The Role of Salience in Newspaper Advertisements with a View to their Development as a Genre

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Abstract

The paper presents an analysis of newspaper advertisements in the Slovene newspapers Edinost (1876–1928) and Slovenski narod (1866-1945) in order to investigate the role of salience in these adverts. The analysis is discussed within the grammar of visual design (Kress & van Leeuwen 2005 [1996]), the theory of culturally popular patterns of text organisation (Hoey 2001), as well as pragmatics and discourse analysis (Kunst Gnamuš 1984, Bešter 1992, Kranjc 1998, Schiffrin 1996 [1987], Verschueren 2000, Cook 2001). It is a detail of a study (Starc 2007) that aims to determine the constants in the development of the adverts' structure, the use of semiotic codes and their functions in the discourse of advertisements through time. The data of the study show two constants: the changing layout of adverts and the organization of the text, which follow either the Problem-Solution or the Desire Arousal-Fulfilment pattern of the text.

In the older adverts, salience is achieved by typography, empty space, pictorial and cohesive sources. It is also concluded that salience has a significant role in the development of adverts as a genre; not only does it help to attract readers' attention, it also construes meaning and affects text structure.

1. Advertisement as a genre

Advertisements appear in all media (from newspapers to the internet), they attract our attention from billboards in the street, walls in bars, halls in cinemas, theatres, etc. They try to interfere in our lives, they show something that is "good" or even "better for us", of course from the perspective of somebody else who knows "more then we do" about the topic(s) dealt with.

What kind of text, then, is an advertisement? Cook (2001: 221-223) claims that advertisements "have the typical instability of a relatively new genre", they are constantly changing "at the 'lower' levels of substance, surroundings, mode, and paralanguage, and also to some degree at the level of text where there is ever more skillful use of poetic devices such as parallelism", the reason for change being "an internal dynamic, changes in society, and changes in the genres on which they are parasitic or in which they are embedded".

Given the diversity of advertisements, is it possible to find any constant in their inherent nature? Is advertisement an "independent" genre with its own characteristics or does it remain a "parasitic" kind of text? Such questions stimulated us to engage ourselves in a study (Starc 2007) of structure and the combination of different semiotic codes and their function in advert as discourse in the Slovene newspapers *Edinost* (1876–1928, Trieste, Italy) and *Slovenski*

narod (1866-1945, Ljubljana) in which we try to discover the basic characteristics of these texts from a historical perspective, to determine whether there is any constant, and how the advertisements were changing in time.

Considering the definition of Slovene linguists (Dular, Pogorelec et al. 1983; M. Bešter 1992) of genre as a pattern of text used for a special purpose, the results of the study are discussed based on the fact that the advert is an interactional text, which in fact may consist of verbal and non-verbal modes. Thus in the interpretation of data we are relying on the grammar of visual design (Kress & van Leeuwen 2005 [1996]), the theory of culturally popular patterns of text organisation (Hoey 2001), and pragmatics and discourse analysis (Kunst Gnamuš 1984, Bešter 1992, Kranjc 1998, Schiffrin 1996 [1987], Verschueren 2000, Cook 2001).

Hoey (2001) claims that a culturally popular organization of text can be realised by a limited number of patterns, of which he notes the Problem-Solution (P-S, abbrev. S. S.) and the Desire Arousal-Fulfilment pattern (DA-F) of the text in advertisements. The Problem-Solution pattern consists of the following stages: Situation (S), out of which rises a Problem (P), usually expressed with lexemes of negative evaluation, then follows a Solution (S) with its positive Evaluation (pE). The Desire Arousal-Fulfilment (DA-F) pattern is explained as a pattern of three phases: the representation of the Object of Desire (OD), lexemes of positive Evaluation of the OD that evoke in the addressee a desire (sensorial) which can be fulfilled by somebody or something (Fulfilment) that can provide the OD. The stages in the text pattern can be expressed by different signals, e.g. lexemes with negative or positive connotation (Hoey 2001).

Since advertisements have been changing and combining different modes, being verbal at the beginning of their appearance in the newspaper, becoming multimodal later in time (Starc 2007), the signals of the text pattern can be multimodal as is shown by the study – which is based on an analysis of 156 newspaper advertisements as texts that try to persuade the reader to buy the advertised article or service.

