



Text and Context in Advertising Discourse

Bianca-Georgiana Munteanu

Vasile Alecsandri University of Bacău

8 Spiru Haret, Bacău 600114

Letters Faculty

<https://orcid.org/0009-0006-7664-6993>

Abstract: This article analyses the specific features of advertising discourse, drawing on various discourse theories through the operationalisation of concepts such as discursive context, co-text, peritext, hypertext, and discursive tradition. Advertising creativity aims at constructing the advertising text by exploring the resources of language, engaging both the idiomatic and expressive competence of the speaker and the receiver.

Keywords: advertising discourse; text; context; co-text; peritext and hypertext; discursive tradition.

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1. The Relationship Between Discourse and Text

It can be stated that discourse is upstream and text is downstream. Discourse represents the deep structure of the text, ensuring its linearisation. Investigating discourse is only possible through the "traces" left in performance texts. Determining the properties of texts represents the essential task of text science, namely grammar.

The text appears as a sequence of sentences governed by the principle of order, with its characteristic properties located at the semantic level. Text is language itself, stripped of its imaginary aspect, it is what is missing from linguistic science for its general importance to be manifested.

A very important criterion in differentiating texts is thematic content. To form a unit of meaning, the text must be coherent, allowing it to be interpreted as a possible unfolding of events.

Research on text boundaries, its syntactic-semantic and pragmatic updates has led to the identification of certain standards of textuality¹, enumerated as follows:

- Cohesion, as a relationship of grammatical dependence at the level of the discursive surface (agreement between subject and predicate, correct choice of prepositions);
- Coherence, as a relationship of compatibility between elements of a text at the level of deep structure, meaning the way these elements are mutually accessible and relevant. According to Robert Martin, coherence is closely related to encyclopedic competence and the nonverbal codes of readers;²
- Intentionality, as the deliberate effort of the text producer to construct a unified and logical text, appropriate for achieving a specific goal;
- Acceptability, as the attitude of the receiver in recognising the set of sentences as a logical and relevant text;
- Informativity, as the appropriate way of structuring information in discourse, balancing what is known and unknown, expected and unexpected. If the information is too dense, unanchored in common values or *topoi*, it may create a hermetic text, whereas the opposite situation would lead to banality or even the dismissal of the discourse;
- Situationality, as the proper anchoring of the text in the communication context;

¹ Robert Beaugrande, Wolfgang Dressler, *Introduction to text linguistics*, London, Longman, 1981, *apud*

Rovența-Frumușani, Daniela, *op. cit.*, pp. 67-68.

² Robert Martin, *Pour une logique du sens*, Paris, PUF, 1983, *apud* Rovența-Frumușani, Daniela, *op. cit.*, p. 68.

- Intertextuality, as the relationship between the current discourse and previous discourses that are borrowed (through parody or pastiche), transformed, and reintegrated into a new discursive framework.

In discourse analysis, classification is a natural and essential operation:

„un tip de discurs este o configurație de trăsături formale, asociate unui efect de sens, caracterizând atitudinea locutorului față de discursul său și, prin discurs, față de destinatar”

[a type of discourse is a configuration of formal features, associated with a meaning effect, characterising the speaker's attitude toward their discourse and, through discourse, toward the recipient]³

The criteria underlying the diversity of discourse classifications include: oral/written, assumed discourse/non-assumed discourse, descriptive discourse/narrative discourse/argumentative discourse.

The segmentation of social practice into different areas of experience leads to various classifications based on content, including categories such as political, legal, literary, didactic, and everyday discourse. Additionally, other types of discourse can be identified, such as popularised scientific discourse, present in media and press, or polemical political discourse, which manifests in printed materials or television broadcasts.

The discourse, approached as an event or generative process, precedes the resulting text, whether written or oral. It must be understood as being situated and rooted in a specific cultural and social context, shaped by a particular episteme, and having a clear purpose. At the same time, it is influenced by the roles and status of discourse participants, according to the concept of context detailed by Herman Parret, which includes verbal, referential, situational, actional, and psychological aspects.

2. Co-text, Peritext, and Hypertext

A real speech situation is determined by its immediate context; thus, information is transmitted through signs, which form the macro-sign, or the ensemble of signs at the text level. This macro-sign is the product of speech activity but cannot be separated from the context in which it is uttered when attempting to understand its meaning. To construct meaning from texts, a variety of relationships between signs are used, established through their reference to co-text, peritext, and hypertext.

The term co-text refers to the words placed before and after a text, or even text fragments. Co-text is frequently exploited in advertising, as it often employs

³ Jean-Marie Marandin, *Problemes d'analyse du discours*, Langages, 12^e année, n°55, 1979, p.31.

words with multiple meanings. To illustrate this, I used the slogan of the Romanian bank OTP:

„Dăm credit visurilor tale!” (“We give credit to your dreams!”)

