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Dissociative Structures in Romanian and French Contemporary Discourse of Advertising

-ABSTRACT-

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Dissociative Structures In Romanian and French
Contemporary Discourse of Advertising

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ABSTRACT

Our thesis is part of a mid-term research strategy focusing mostly on the concept of *argumentative dissociation*. Older scientific contributions, published or just presented during scientific manifestations held on a national level with international participation, have been developed in this thesis.

Studying the bibliography about argumentative dissociation (and a special mention would go especially to the scientific work of A. van Rees from University of Amsterdam, but also to the papers published by professor A. Gâță from "Dunarea de Jos" University of Galati) we considered that the pragma-linguistic approach of this concept would benefit much more from a pragma-semiotic view. Therefore we propose a theoretical journey to the fascinating universe of pragma-linguistic dissociation applying our discourse analysis on Romanian and French advertising productions, but we dare to open a door to another universe, less known, less studied, the universe of pragma-semiotic dissociation. Actually, this is the new perspective that we propose to researchers in the field of argumentation – could it be possible to perform argumentative dissociation by multimodal arguments, not only linguistic, but also iconic too?

This research hypothesis represents a secondary objective in our thesis, the concept of pragma-semiotic dissociation going to be studied and developed theoretically in others scientific papers. The main

objective was to prove that dissociative techniques - on a linguistic level (even less deployed in advertising discourse, being harder to decode by the addressee), once used in advertising can produce semiotic relations leading to new, surprising significations. The difficulty of our approach came from applying such concept on a discourse well-known by its elliptical structure, by the variability of its semiotic decoding and by the abundance of associative structures (on linguistic, but also iconic level). Dissociation has been studied especially in the pragma-dialectics framework and pragma-dialectic analysis have been performed on a corpus from political or everyday discourse. This kind of discourse presents the advantage to explicitly offer to the researcher not only the stages of the critical discussion, but also complete dissociative structures. The advertising discourse is an *in absentia* type of communication, where the two actors of the enunciation are hidden, the discursive exchange lacks his feature of immediacy, and therefore it is a communication apparently dialogical, in fact being a monologue. But a specific feature of this discourse gives consistency to our approach – it's the setting up of a complete enuntiative structure by the enunciator. This apparent communication can be set up not only on associative strategies, but also on dissociative ones.

The relevance of any scientific approach is given by the bibliography about the main concept studied. The advertising discourse is widely studied by linguists, specialists in communication, economy, psychology or sociology and therefore the bibliography – in Romanian or other international foreign languages is well represented. The argumentative dissociation is not the

topic of such numerous studies as for advertising, being treated mostly in Anglo-American linguistic works as extended pragmatics or discursive rhetoric concept. It has been treated by very few Romanian researchers and mostly not in Romanian, but exclusively in English or in French. That is why we found particularly difficult to adapt the terminology linked to this concept to the Romanian language. This is the reason why some paragraphs might lack of conceptual precision or proper meaning of terms.

We applied this conceptual apparatus to a corpus formed mostly of those advertising messages with an explicit polemical tone, created more likely using dissociative techniques. In this kind of discourse the enunciator sets up an ideological dialogue between an old, widely shared standpoint, and a new one, derived from the first one, but totally different, presented as superior from a qualitative point of view and as the only one being real. In such messages one gives new meanings through his discursive productions to social and ideological concepts widely spread. The main objective of the speaker is to make one of a kind the image of the producer as character of advertising message. The polemic strategy based on dissociative techniques intends to redefine concepts and associating the producer image to this new ideological construction means also redefining his identity in the collective mentality.

To reach this main objective - analyzing the dissociative structures in Romanian and French advertising discourse, we organized the theory part and the applied one in five chapters, each of them contributing

to sustain the main concept; our work contains also an introduction, the conclusions of each chapter and the final conclusions, an extended bibliography of more than 100 titles from different scientific fields (Philosophy, Psychology, Marketing, Semiotics, Pragmatics, Semiotics, Rhetoric), from various linguistic communities (Romanian, French, English) and ends up by a corpus of almost 50 posters and graphic representations of advertising productions.

