# The Meddling of the language functions whit the lexical fields of the Coca-Cola brand slogans

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**Resumé:** Le but de cet etude a été celui de presenter quelques aspects qui visent la liaison qui peut se faire entre les fonctions de la langue telles comme ells sont théorisées par le linguiste Roman Kakobson et les champs lexicaux des slogans de la marquee «Coca-Cola» qui peut être circonscrite à une structure théorique qui appartient à l'acte communicationnel. Les champs lexicaux d'un objet notionnel, respectivement le boisson gazéifié «Coca-Cola», et une structure théorique spécifique à un acte communicationnel base sur le langage.

Pour chaque des fonctions du language, telles comme elles ont été théorisées par le linguiste Roman Jakobson, ont été trouvées des correspondances des champs lexicaux, appartenant aux slogans de la marque «Coca-Cola». Ces champs lexicaux ont été considérablement étendus par des exemples prépondérente de la sphère verbale.

**Mots clés:** linguistique structurale, fonctions de la langue, champs lexicaux des slogans de la marque «Coca-Cola», lexématique.

The structure of the lexical fields of the slogans, assessed in terms of associations lying at the basis of the communication act, seems to have been approached, so far, rather implicitly than through direct explanations, reflecting the organic connection between the functions of the language and the lexical-paradigmatic factor of the slogans.



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Given the legendary dimension that the *Coca-Cola* brand got, defining, respectively, explaining this relationship (language functions – lexical fields) turned into a necessity, the current analysis aiming at addressing it, too.

## 1. The theoretical framework and objectives

The analysis of the language functions is connected to the name of the American linguist of Russian origin, Roman Jakobson. Accordant with his theory, any verbal act of communication consists of six elements, called functions. These are: the referential function, the expressive function, the conative function, the fatic function, the poetic function and the metalinguistic function. These can be activated whenever, within a context, there is a transmitter, a receiver, a channel, a common code and a message.

By applying these functions to the *Coca-Cola* brand slogans takes into account that the advertisements that include these promotional elements, respectively, the slogans, are based on three elements: to call attention, to persuade and bring about empathy. All these are brought together with the view of persuading the virtual buyer to take action and buy the product.

On the other hand, the slogans give rise to a very large variety of lexical fields. The intercrossing of the elements subordinated to the language functions with the lexical fields in the slogans emphasizes a dimension aiming at a practical purpose, selling the product, which overlaps the paradigmatic aspect of the lexical fields generated by the slogans.

What we are aiming at in the current study is examining the way the lexical fields in the *Coca-Cola* brand slogans fall into the specific of the language functions, such as they are theorized by Roman Jakobson.

Thus, on a structure that theorizes a certain hierarchy of the communication act, there are identified lexical fields of some clear-cut identified entities. These entities become, along the analysis, the research focus, being promotional factors of a product intended for consumption.



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It is not the purpose of this linguistic approach to define the structure of the lexical fields. What we intend is to bring forward the extent to which a communication act generates an interpretative potentiality based on, mainly, the verbs and nouns of the *Coca-Cola* brand slogans.

### 1.1. The referential function

The referential function is, basically, connected to the context and to the description of the situations, to the presentations of the concepts and of the mental state in which an event takes place. It includes deictic and descriptive elements. The promotional nature of the slogans involves the generous use of some verbs and semantic structures derived therefrom.

On principle, this function contains a flexible lexicography. Thus, we have verbs whose lexical field is submitted to changes ("size", "temperature change", "intensifying"), cognition verbs ("thinking", "judging", "analyzing"), communication verbs ("telling", "asking", "ordering", "singing"), verbs denoting consumption activities ("eating", "drinking"), verbs related to emotions ("feeling"), perception verbs ("seeing", "hearing", "owning"), verbs denoting social activities ("social activities" and "events") etc. These verbs are directly expressed in the slogans or they are implied. These verbs can be added to other verbs belonging to other classes, such as: verbs related to the lexical fields of the verb "get" ("win", "gain", "earn", "buy"), verbs related to the lexical fields of the verb "amuse" ("delight", "scare", "shook", "confuse"), verbs related to the issue of light ("shine", "flash", "flare", "glow", "blaze"), verbs referring to the change of the physical state ("soften", "weaken", "melt", "narrow", "deepen"), verbs that relate to the verb "peer" ("listen", "stare", "look", "glance", "gaze") etc.