In this advertisement, the word „credit” holds both the meaning of „a sum of money granted through a bank loan” and the idea of participating in the fulfillment of dreams. The dual significance of the term „credit” in this example successfully targets the recipient, who is satisfied with the loan obtained, while also reflecting the satisfaction of the sender (the bank), who has actively contributed to fulfilling a dream.

The presence of co-text in the structure of advertising discourse proves to be important through the use of argumentative connectors, which serve to link two or more structures to mark a justification or a conclusion. I illustrated this statement with the following slogans, which emphasise the justification of product quality:

„Funcționează, chiar funcționează, pasta de dinți Sensodyne chiar funcționează!” (Sensodyne) [It works, it really works, Sensodyne toothpaste really works!]

„Autan, oferă protecție dovedită împotriva țânțarilor.” (Autan) [Autan provides proven protection against mosquitoes.]

„Indiferent ce cauți într-un balsam de rufe, Semana îți oferă mai mult!” (Semana) [No matter what you look for in a fabric softener, Semana offers you more!]

Peritext represents what is found "around, surrounding, above, outside, or between" texts. Alongside epitext (elements distant from the text), peritext forms the paratext of a text.

In the case of literary texts, peritextual elements consist of the cover, dust jacket, title page, author's name, title, subtitle, dedication, motto, table of contents, quotes, etc. However, in the case of written advertising texts, peritext is represented by font, title, keywords, brand name, slogan, and page layout. Not all these elements are always necessary to highlight the main meanings of an advertisement. For a successful advertisement focused on visual support, a carefully thought-out image is needed to capture the attention of as many viewers as possible. No image is chosen randomly. There are several types of images: metaphorical, metonymic, humorous, interrogative, and emotional.

Two criteria determine the success of an advertisement: lighting (illumination – "eclerajul") and readability ("lizibilitatea").

In addition to the elements subordinate to peritext, advertising must maintain essential characteristics such as abbreviation, rhyme, hiatus, paradox, or enthymeme, illustrated through slogans like:

„Frosta dezgheață pofta” [Frosta melts your cravings]

„Pom-bar, ursuleți cu gust de joacă” [Pom-bar, teddy bears with a taste of play]

„Kika - facem casă bună împreună” [Kika – we make a great home together]

Also, within the sphere of relationships between signs, hypertext is recognised, defined as: „*ansamblu de texte care conțin noduri și care pot fi activate prin intermediul linkurilor sau hyperlinkurilor, de obicei printr-un click de mouse sau apăsare de tastă-secvență*” [a set of texts containing nodes that can be activated through links or hyperlinks, usually by clicking a mouse or pressing a key sequence]. This term is used exclusively in computerised communication, differing from two other terms concretised in text theory: „hipertext” (“hypertext”), referring to what is “above or beyond” the text, and „intertext” (“intertext”), referring to what is “between” texts.

In advertising discourse, electronic hypertext appears in online advertisements containing button-like words, which serve to redirect users to other links, such as contests, promotions, product details, etc.

Hypertext has evolved into a new era—the electronic era. In the virtual space, information is transmitted rapidly, and generated by a large number of users. As a macro-sign of virtual language, the internet hypertext can be defined as the perfect projection of structuralist and, especially, poststructuralist ideas, successfully generating a new ideology and new human behaviors in the digital sphere.

3. Discursive Tradition

Discursive traditions have developed over time through the relationships between signs and other signs within texts. This phrase was introduced around the 1980s by the German linguist Peter Koch, who highlighted Eugen Coșeriu’s concept regarding the types of historicity in language in his research.

In his work *Lecțiile de lingvistică generală* (“*Lessons in General Linguistics*”), Eugen Coșeriu discussed traditions within synchronic language, distinguishing between two types of traditions: free discourse technique and repeated discourse. Free discourse technique includes the constitutive elements of language, the rules of combination and modification, as well as lexical and grammatical procedures. The repeated discourse is defined as:

„*tot ceea ce în vorbirea unei comunități se repetă într-o formă mai mult sau mai puțin identică sub formă de discurs deja făcut sau combinare mai mult sau mai puțin fixă, ca fragment, lung sau scurt, a «ceea ce s-a spus deja»*” [everything that, in the speech of a community, is repeated in a more or less identical form as pre-established discourse or as a more or less fixed combination, whether as a long or short fragment, of what has already been said”]⁴

⁴ Eugeniu Coșeriu, *Limba funcțională*, în *Lecții de lingvistică generală*, Arc, 2000, pp. 258-259, apud. Dumistrăcel, Stelian, *Discursul repetat în textul jurnalistic*, Editura Universității „Alexandru Ioan Cuza”, Iași, 2006, p. 34.

For a long time, Eugen Coșeriu hesitated between choosing one of the two terms: "repeated discourse" and "repeated texteme", which is why he ultimately considered the latter as a subcategory of the former. Repeated discourse merges with free technique, and from this combination, a collage-like painting emerges:

„vorbirea este ca un fel de pictură cu colaj simultan, adică, în parte, este tehnică actuală și în parte sunt bucăți de vorbire deja existente și duse, ca să zicem așa, de tradiție, în toate aceste expresii, locuțiuni fixe, în proverbe, citate ș.a.m.d.”