The introduction of our thesis, made up of three parts, is intended to make a brief presentation of the main concepts treated *in extenso* in the chapters to follow, *dissociation* and *advertising discourse*. The first part, "Argumentative Dissociation in Specialized Literature" presents the theoretical approaches of dissociation, its definition and characteristics given by Ch. Perelman and L. Olbrechts-Tyteca in "The New Rhetoric", by Agnes van Rees, Anca Gâță, E. Schiappa, T. Konishi in their scientific works. We insisted on different perspectives when defining dissociation as argumentative scheme or technique, on the fact that all researchers cited above mention The New Rhetoric authors as the first who stated about dissociation, who defined it and treated each feature in detail. In the second part, called "Argument", an important space is reserved to the characteristics of advertising discourse, on formal, discursive level, but also in its ideological and cultural essence; this part of introduction contains also our perspective on dissociation as argumentative technique not only of pragma-linguistic type, but pragma-semiotic too. The last part of introduction has an administrative role, making a brief presentation of the contents of the 5 chapters.

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The first chapter, "Advertising - general aspects" treats advertising from a larger perspective, a social, cultural, philosophical and economic one. One could find in here a brief history of advertising, some philosophical theories about advertising phenomena (the advertising considered as a subversive, humanitarian, literary or mythical movement, the relationships between advertising and theories of communication), and an extended presentation of the components of advertising message (logo and slogan especially, considered as two key elements). We made a brief presentation of advertising taxonomies (forms of advertising depending on its ways to be transmitted, the different Medias) and its functions in social, political or economic background. In the subchapter dedicated to the two key components of any advertising message – the slogan and the logo (of greatest importance taking into account our pragma-linguistic perspective combined with the pragma-semiotic one) there are several well-known Romanian and French graphic illustrations and advertising posters. This introduction to advertising has a terminological function too – our intention was to define the terms used in advertising and therefore in our discursive analysis from the following chapters.

The second chapter, "Enuntiative Characteristics of Advertising Discourse", treats this type of discourse from enuntiative perspective. Similar to the third chapter, it is made up of a theoretical part and an applicative one. In the theoretical part there are the enuntiative theories of Benveniste, Ducrot and Kerbrat-Orecchioni, and we would like to mention here the concepts of discursive polyphony and the subjectivity of the language, two

concepts encountered in our discourse analysis (in the applicative part of this chapter, but also in the last one, totally dedicated to the analysis of dissociative structures). The formal apparatus of enunciation adapted to advertising (the concepts of enuntiator, addressee from classical enuntiative theories being replaced by "publocutor" – advertising locutor and "pubalocutor" – advertising addressee, enuntiative instances specific to this type of discourse) is presented *in extenso*, the discursive relationships taking various aspects of manifestation. An analysis of dissociative techniques in advertising discourse would be incomplete without these enuntiative theories, without taking into account the complexity of these discursive structures. Pointing out the delocutive or interlocutive marks from advertising discourse makes possible finding out dissociative marks too.

The third chapter, "Argumentative Characteristics of Advertising Discourse", similar in structure to the second one (a theoretical and an applicative part) is dedicated to the argumentative function of advertising discourse and to stress out its argumentative marks. From a theoretic point of view, we presented three crucial moments of the history of argumentation:

a) "The New Rhetoric. A Treatise on Argumentation"

b) Substantial logic

c) Pragma-dialectics

The importance of the three moments derives not only from an historical point of view, but also from the fact that they offered us the key elements in analyzing advertising

discourse from argumentative and dissociative perspective.

The Treatise of Perelman and Obrechts-Tyteca is important for understanding the taxonomy of arguments, those *topoi* from the ancient Greek philosophy, for the concept of *audience* and also for defining the concept of argumentation (and a special mention would be for the distinction made by the authors of the Treatise between *conviction* and *persuasion*, of great importance when analyzing the advertising discourse).

S. Toulmin's "The Uses of Argument" is the scientific work that brought up the concept of substantial logic in the field of argumentation. No analysis of advertising discourse would be complete without applying this concept. Given the brevity of advertising message, this concept of "warrant", implicit premise allowing to infer the conclusion, to be deducted, becomes very important in the semiotic process.