Within the *Coca-Cola* brand slogans, the causative structures ("causative construction") are essential to the promotion of the product. These structures cover, mainly, the posture or the movement, as we can see in the slogans from:

1924: "Pause and refresh yourself";



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1925: "(…) Stop at the red Sign and refresh yourself";
1926: "(…) Stop at the red sign";
1934: "(…) Start with a *Coca-Cola*".

The lexical fields of the determinative verbs from the above mentioned slogans include other verbs, such as: "bounce", "dangle", "drift", "drop", "float", "fly", "glide", "hong", "lean", "move", "perch", "rest", "revolve", "rock", "roll", "rotate", "sit", "skid", "slide", "spin", "stand", "swing", "turn", "twist", "whirl", "wind".

The *Coca-Cola* brand slogan of the year 1908 is: "Sparkling – harmless as water, and crisp as frost. The satisfactory beverage". To define the qualities of the *Coca-Cola* carbonated drink, the term "frost" is, together with "refreshing" and "taste", an essential one.

The lexical field of this term circumscribes to the verbs that show state changes such as: "age", "bend", "break", "burn", "char", "chill", "chip", "collapse", "condense", "contract", "corrode", "crack", "crash", "crease", "crinkle", "crumble", "crush", "decrease", "deflate", "defrost", "degrade", "diminish", "dissolve", "distend", "divide", "double", "drain", "enlarge", "expand", "explode", "fade", "fill", "flood", "fold", "fracture", "fray", "freeze", "fuse", "grow", "halt", "heal", "heat", "ignite", "improve", "increase", "inflate", "light", "melt", "multiply", "pop", "reproduce", "rip", "rumple", "rupture", "scorch", "shatter", "shrink", "shrivel", "singe", "sink", "smash", "snap", "soak", "splay", "splinter", "split", "sprout", "steep", "stretch", "tear", "thaw", "tilt", "topple", "warp", "wrinkle".

If we take into account the same slogan of the year 1908 we consider the term "sparkling", this time. When referring to the slogan of the year 1932: "Ice-could sunshine", the noun "sunshine" is made up of the noun "sun" and the verb "shine". This verb circumscribes to some lexical fields that include the following verbs: "blaze", "flame", "flare", "glare", "gleam", "glisten", "glitter", "glow", "shimmer", "shine", "sparkle", "twinkle", "blare", "boom", "buzz", "chatter", "chime", "creak", "fizz", "gurgle", "hiss", "howl", "hum", "peal", "purr", "splutter", "squa-



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wk", "swoosh", "thrum", "vroom", "whine", "whump", "zing", "drip", "emanate", "erupt", "foam", "gush", "leak", "ooze", "puff", "radiate", "shed", "spout", "sweat".

The slogan of the year 1906: "(…) Thirst quenching – delicious and refreshing" and the slogan of the year 1910: "(…) Quenches the thirst as nothing else can" are based on the verb "quench". From the point of view of the lexical fields, this verb circumscribes to the semantics of other verbs like: "depart", "disappear", "disintegrate", "expire", "fall apart", "lapse", "pass away", "pass on", "perish", "succumb", "vanish".

Broadening the area of the afore mentioned lexical fields, we associate other verbs like: "abolish", "annihilate", "ban", "blitz", "crush", "decimate", "demolish", "destroy", "devastate", "exterminate", "extirpate", "finish", "obliterate", "ravage", "raze", "rescind", "ruin", "tear down", "terminate", "waste", "wipe out", "wreck".

In the slogans of the year 1926: "(…) Stop at the red sign" and 1934: "(…) Start with a *Coca-Cola*", we have two verbs that express the idea of movement and posture: "stop" and "start". These verbs circumscribe to a lexical field that includes the following verbs: "bounce", "dangle", "drift", "drop", "float", "fly", "glide", "hang", "learn", "move", "perch", "rest", "revolve", "rock", "roll", "rotate", "sit", "skid", "slide", "spin", "swing", "turn", "twist", "whirl", "wind".

The referential function is the most comprehensive of all the functions. The verbal fields of this function comprise, besides the already mentioned verbs, verbs belonging to the class of "urge" ("ask", "persuade"), "force" ("manipulate", "pressure"), "order" ("command", "require"), "want" ("need"), "pay" ("buy", "spend"), "allow" ("permit"), "enquire" ("ask", "consult"), "see" ("notice", "feel"), "love" ("like", "hate"), "explain", "suggest" ("propose", "recommend") etc.

