SOME PERSUASIVE STRATEGIES IN SLOGAN

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Abstract: *Slogan or electoral message presents similitude to publicity discourse because their goals are similar and this reflects in its structure. The aim of this paper is to investigate the slogan as a particular type of persuasive discourse and it is focused on the pragmatic framework of this type of discourse and the relationship between speaker and his audience. The specific context shapes the slogan which uses various rhetorical devices and figures of speech.*

Key words*: slogan, spontaneous/ elaborated, predictable/ unpredictable, stereotype/ innovation, polemic.*

Slogans represent an extreme form of political discourse, which is used not only in the political publicity, but also in more elaborated discourse treating a political issue, where it functions as a conclusion. As a part of the political publicity, the electoral message shares a series of features with the publicity discourse and these characteristics derive from the two main functions they have to fulfill: to inform and to persuade the audience, regarded as a consumer (virtual buyer or elector).

"Just as the early commercials did not mean anything else but transmitting simple messages regarding the existence, the price and utility of a product, the contemporary political publicity may be considered an important means of informing the citizens about who the candidates are and what they offer from a political point of view." (McNAIR, 2007: 130). More than simply informing, the publicity of a product tends to offer it a particular significance that gives it individuality and convince the receiver of the superiority of that product. In a similar way, the political publicity shows the public a "product" that is endowed with a value of change or of a sign.

Nowadays, slogan, that represents the linguistic part of political publicity, is an interesting issue for researchers in various domains and the electoral message may be approached from many points of view.

In communication and public relations studies, the publicity of a political issue is a product and its success depends on the political marketing strategies (McNAIR, 2007: 194-196). From a psychological point of view, slogan, as a type of persuasive message, raises "a real interest in the role of linguistic force in marketing, publicity, the Bar, so models of communication based on keywords, on semantic cores of subliminal action are elaborated. The fundament of these models is a cultural one, relied on the general education and its automatic reactions, as well as on behavior observing" (RUŞTI, 2005: 85).

Also semiotics represents an instrument of investigating publicity, in general, and political publicity, in particular, aiming to explain how it functions and what is its importance. "Publicity, as well as the image, seem to operate a regression (or evolution) towards the mythical dimension, by which a mediation between the cosmological order (or the natural status of indiscrimination) and the human order, between nature and culture is established" (ROVENŢA-FRUMUŞANI, 2005: 152). A semiotical approach notices that the publicity utterance is a particular discourse type, characterized by the syncretism of semiotic codes, by a dense intertextuality

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(techniques of modifying previous discourses in the same domain or in other fields such as scientific or colloquial discourse) and by a variety of discoursive interactions.

Because the linguistic element is placed in the center of the publicity message, together with the image, this allows an approach from a rhetorical and pragmatic point of view. Both publicity discourse, considered as a "device (ensemble of strategies) producing the text of a commercial" (STOICHIȚOIU-ICHIM, 1997a: 51) and propaganda language illustrate the type of persuasive discourse, dominated by the conative function of language.

Situated near the border between political and media discourse, slogan or electoral message presents similitude to the publicity discourse which derive from the similar role they have: to impose a product to a virtual buyer/ elector who must be convinced /seduced in order to act a certain way. Thus, the persuasive strategies determine a certain configuration of publicity discourse and political publicity message, and the approach is relevant only if that speech act is considered from a pragmatic point of view. Political publicity discourse is performed as a unidirectional, non-mutual communication, from a speaker who holds a superior position because he has got the information, towards a passive hearer.

The producer of a political publicity discourse may appear explicitly in the utterance, encoded as personal pronoun 1st person pl.: *Ei cu ei, noi cu voi*, but it doesn't represent the plural of authority. Due to the particular goal of this type of discourse, the distance between the position of the speaker and the position of the hearer tends to be shortened or even cancelled. This personal pronoun in the plural makes the hearer understand that the speaker and the hearer belong to the same group, so that he might be induced the same opinion.

However, the speaker's person remains out of the performed discourse in most situations.