However, the results of the study indicate that the advert is a genre that has been changing over time (as already stated by Cook 2001), but has its own constants, one of which is, paradoxically, its changeable format which in fact plays a very important role – it attracts the reader, but also construes meaning with its innovative layout and with the use/placement of verbal and non-verbal signs in the composition. The other constant is the structure of advertisements, mainly corresponding to the Desire Arousal-Fulfilment and the Problem-Solution pattern of the text. The advertisement appears mainly as a multimodal text and as a cul-

turally popular pattern it affects the reader's interpretation, expecting from him/her contextual/cultural, intertextual and experiential inferences. It is a genre with predominantly persuasive illocutionary force.

From the diachronic perspective the study shows the phases in the development of the advert as defined above. Yet we claim that one of the constituent elements in the development of advertisements as a new genre is the phenomenon called *salience*, which strengthens the meaning of the composition, and attracts the reader. And it is this phenomenon we would like to pay attention to in this article.

2. Salience in old newspaper advertisements

Kress & van Leeuwen (2005 [1996]: 183) discuss salience as one of the three principles of composition in a multimodal text (along with information value and framing) which function as an interrelated system, defining a multimodal text as "any text whose meanings are realized through more than one semiotic code" (Kress & van Leeuwen: 2005 [1996]: 183). Thus the elements (participants) in the composition can be more or less salient; salience can create "a hierarchy of importance among the elements, selecting some as more important, more worthy of attention than others" (Kress & van Leeuwen: 2005 [1996]: 212). Considering this we find the presence of salience also in texts that construe meaning only through one code – the verbal.

In the following analysis we would like to present how the appearance of salience in the newspaper adverts from the second half of the 19th century influence the adverts' layout and meaning. The first four samples demonstrate the role of salience in the verbal texts, the next four in the multimodal texts. We try to analyse the adverts in the same order as they were published in the newspapers to better notice the possible difference of the structure and layout in a time perspective.

2.1

The first advert in *Slovenski narod* was published on 4th April 1868, and stands out from the rest of the texts on the newspaper page. It is framed and this fact distinguishes the advertisement from the other ("regular") texts. Furthermore, some of the printed words are salient: the "title" of the text **Oglas** (Advert), and the information that represents the phases in the text structure of the Desire Arousal-Fulfilment pattern (DA-F).

The frame itself gives salience to the text, and furthermore within the verbal text we find more salient words printed in bold which attract the reader's attention, and they interlock with the phases of the pattern mentioned above.

The salient noun phrases are the Rhemes which contain the new, important information that is provided by the author (J. Toporiši• 2000 [1976]; M. A. K. Halliday & C. Matthiessen 2004; S. Kranjc 2004), and they are even typographically salient (as Figure 1 shows). Thus the reader notices the important information of the message at first glance, scanning only the salient lexemes.

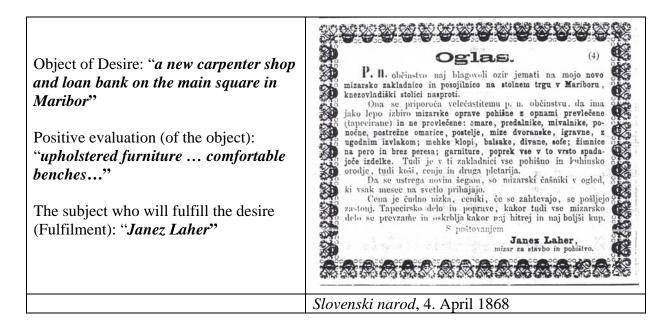


Figure 1

2.2

The next example is a text that was placed under the rubric *News* in the newspaper *Edinost* (14th Sept. 1889). The text is organized as a Desire Arousal-Fulfilment pattern. In its report of the news and activities in the vintage season in Crni Kal (CK) it gives a positive Evaluation of the Object of Desire (Hoey 2001): "abounding harvest of sweet grapes and very good wine", hence arousing the desire to taste the wine. The text provides also the answer regarding who can fulfil the desire: "the wine producers in CK" that are not expressed explicitly, but understood in the context of the name of the village and the narrator in the common subject *we*. Further on the narrator invites the clients, "the wine merchants, to buy their wine", but the text does not attract the reader with any particular visual element; it functions as "a plain text", although the name of the place is bold and thereby salient. This is connected with the

rubric, because it lends importance to where the news happened and when. The elements mentioned mark the text as news. Suppose the date were omitted and that the Themes in the phases of the text pattern were salient, i.e. bold, as in the previous text, then the text might even function as an advert, its layout becoming similar to the layouts of the adverts of the time (as shown in Figure 2).