[speech is like a kind of simultaneous collage painting, meaning that it is partly current technique and partly fragments of speech that already exist and have been carried on, so to speak, by tradition, in all these expressions, fixed phrases, proverbs, quotes, etc.]⁵

What was established in Coșeriu's theory is the relationship between signs and signs from other texts, developed through the concept of "intertextuality."

In the *General Dictionary of Language Sciences* ("Dicționarul general de științe ale limbii"), intertextuality is defined in two senses:

„În sens larg, intertextualitatea poate fi interpretată ca o relație a fiecărui text-enunț, cu alte texte pe care le absoarbe și le transformă, în ansamblul aceleiași culturi literare.”

[In a broad sense, intertextuality can be interpreted as a relationship between each text-statement and other texts that it absorbs and transforms within the framework of the same literary culture.]

„În sens restrâns, intertextualitatea presupune o preluare directă a unui text, a unui (fragment de) enunț aparținând unui alt text și autor.”

[In a narrow sense, intertextuality involves the direct appropriation of a text or a (fragment of) statement belonging to another text and author.]⁶

The use of a form of discursive tradition is based on the principle of evoking a situation similar to that within the given discourse framework.

Stelian Dumitrăcel identifies two main categories of repeated discourse: "anonymous" utterances and utterances attributed to authors, usually well-known ones. "Anonymous" utterances include popular speech, which manifests through expressive phrases, idiomatic expressions, proverbs, common or stereotypical comparison formulas, quotes from folklore (such as verses, stereotypical formulas from fairy tales, riddles), formulas from religious discourse, dicta, slogans, and famous proper names. On the other hand, utterances attributed to known authors include titles of works from various genres, quotes from these works, and "famous"

⁵ Eugeniu Coșeriu, *Prelegeri și Conferințe*, Institutul de Filologie Română, -A. Philippide, Iași, 1992-1993, p. 55.

⁶ Angela Bidu-Vrânceanu, Cristina Călărașu, Liliana Ionescu-Ruxăndoiu, Mihaela Mancaș, Gabriela Pană Dindelegan, *Dicționarul general de științe ale limbii*, Editura Nemira, București, 2005, p. 274.

words of notable figures from history, culture (literature, philosophy, arts), science, and public life.⁷

Stelian Dumistrăcel succeeds in distinguishing between "abusive collage-type intertextuality" and "transformation of the utterance through different figures of construction." This distinction between collage types is also affirmed by Cristinel Munteanu⁸, who proposes an original distinction between genuine collage and parodic collage. The first type of collage aligns with Coșeriu's concept of repeated discourse, referring exclusively to learned technique. The second type of collage refers to surpassing the learned technique or tradition through modifications produced in a new context.

In advertising discourse, the most frequent forms of genuine collage involve the use of expressions rooted in idiomatic tradition. At the discursive level, these can be perceived in two ways: capturing the audience's attention and facilitating memorisation of advertising messages, and creating a parallelism between the discursive traditions used and the concept of tradition that the promoted product supports. This can be observed in advertising campaigns:

„Există un loc de un loc în care tradiția se păstrează, de acolo vine pate Sibiu!”
(Pate Sibiu)

[There is a place where tradition is preserved; that's where Sibiu pâté comes from!]

„România, în esență și în tradiție. O Românie de prestigiu, de valori, de inovație. România ta! Borsec, de 210 ani reprezintă România ta! 210 ani de tradiție și prestigiu. Borsec – izvor de energie!” (Borsec)

[Romania, in essence and tradition. A Romania of prestige, values, and innovation. Your Romania! For 210 years, Borsec has represented your Romania! 210 years of tradition and prestige. Borsec – a source of energy!]

From the perspective of discursive tradition, some syntactic sequences used in particular advertising texts later become linguistic models for future speech acts, as seen in these examples:

„BCR – Gândim la fel!” (BCR) *[BCR – We think alike!]*

„Să luăm viața ca pe o încântare!” (President) *[Let's take life as a delight!]*

„Evoluăm împreună!” (Alpha Bank) *[We evolve together!]*

„Totul pregătit pentru viață!” (Colgate Total) *[Everything ready for life!]*

„Cei mai frumoși ani!” (Kinder Chocolate) *[The most beautiful years!]*

Advertising acts as a producer of such discursive models, which manage to establish themselves, particularly in colloquial language, for a relatively short

⁷ Stelian Dumistrăcel, *Limbajul publicistic românesc din perspectiva stilurilor funcționale*, Institutul European, 2006, p. 130.

⁸ Cristinel Munteanu, *Lingvistica integrală coșeriană*, Iași, Editura Universității „Alexandru Ioan Cuza”, 2012, pp.105-106.

period. Unfortunately, these expressions lose relevance due to overuse in advertising, leading both advertisers and speakers who use such stereotypical formulas to feel the constant need for discursive model renewal.

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