The hearer of political publicity utterance is not individualized, but an audience regarded as a collective entity, socio-culturally, educationally, ideologically heterogeneous, considered as a virtual elector; this situation determines the speaker to use certain persuasive strategies that aim to fulfill three goals: to attract and maintain attention, to get agreement by seduction and/or persuasion and to bring out a particular behavior of hearer/elector (to vote/support the candidate).

In order to achieve the first goal, its efficiency creating a favorable premise for the persuasion act, one can use extra-linguistic means: images that appear together with the text (orally communicated or written), which are interwoven. *Captatio benevolentiae* is achieved also by using some wordings that suggest the receiver is involved in a profitable partnership relation. The idea of a team, of a group including both the speaker and the hearer, sharing similar opinions, is rendered by using the personal pronoun in the 1st person plural or verbs in the 1st person plural, sometimes accompanied by the adverbial *together*, so that the speaker emphasize the cohesion: *Numai împreună vom reuşi!*

As a form of political communication, "publicity has a major shortcoming. The publicity message is perceived by the receiver as being, if not necessarily <propagandistic> (in the negative direction), at least <subjective> and biased. Disregarding the agreement with the transmitted message, the public understand that they deal with a political content of that message, reflecting the interests, the ideas, the values of the person who promotes it" (McNAIR, 2007: 167). Situated on this position, the receiver (reader, hearer or TV viewer) tends to move away from the transmitted message, to resist and reject it. By means of persuasive strategies, the speaker tries to

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prevent this reaction of the receiver, to perform an efficient act; those two opposed tendencies are reflected in the publicity political discourse, which is based on oppositions that are manifest at each level of the text. The dichotomies *spontaneous/elaborated, rational/emotional, predictable/unpredictable* which determine a certain configuration of the publicity discourse become manifest also in the political publicity discourse (electoral message/ slogan).

"The efficiency of publicity message that is addressed to a heterogeneous public in respect to education depends on its degree of accessibility at the level of internal organization of the text, of grammatical structure and vocabulary as well as on the stylistic variant which is used" (STOICHIȚOIU-ICHIM, 1997a: 53).

The spontaneous character of political publicity message results from using the colloquial variant of the language, from exploiting several methods of oral communication which are recurrent in this type of message.

a. Addressing in the 2nd person singular, in a familiar manner: *Alege dreapta!*

Even if the speaker addresses to the hearer in the 2nd person plural, this is not a plural of politeness, but it involves a group of receivers that are induced the impression of unity, of team awareness: *Votaţi schimbarea!*

b. Expressions which are specific to the spoken variant of language:*Să trăiţi bine!*
c. Frequent exclamatory or imperative constructions, which in most cases include an ellipses and are meant to achieve a fast and powerful impact on the receiver: *Mai bine pentru cei mulţi!*
d. "Simulated" dialogue which involves the receiver as an individual, not as a group, offering the impression that the receiver takes part in an active way in formulating the answer that may be implicit, not necessarily explicit: *Votul tău pentru o brichetă, ce ai face pentru două?*

In spite of the apparent spontaneity and simplicity, this type of message is an elaborated one, its architecturedepending on the channel of communication/spreading.The existence of some patterns, some "prescriptions" for producing the publicity message in general and the political slogan in particular reflects in its predictable, stereotype character.

The predictable character of publicity discourse is pointed out by the grammatical and lexical recurrences, as well as by the repetition and insistence figures of speech. "In a psycholinguistic approach, the existence of some repetitive structures presents advantages in receiving and memorization. In a stylistic approach, there is a risk to create the impression of monotony, of closed, stereotype universe, where the receiver feels trapped" (STOICHIȚOIU-ICHIM, 1997b: 45).

The grammatical recurrence appears because there is a preference for typical structures in slogan, such as that with a verb in the imperative mood (singular or plural) and a direct object: *Alege schimbarea!*

This typical structure may lead to another one, by using ellipsis of the predicate: *Franţa unită!*

The typology of sentences in electoral messages is quite restricted, so a few syntactic structures are highly frequent: some used more often in the past, such as that with predicate ellipsis and a noun group formed by noun in the nominative case– preposition *pentru* – noun in the accusative case (where the nouns may have adjective determiners): *Un preşedinte tânăr pentru o Franţă modernă!*; others, such as the interrogative sentences, preferred nowadays: *Tu ce alegi?*

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The lexical recurrence is manifest due to a high frequency of a small number of words, which represent two categories: some elements belong to the semantic field of political domain- *preşedinte, primar, a alege, a vota, deputat*; other lexical items refer to generally human aspirations, having "emotional" connotations, expressing values that are almost unanimously admitted- *dreptate, adevăr, bine, schimbare*.