Within the *Coca-Cola* brand slogans, the referential function directs the buyer towards the promoted product and tries to justify the benefits of purchasing this brand.



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### 1.2. The expressive or emotional function

The role of this function is to identify the aspect of the message transmitter's emotional involvement. In our assessment of the *Coca-Cola* brand slogans, this function lies under the aegis of the perception verbs, for example: "seeing", "hearing", "feeling" and of the lexical fields that derive from these: 1909: "(…) Whenever you see our arrow think of *Coca-Cola*", 1945: "Whenever you hear, have a *Coke* you hear the voice of America" and 1956: "Feel the difference. Frendliest drink on earth. Makes good things taste better".

The verb "to feel" holds a special place within the lexical fields associated with the emotive function of the *Coca-Cola* brand slogans.

With the slogan of the year1908 in view: "Good fills the last drop", we can underline the following aspects, taking into account the expressive function subordinated to the lexical fields:

a. The noun "drop" is directly linked to the verb "drop". This can be correlated with verbs such as: "dribble", "drip", "dump","funnel", "ladle", "pour", "shake", "siphon", "slap", "slash", "spill", "spoon";

b. This slogan of the year 1908 is linked to the verb "to feel".

Sometimes, this verb and the derived nouns are expressed directly, such as is the case in the slogans from:

1956: "Feel the difference. Friendliest drink on earth. Makes good things taste better"

1961: "*Coke* and food – refreshing new feeling";

1989: "Can't Beat the Feelings".

The above mentioned slogans allow framing the verb "to feel" within the lexical field of other verbs, which can form phrases with such as: "to feel interest", "to feel love", "to feel attraction". Expanding the lexical field of these statements by way of positive forms, we come to verbs like: "dislike", "detest", "hate".



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We can draw the conclusion that the emotive function of the Coca-Cola brand slogans can generate lexical fields associated with the major meaning of the message.

### 1.3. The conative function

This function is called "impressive", too, or "conative", with the purpose of engaging the receiver in a direct dialogue, making use of vocative or imperative. There are numerous such examples:

1923: "Enjoy life!";
1924: "Refresh yourself!";
1925: "(…) Stop at the red sign and refresh yourself!";
1934: "Carry a smile back to work (…)";
1975: "Look up America!";
1986: "Drink *Coca-Cola*!"

If we take into account the slogan of the year 2009: "Open Happiness", this contains the term "happiness", which has corresponding verbs such as: "gratify", "satisfy", "fulfill", "content", "delight", "cheer", "gladden", "trill", "exhilarate".

In the area of the semantic fields, these verbs have as correspondents hyponyms such as: "please", "delight", "cheer", "gladden".

The verb "satisfy" comes up in the slogan of the year 1904: "*Coca-Cola* satisfies". The adjective derived from the above mentioned verb can be found in the slogan of the year 1908: "The satisfactory beverage", which is an anaphoric construction where the adjective "satisfactory" holds a determinative position. The slogan of the year 1910: "It satisfies" contains the same verb, "satisfy", which comes in a deictic structure type. (Within this construction, the verb has an equal value with the deictic element "it", because it casts the anchor in the communication situation). The slogan of the year 1913: "It will satisfy you" is similar to the one of the year 1910.

It must now be pointed out that the slogan of the year 1913 can be considered denotative and, through this, it can also circumscribe to the referential function.



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This shows that the boundary between the functions is very flexible and that, by activating the different characteristics of the lexical fields, one can easily switch from one function to another.

The slogan of the year 1911: "Real satisfaction in every glass", due to the presence of the noun "satisfaction", remains in the sphere of the verb "satisfy". Following the lead of the semantic field of the noun "happiness" from the slogan of the year 2009: "Open Happiness" and going on to relate this noun to the verb "happening", we come to its hyponyms, such as: "please", "delight", "cheer".

Starting from the conative factor that can be found in "Open Happiness", through derived words of the verb "delight" from the slogan of the year: "*Coca-Cola* is delightful, palatable, healthful beverage", one can prove how easily one can make the transition from the conative function to the referential one by activating the lexical fields.

