used, the advertising speech approaches the *argumentation*[4] speech.

From the perspective of functional stylistics, the advertising speech can be considered as an apart sub-code of the *publicistic style* (journalistic)[5], with which has in common the same functions set, as well some particularized discursive strategies.

Some romanian writers consider the advertising speech as being *"the direct persuasive measures, daily, which promotes a product or a service in front of the receiver"*. The advertising speech can be equally *spoken* (radio or TV advertising) or *written* (printed advertising, banners), being in the same time a *demonstrative* and *extensive un-determined* speech. The production of the advertising speech suppose the presence of one Transmitter,

[2] U. Eco, *Tratat de semiotica generala*, E.S.E., Bucuresti, 1982, p. 350.

[3] Cf. R. Lindekens, *"Semiotica discursului publicitar"*, in Marcus S. (coord.), *Semnificatie si comunicare în lumea contemporana*, Ed. Politica, Bucuresti, 1985, pp. 267-286.

[4] Cf. Adriana Stoichitoiu – Ichim, *"Strategii persuasive în discursul publicitar (1)"*, in *Limba si literatura*, vol. 2, 1997, p. 52.

[5] D. Irimia, *Structura stilistica a limbii române contemporane*, E.S.E., Bucuresti, 1986, p.185.



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one Receiver and a spatial/temporal context for development. The immediate purpose of the advertising speech is to persuade the Receiver, to induce a certain *"perlocutionara" component* to the message and to generate, in consequence, the favourable attitudional manifestation: the acquisition of the product / the contracting of the service"[6].

We can deduce from here, once again, that the advertising speech is also a peculiar form of communication. But isn't that somehow the semantic spectrum of the "advertising" notion already includes specific communicational functions?

The Explanatory Dictionary of Romanian Language (DEX) doesn't register the meanings with which the neologism *advertising* is used today, but in some foreign dictionaries the term is defined as "the activity of making a product known and of determining the public to buy it, as well as all the means used for this purpose".[7]

At the base of the word *advert* ("advertising") is the latin verb *advertere*, which means "to direct towards something/ somebody". The advertising speech is not addressed to one individualized receiver, but to one public conceived as a collective and heterogeneous entity (under socio-cultural, educational, ideological aspect).

Living into a world of contraries, when – paradoxically – the extremities touches and confounds, the advertising becomes a modality of polarizing the human existence, expressing new meanings through the word and image.

The Wittgensteinian device "don't search for the meaning of one word, but for his usage manner", reminds us that "the only empirical control that we have over the language is the use of enunciations in concrete daily situations"[8]. Or, the advertising use these situations by handling different types of contexts. From this

[6] O. Balanescu, *Tehnici discursive publicistice si publicitare*, Ed. Ariadna, Bucuresti, 2003, p.139.

[7] Cf. *Le Petit Larousse en couleurs*, Editions Larousse, 1995, p. 835.

[8] V. S. Dâncu, *Comunicarea simbolica. Arhitectura discursului publicitar*, Dacia, Cluj-Napoca, 1999, p. 76.



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point of view, an advertising speech has two alternatives: it either is immediately effective, or it is not effective at all. When the goal is reached, this becomes a communication act, because the word was and remains "the highest expression of the language and it is the identity act of human species".[9]

## 2. The advertising iconotext[10] – applications of the communication functions

The iconic or textual advertising is the main form of paid publicity, which presents itself under the form of a message "in most cases intermediated by mass communication means and has the role of convincing a certain public"[11].

The advertising is used on a very large scale, starting from a product launch – when the familiarization instrument, the curiosity and wish stimulation instrument contributes too- until the consumer attention keeping through fidelity, sympathy and, finally, repositioning the product image, which can shift to other qualities.

The most important functions of advertising[12] are:

- to announce the existence of the product;
- to diffuse informations about the respective product or service;
- to wake up interest for the product;
- to influence the consumer's preference for obtaining their adhesion.

The efficiency of the advertising depends on the degree in which the advertising attracts and keeps the attention, can be remembered, is persuasive, surprises by content and appearance,

[9] St. Prutianu, *Manual de comunicare si negociere în afaceri*, Polirom, Iasi, 2003, p.172.

[10] Cf. I. C. Corjan, *Semiotica limbajului publicitar. Textul si imaginea*, Editura Universitatii Suceava, 2004, pp.192-277.

[11] Maria Moldoveanu & Dorina Miron, *Psihologia reclamei. Publicitatea în afaceri*, Ed. Libra, Bucuresti, 1995, p.17.

[12] Cf. S. Stanciu, *Bazele generale ale marketingului* (www. marketing.ro).



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captivates the interest by technical execution and aesthetic values, by usefulness and offered solutions.

**2.1 The expressive function. Analysis of the *Eukanuba* advertising**

Through the *expressive function* the personality, the characteristics of the one who communicates it are emphasized. This function shows the will of expressing the thoughts reffering to the message content. To make the reception easier and for memorability, the message has to crystallize around some key words which play the role of an interrogator. The abstract terms are avoided and also the inversions with stylistic functions.



For example, the expressive language used by Eukanuba (see photo) relates us directly with the person situated at the origin of this message. The product isn't described, it is preffered that its qualities are intuited. Between the animated performer – the bird – and the context of the slogan "Everybody wants to be a dog" there is a "surprise" congruence. The central visual element attracts our attention, while the verbal element explains the sense of the message succintly. The image – with a surrealist content, a little bit incomprehensible – verbalises the message. For decoding, an implicit or explicit connection with the product must be established. Beautiful and intriguing images are frequently used in advertising, the text having the role to explain what this beauty means. This text adds a new dimension to the visual message, waking up our interest through originality.