The repetition figures appear frequently in the publicity political discourse because their stereotype character, sometimes associated to symetrical structures achieves the effect of persuasion by insistence and makes the memorization easier. The repetition is always a means of materializing the fatic function of publicity language, assuring a connection between the two poles of communication.

a. Repetition at the phonological level rarely appears as rhyme: *Ei cu ei, noi cu voi!*

b. Lexical repetition appears in more various forms, its typology in slogan being more restrained than in the publicity discourse in general.

-epifora (a word or a group of words repeted at the end of some syntactic or metric constructions); *La vremuri noi, oameni noi!*

-parigmenon (use of words that have the same radical in a syntactic structure): *Franţa francezilor!*

-poliptoton (repetition of a word in different flexionar forms) may combine with *antanaclaza* (repetition of a word with different meanings) when the context indicates a certain significance added to the meaning of a lexem: *Un om pentru oameni!*

c. Syntactic repetition appears as *paralelism* (repetition of grammatical forms in parallel succession in a sentence or clause): *Unicul ideal al dreptei: să păstreze puterea. Prima mea grijă: să v-o redau!*

The hyperbole, the stylistic superlative are figures of exaggeration that feature in the publicity discourse, but in the slogan, in the political publicity message are to be avoided, because of the specific "product" that is promoted. They prefer presenting this as a representative of a large group of individuals who constitute the target- public, so this is not "the perfect choice", but "a person" who deserves the receiver's trust just for he is a member of the same group, one of "them".

Creativity, innovation, distinctive features of any type of persuasive discourse oppose to the predictable character of publicity discourse. To the publicity discourse in general and to the political publicity message, the element of surprise has a tripled finality: to capture the receiver's attention, to involve him in decoding the significance of the utterance and thus to facilitate memorization, making him adopt a certain attitude or behavior. The innovating (unpredictable) character of any type of persuasive discourse is manifest in the electoral message, which is possible to get from the receiver a reaction opposite to that aimed by the speaker, a reaction of over-saturation because of stereotypes and repetition. The receiver's attention may be captured and his interest may be maintained also by leaving the patterns behind. Creativity can become evident in various methods, placed at different levels of the utterance and in different degrees according to the receiver. The target-public of the slogan is not homogenous, but when the speaker focuses on a certain segment of this public, he can design the expectations and general coordinates of this receiver by using specific methods in other domains (political marketing), so that he should be able to introduce the innovating element in the electoral message in the most efficient degree. This constraint imposed

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by the goal makes some messages be innovating and others remain in the stereotypes that satisfy the receiver's trust.

The iconic part of the publicity discourse, which consists of a static or dynamic image, is one of the coordinates of this type of discourse and in the write-spreading political message it is represented by the symbol of the party or by the picture of the candidate. The predictability at this level can be diminished by using the *caligrams.* They offer the text an iconic dimension by modifying one or even more letters in a word, turning them into a design (drawing) with a value of a sign. In the utterance *găseşt-EL,* the spelling is uncommon, there are not two words pronounced together written separately, but this spelling creates a symbol, *EL* (which was written in a different color on the banners promoting that candidate). By this innovation at the graphic level, representing an intimate connection between the iconic component and the linguistic one, the message succeeds in capturing the receiver's attention, in directly imposing him a *EL* (signifying the "product"), the personal pronoun third person singular used with an apparent anaphoric value. The lack of decoding possibilities, as there is no previous utterance containing a noun to be substituted, represent a reason for the receiver to look for this "him" and to find its referent.

The interference between various discourse types is a technique which rarely appears in the electoral message, maybe because it has a parody aspect which contrasts with the seriousness of such a situation, with the solemnity that has to characterize a candidate. However, as criticizing the opponent is a fundamental coordinate of political discourse, this sometimes could be done in the form of parody; the quotation of a well-known expression, which was spread and taken over in discourses in public area, represents a critical parody: "*După noi, potopul!"* is a concise metaphorical expression, used as a slogan turned against the opponents.