Going further with the relation "happiness" / "happening", generated by the slogan of the year 2009: "Open Happiness", the verb "happening" is circumscribed, in terms of lexical fields, the verb "exhilarating" that, in its turn, is equivalent with the wording "to trill somebody in a refreshing way". This last wording is correlated with the slogans of the years:

1906: "Delicious, wholesome, refreshing";
1914: "Exhilarating, refreshing";
1920: "Delicious and refreshing";
1932: "The drink that makes the pause refreshing";
1936: "What refreshment ought to be";
1938: "Anytime is the right time to pause and refresh";
1948: "Delicious and refreshing";
1950: "Help yourself to refreshment";
1961: "Enjoy the refreshment of new feeling";
1962: "*Coca-Cola* refreshes you best";
1964: "You'll go better refreshed".

The impressive function within the *Coca-Cola* is circumscribed to the idea of persuasion, that is a an essential one for each promotional act.



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### 1.4. The fatic function

The fatic function is meant to establish a contact within the communication process. This function can be found in the interactional parameter. In order to create a bond with the potential buyer, the slogans of the *Coca-Cola* brand make use of this function continuously.

The area of the lexical fields of this function use communication verbs like: "feeling", "asking", "ordering", "singing", "demanding", as one can notice in the slogans from:

1912: "Demand the genuine – refuse substitutes"

1913: "Ask for it by its full name – then you will get the genuine (…)".

The lexical fields of the above mentioned verbs can be. In this way, the verb "ask" can be enclosed in the category of other communication verbs, like: "cite", "pose", "preach", "quote", "read", "show", "teach", "tell", "write", "call". This function, correlated with the above mentioned verbs, necessarily implies a receiver. We can go further with the extension of the lexical fields of the above mentioned verbs and we can add to them some others, like: "bash", "bat", "bounce", "bunt", "chuck", "flick", "fling", "flip", "heave", "hit", "hurl", "kick", "lob", "pass", "pitch", "punt", "roll", "shoot", "shove", "slam", "slap", "slide", "sling", "throw", "tip", "toss".

The slogan of the year: "Carry a smile back to work (…)" is one that can equally be enclosed to the conative function and to the fatic one. This proves that these functions have fluid boundaries between them.

What we consider special about the verb "carry" from the slogan of the year 1934 is the fact that it circumscribes to an extended lexical field, that includes verbs such as: "drop", "harel", "haist", "lift", "lower", "lug", "pull", "push", "schlep", "taste", "tow", "tug".

The fatic function leads to the intercrossing of a large range of lexicographic elements, allowing the intercrossing of some verbs with a varied lexicographic content.



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### 1.5. The poetic function

As described by Roman Jakobson, the poetic function focuses on "the message for its own sake" (Jakobson 1960: 58). This function aims at providing with an emotion and to add an extra meaning to the message. It is connected to the idea of bringing about pleasure.

The verbal fields involved in carrying out this function are by no means limited. The message holder sends the receiver an information that contains a code and a context. This function is closely connected to the message. It prevails in both poetry and slogans, taking into account conative and perceptive verbs. The sphere of the perception verbs is associated with the lexicography of the verbs "seeing", "haring", "feeling", "testing".

The promotional nature of the *Coca-Cola* brand slogans rely mainly on the lexical fields of the verbs "refresh" and "taste". Thus, as far as the verb "taste" and its derivatives are concerned, we have the following slogans:

1943: "A taste all its own (…)";
1955: "(…) America's preferred taste";
1956: "(…) Makes good things tasted better";
1957: "Sign of good taste";
1958: "(…) The cold, crisp taste of *Coke*";
1985: "We've got a taste for you (…)":
2001: "Life tastes good".

The perspectives we can take into account in order to assess the lexical fields of the verb "taste" can include:

a. verbs that include combined actions, like:
a.1. actions of the arms: "wave", "scratch";
a.2. actions of the feet: "go", "walk", "jump", "kick";
a.3. actions of the head: "bow";
a.4. actions of the hands: "throw", "push", "open", "eat";
a.5. other actions, including parts of the body: "escape", "glide", "fight", "chase", "guide";
b. verbs that require the presence of an element within a context: "attempt", "succeed", "manage";



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c. verbs that involve creating or destroying something: "build", "create", "assemble", "construct", "break", "destroy";
d. acknowledgement verbs: "decide", "believe", "doubt", "think", "remember";
e. perceptive verbs: "watch", "hear", "see", "feel";
f. verbs that lead to the mental awareness of some physical attributes, like: "bend", "taper", "(dis)appear".

The nature of the poetic function within the *Coca-Cola* brand slogans entails current vocabulary elements, which adds them a dimension that is specific to the promotional aim.