Pragma-dialectics, argumentative direction developed by Eemeren and Grotendorst at University of Amsterdam, (even if less productive in analyzing advertising discourse, because this argumentative theory is mostly applied on developed, complete discourses where critical stages are clearly shown) can be used at least from the point of view of concepts such *protagonist*/*antagonist*, *standpoint* to be defended or attacked. Dissociation as argumentative technique will always be present in the opening stage, the stage of attacking the standpoint of a presumed, implicit protagonist. Solving conceptual conflict by dissociative strategies is an open argumentative process, the

advertising discourse not allowing to the protagonist to express his opinion, to defend his standpoint, and therefore to attack the antagonist's standpoint which come from a dissociation technique.

The theory part of this chapter includes also the taxonomy of argumentative indicators, of arguments and fallacies, the types of argumentative schemes; all these concepts will be used in analyzing the examples of advertising discourse from the final part of this chapter and also from the fifth chapter.

As said before, this chapter has also an applicative part where discursive analysis are based on multimodal arguments, both linguistic and non-linguistic.

The fourth chapter, "Argumentative Dissociation", represents a standalone theory chapter dedicated completely to dissociation. There will be definitions of dissociation as given mainly in The New Rhetoric, but also in several scientific works of international researchers already mentioned in the introductive part (A. van Rees, E. Schiappa, A. Gâță, Goodwin, T. Konishi, and many more). Dissociation is treated from a logic point of view in one of its subchapters dealing with the mechanism of logic distinction, as developed by Goodwin in his paper from 1991, "Distinction, Argumentation and the Rhetorical Construction of the Real". We'd like to highlight the contribution of this author in opposing the dissociative distinction to the non-dissociative one, an opposition which is the topic of further investigations by A. van Rees. In order to give a comprehensive definition of dissociation we made references to similar concepts such *semantic shift*, *euphemism*, *precization*, *persuasive*

definition. We deployed also a taxonomy of dissociative indicators, a first classification being made according to the characteristics of dissociative process, a second one, to the logic operations of this process. The first classification contains the following classes of indicators: 1. Indicators of argumentative dissociation in the process of conceptual distinction; 2. Indicators of argumentative dissociation in the process of conceptual defining; 3. Indicators of argumentative dissociation from valorization; 4. Dissociative indicators as result of logic negation. According to the second criterion, given the logic operations of the dissociative process, the following classes of indicators resulted: a) The first logic operation, detecting an incompatibility between the aspects of a notion/a concept, can be rendered from a discursive point of view by: Morphosyntactic indicators, lexico-semantic indicators, indefinite article used to render the meaning "unique", definite article in order to mark the confusion into a notion from many others which should be dissociated, manner adverbs indicating the way to speak of the enuntiator. b) Distinguishing through complementary, but conflicting aspects into the same notion; c) Separation of constitutive aspects in two complementary classes; d) Concession / accepting the two classes of aspects, compatible and incompatible with the representation of initial notion. e) Deconstruction of the representation of initial notion f) Not accepting/ refusing the conflicting aspects; g) Restructuring the components h) Terminological alteration / new designation / Tag.

The fifth chapter contains discursive analysis of several Romanian and French advertising posters dated

from different periods of time, all of them created using explicit or implicit dissociative structures. The criteria of organization these posters were the type of dissociation – pragma-linguistic or pragma-semiotic, the explicit or implicit type of dissociation, the advertising component whose image was created using dissociative structures (producer/product or the ideal advertising addressee). The variety of the ways to create by dissociative techniques the image of the producer, of the product or of the ideal addressee was analyzed from rhetoric, semiotic, lexical perspective, but also from cultural, psychological or sociological point of view. We highlighted the ideological, conceptual structures that the locutor decomposed by these dissociative techniques in order to create his own perspective on these, to associate the image of the producer and of the brand to these new, revaluated concepts.

The pragma-semiotic dissociation is treated in this final chapter from an applicative point of view only, a theoretical approach going to be developed in further studies. The analysis was made exclusively on French advertising posters, more precisely the advertising products of ADIA (HR Company) campaign from 2014.

Dissociation is a complex process, a psycho-logic one, whose forms of discursive manifestation are various, from mere manner adverbs to intra- and interphrastic structures. More important than its forms of discursive manifestation we consider to be the perlocutionary effects of this rhetoric strategy. It is a rhetoric-discursive process having important consequences on cognitive, epistemic level. From this perspective, dissociation is meant to

destroy a whole conceptual foundation, to decompose a known universe and to propose a new, uncomfortable one, but always meaningful, surprising, every time this strategy is used.

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