Leaving the patterns and stereotype structures away could be achieved by using the metaphor as a figure of ambiguity, but just apparently, because metaphor in publicity discourse functions as an ornament and has an argumentative role. In publicity discourse promoting a "political product", the speaker resorts metaphor in order to obtain the receiver's agreement, having him cover the distance between the significant that is present in the utterance and the term behind the metaphorical one. This action of the receiver is controlled by the speaker as the latter uses an explicit metaphor, a stereotyped one, frequent in the everyday language, so that the decoding process should be predictable. Despite this predictability, metaphor appears as an argumentative technique, because the reasoning through which the metaphorical term is associated to the other term represents the result of an inference and "it is always easier to deny what the interlocutor states than what you inferred by yourself" (ROVENȚA-FRUMUȘANI, 2000: 119).

The effect of surprise is much diminished when the metaphors that are used are explicit (*catacreze*), and they are not frequent in the electoral messages: *Votaţi ursul! PIN*. The process of decoding this metaphor depends both on the collective mentality and on the social context, as the same word was used with a different meaning in a spot produced by Reagan's staff, spread during the election campaign in USA. "In a spot, a serious and calm voice warned the viewers that <in the forest there is a bear>. This time, Reagan's campaign manipulated fear of communism and of <soviet bear>" (McNAIR, 2007: 139).

The use of polysemous words which create a surprise effect on the receiver in some contexts proves the role of ambiguity: *Alege dreapta!* Beyond the first reading of the utterance, the polysemy of the word *dreapta* may induce the idea of " loyalty,

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justice" exclusively associated to a certain political group, their opponents lacking these values. The receiver may be leaded towards such a reading of the text, on the ground that the political publicity message is defined by polemic. Although the polemical feature is manifest in the publicity discourse in general, it is more obvious in the political message. "The polemic character of the slogan is, in the political discourse, the expression of the opposition between the doctrines they represent and that belong to different power groups […] slogan must reflect this permanent political struggle, and the reflecting act has the aspect of polemic feature of such utterances" (SĂLĂVĂSTRU, 1999: 299).

The opposition between the political groups or their representatives may take an explicit form, when the antithesis appear as a figure of opposition and contradiction: *Unicul ideal al dreptei:să păstreze puterea. Prima mea grijă: să v-o redau!*. The effect of shock of contraries relies on the presence of contextual antonyms in this sentence: *a păstra- a reda*.

There is a polemic character in every slogan and it may be implicite or explicit, coded as antithesis. As it is transmitted by a political group, the intention of slogan is to promote an opinion which necessarily opposes the point of view of the other groups. The acceptance of a compromise would be unefficient with respect to getting the discourse performance, that materializes in determining the receiver to give his vote for a certain group to get legitimity. The polemic aspect is not always obvious in slogan, but it appears by connecting the discourse to the communication context: *Mai bine pentru cei mulţi!* This slogan implicitly contains the meanings "so far only a small group was well", "our program will bring welfare to the majority", "our opponents will not do this way". The use of the comparison of superiority "better" implies the reading "the persons who governed acted differently than we shall do", and function as a presupposition trigger.

Numai împreună vom reuşi!- the presence of the adverbial *only* triggers the presupposition that "success could not be guaranteed by other political groups that we oppose to".

This association of the opponent to a series of negatively connoted concepts which underline the positive aspects of the speaker's own opinion, ideology, political group underlies every slogan and is manifested even in the other components of the political publicity message in many cases. The negative publicity which is the result of the combative spirit focuses on the opponent's would-be defects rather than on the candidate's positive qualities, but, when the aim is getting the public trust and vote, it must be regarded as a simple persuasive strategy, not as a manipulation attempt.

Due to the fact that political discourse and slogan, as one of its forms of manifesting, address both to the receiver's reason and emotions, they use persuasive strategies that rely on different linguistic levels. The analysis of these utterances needs extra-linguistic contextualizing, as the lack of an image of social, cultural, economical background where their significance and consequence are projected may lead to false conclusions.

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