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**2.2. The impressive function. Analysis of the *Academia Catavencu* advertising**

*The impressive function* involves the recipient of the message. This involvement is done by implicating the recipient, through adhering at knowing his personality, his character, his culture, behaviour or language.

Umberto Eco names this function "imperative" because it's recognized by the use of the second person, vocative, imperative and interrogative characteristic.




Interesting is the iconotext proposed *for Academia Catavencu* (see photo) which is addressed to a nucleus of informed readers. Through direct approach: "We can afford to name things different", we know who are the real recipients of this concept: "we, those newspaper consumers who taste the games of senses". In this printed advertising the full communication is assured by the text, this being the only element of the announcement. Through the content of the writing, through his format, the text has transformed into a interesting advertising message, into a "different" message. The slogan: "Because our readers are more intelligent than theirs" proves a close and permanent relation between the recipient and transmitter.



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### 2.3. The fatical function. Analysis of the *Touareg* advertising

*The fatical function* tends to group all the efforts made by the transmitter, both for trying to make contact with the recipient and for keeping it, once this contact is established. The message of this function must be clear, unique, and especially simple in order to succeed in making the public understand exactly what you want them to understand.

Usually, at the advertising panels along the streets, the text of the advertising is limited because of the short time of reception on the fly.

The advertising from Volkswagen doesn't propose for Touareg a text which to include the performances of the car, the selling price or technical details, but attracts the attention through originality. First, the recipient (driver) is invited to read the Touareg slogan *Perfection at real scale*, which leads to the following idea: "Volkswagen produces perfect cars for real". The reader is guided in the reading process from top to bottom, the eyes descending to the text indicating the name and address of the distributor. The key sentence of the message is: *Finally, a car that comes to your stairs!* In this way the connection with the reader is realized, and he has the possibility to discover alone the value of the car. The receiver of such a message begins to become a creator, to discover original occasions for using the car Touareg (of course, without affecting the others from traffic). It's not enough to show what the car serves for, you must make the receiver imagine himself as a creative element, as an actor in the relation. The advertising is not addressed to those who wait for something new and of quality "finally", the car that comes to a "real scale", directly and shocking, expresses the attitude and the high and precise level of acting. Touareg is the car that can ascend you one stair. The repetition of the word "stair" makes us think about social evolution and confort: "that comes to your stairs". The proposed relation Touareg – You, understood in the sense that the car is for you (You can drive it, You can benefit from it), develop a relation from which both parties will win.



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**2.4. The referencial function. Analysis of the *Nardi* advertising**

*The referencial function* is a pure informative function, which exposes the content of the message without engaging the one who produces it or receives it. It's an entirely objective function, in which we cannot detect nor the presence of the emitter neither that of the recipient. It's orientated towards the exterior reality and shows the context at which the communication reffers and not the context in which the communication occurs, the last case being specifically for the situational function.




The Nardi products mean a certain quality level. The economy of the speech, the simple description of what Nardi represents "a rare metal", without adjectival exaggerations and without adverbial snorting is the most elegant solution. From the positional point of view, the advertised object benefit from the realist characteristics of the three-dimensional volumetry (shadows and light reflexions). The framing of the image has a bi-chromatic background, with tonal gradients of natural green and black which creates the impression of a limited access space. Even if technical details are missing, the image contains the solitary and almost true reproduction of the product. Nardi doesn't need no exaggeration.



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### 2.5. The metalinguistics function. Analysis of the *Grigore Antipa* advertising

*The metalinguistic function* uses a peculiar message, because there are some cases when the subjects appeal to an expertise, to a terminology which requests a translation for explainig another language. It's a paraphrase and translation function.



The language used in the advertising for the National Museum of Natural History "Grigore Antipa" is self-reffering and speaks about itself. The advertising suggests the forgetting degree and civic de-temporalisation. The purpose is not to represent the museum, but to create an ambiance, to cause an emotion, to create a remember feeling of the past or present. The message is of reaf-firming and has the goal of remembering the existence of the product, the museum, taking into consideration the situational context (the skeleton of the human from the plate) from the temporal axle.

### 2.6. The poetics function. Analysis of the iconotext *C'est la vie !*

*The poetics function* is centered on the message, through words games, syntactic structures, rhytms and tones. The tropes and figures of speech are perfect examples of this "sense supple-ment" confered by the structure variations.



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In the following advertising, the gestures of the performers are imperiously immortalized: the gesture index aims to reevaluate, in a special way, a special product, which denotes the fragrance and the freshness of the life lived at superlative. The chromatics is simple: the pink prevails the happiness of a performer and black the happiness of the another's. By multiplicating the flexion of the hands the space and enigmatical profoundness of the perspective are configured. Here, the dominant colours of the context are blending with those of the perfume's box, in a perfect stylistic unit. In this way a "chromatic syntax" which sustains the equilibrium shown by the perfume *C'est la vie!* is created. The essence of life is a mixture of pink and black, of mistery and astoundness, of static and dynamic.

Art of the immediate effect, the advertising is niether science, nor techique, but reaches its culminating point in our reactions. Escapism from legible space (text) into the visible space (image) helped us to go beyond the babilonical confusion regarding the transversal analysis of the advertising "field". We



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identified the relations between literal image (denotation) and symbolic image (conotation) through iconotextual analysis which celebrates the language and visual forms poetry.

Even if it has an ephemeral character, the effects of the advertising are long lasting and cumulative. We have the intuition that in the next years the advertising speech will have a spectacular evolution, because it articulates the sense, the ethic and the sensorial in a continuous exchange of the signs on the social scene.

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