### 1.6. The metalinguistic function

The metalinguistic function has, on principle, the role to explain, to translate a new communication code. It is also called "reflexive. This is because, within this function, the use of the language aims at describing entity (the concept) "in itself", made by "itself".

This function resorts to a metalanguage which is integrated into the speech linguistic by Eugen Coşeriu. In doing so, "it bears no structure and cannot be structured either at the level of the idiomatic competency, because it is indefinite" (Coşeriu 2000: 84).

Within the framework of the *Coca-Cola* brand slogans, as we shall prove, this aspect of the metalanguage s considering whole slogans or parts of them.

On the other hand, Eugen Coşeriu considers that, "if the metalingusitic lexic is not structural, by being virtual and boundless (in fact, the words of the metalanguage can create optionally the moment they are used) *the use* of the metalanguage can, as well, display a specific technique in a certain linguistic tradition, namely, we can have a grammar of metalanguage [...]" (Coşeriu 2000: 84).

By applying Eugen Coşeriu's statement to the *Coca-Cola* brand slogans, we identify more situations that bear an identity with a certain degree of independence. Thus, we speak of:



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1. reversible slogans, like those from 1941: "*Coca-Cola* is *Coke*" şi 1945: "*Coke* means *Coca-Cola*";

2. brand identification through repetition, for example in the slogan from 1966: "*Coke*… after *Coke*… after *Coke*";

3. overlap brand identification through, such as one can notice in the slogans from aşa 1942: "The only think like *Coca-Cola* is *Coca-Cola* itself" şi 1982: "*Coke* is it";

4. brand identification through the use of some verbs that have a large lexical field, like in the slogan from 1905: "*Coca-Cola* renews and sustains".

The verbs "revues" and "sustain" circumscribe to a lexical field from the sphere of other verbs:

a. perceptual: "seeing", "hearing", "feeling";

b. that improve something (or somebody), making the object (or the person) better or worse): "adorn", "burden", "clutter", "derk", "dirty", "embellish", "emblazon", "endow", "enrich", "festoon", "garnish", "imbue", "litter", "ornament", "pollute", "replenish", "season", "stain", "taint", "trim".

The *Coca-Cola* brand slogan can refer, within the framework of the metalinguistic function, to a world whose dimension is extratextual, such as it can be seen in the following examples:

1945: "Passport to refreshment";

1954: "For people on the go";

1970: "It's the real thing".

Consequently, we have situations similar to the above ones, where the world text talks about (whose first function is the metalinguistic one) is different than that the text sends. In other words, the text in itself is directed, by metalinguistic force, towards the promoted concept by the slogan, namely, the carbonated *Coca-Cola* drink. The metalinguistic function identifies the evaluated concept and, in the same time, allows the recognition and rephrasing of the assessed entity.

The metalinguistic function can bring about, in its development, extended lexical fields. If we take into consideration, for example, the slogan of the year 1959: "Cold, crisp. Taste that de-



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eply satisfies. Make it a real meal", we can easily enter the sphere of some verbs where a solid object meddles with a liquid one: "drench", "impregnate", "infuse", "saturate", "soak", "stain", "suffuse".

## 2. Conclusions

The above explanations proved the fact that a connection between the lexical fields of a notional object, respectively the *Coca-Cola* brand, and a theoretical structure, similar to the one that refers to the functions of the language. The common framework of the two elements was constituted the language of the *Coca-Cola* brand slogans. The boundaries between the theoretical form and its application to a specific vocabulary proved to be easily permeable. The lexical fields of the brand slogans in question are connected to a specific activity, having a well defined area of use, aimed at selling the product.

As communicative events, the *Coca-Cola* brand slogans display an individualized structural behavior. The functions of the language, seized upon in the *Coca-Cola* brand slogans, prove the fact that the discourse within these slogans has an oriented and intended character. The verbal fields involved in these language acts prove the existence of an interactive and contextualized mechanism. Within the structure of the commercial persuasion, the language acts can be identified on the levels of the lexical fields, that contribute to expressing an opinion as far as a promoted object is concerned, namely, the *Coca-Cola* brand. To that end, it was proved that the slogan is a joint construction, which is prone to manifold interpretations. Linguistically, these fields give birth to others by way of the sign sender's conscious interference. The shift of the lexical units from the linguistic field to that of a communication theory proved to be possible and analyzable.

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