V •ernemkalu. Leto je minolo, In •rni kal esen je nastala, bliža se nam trgatev. žalost me sprehaja, ko •itan po •asnikih V Černemkalu, dne 8. sept. Leto je mislovenskih, da je trte uni∙ila trtna uš, nolo, jesen je nastala, bliža se nam trga-tev. Žalost me sprehaja, ko čitam po časnikih slovanskih, da je trte uničila strupena rosa in še zraven to•a poklestila po mnogih krajih. Ubogi ljudje veliko dela in troškov imajo s trto ali malo jim trtna uš, strupena rosa in še zraven toča etos obe•a trgatev. veliko dela in troškov imajo s trto ali Pri nas, hvala Bogu, zemlja je **dobro** Very good harvest. malo jim letos obeča trgatev. obrodila. Vinska trta nam obilo obe•a Pri nas, hvala Bogu, zemlja je dobro Good wine, especially dobrega vina, posebno moškata obrodila. Viuska trta nam obilo obeča dobrega vina, posebno moškata bode do**bode dovolj**, ako nam ga Bog do kraja muscat wine in abundance. volj, ako nam ga Bog do kraja obvaruje; obvaruje; strupena rosa in trtna uš nam strupena rosa in trtna uš nam neso še neso še znane; tudi to•a nam ni škode znane; tudi toča nam ni škode učinila; u•inila; trte so lepe, zelene kakor meseca trte so lepe, zelene kakor meseca junija junija in grozdje nam je popolnoma in grozdje nam je popolnoma dozorelo. Hope, the wine merchants dozorelo. Upam, da **nas bodo vinski** Upam, da nas bodo vinski trgovci obilno obiskali in bili zadovoljni z dobro kapljico. trgovci obilno obiskali in bili will visit us, (and) be Ako bo vreme tako ugodno kakor dosedaj zadovoljni z dobro kapljico. Ako bo bo še boljše vino in bolj sladko kakor vreme tako ugodno kakor dosedaj bo še prejšnja leta. Naše bralno družtvo, še vedno happy with a good wine. živi in procvita, udje so mu zvesti ter ga boljše vino in bolj sladko kakor krepko podpirajo. Dal Bog, da bi še na**prejšnja leta**. Naše bralno društvo še (Regarding the weather) **the** dalje evetelo in se razvijalo narodu v vedno živi in procvita, udje so nam zvesti ter ga krepko podpirajo. Dal Bog, da bi še wine will be better and nadalje cvetelo in se razvijalo narodu v korist. sweeter than last year. Dopisi, Edinost, 14 Sept. 1889

Figure 2

Yet if all the lexemes in a verbal text/advert were salient by typography the text would gain the effect of salience as a whole in comparison to the other texts, while all the component words would be of equal importance. Thus the typographic salience does not just gain the effect just by bigger and bold letters, but by an outstanding typography (shape, font, different sizes) that differs from the other words in the text.

2.3

In contrast to the above, the advert which follows (Figure 3) also consists of verbal signs only, but its first line is bold, salient, and thus it attracts the reader's attention and more likely functions as an advert.

Reading only the salient words we get a very short, condensed advert with the structure of a Problem-Solution pattern (P-S). In this advert, the lexemes expressing the Problem ("Having no appetite") and Solution ("Univer. stomach elixir") are salient.

Problem: Having no appetite (Brezte • nost)

Solution: Univer. stomach elixir (Univerz. želod•nim eliksirom)

Breztečnost

slabo prebavljanje, želodčni katar, preblajenje želodca se ozdravi najhitreje in najsigurnije z edino pristnim sv. Jurija Univer. Želodčnim eliksirom lekarn, Wien, V., Wimmergasse 33.

Cena 1/2 steklenice 1 gl.; cela steklenica gl. 1.80; z pošto 25 kr. več. — V Trstu se dobi pri G. B. Manzoni, lekarna, Via sette Fontane.

Edinost, 29. Sept. 1888

Figure 3

Salience in this kind of advert explains the condensed adverts that consist of the signals of the stages in the culturally popular text patterns only (Starc 2008), as shown by the following advert (Figure 4) which consists of lexemes, "Wax candles", which express the Object of Desire and "(makes¹) Seemann in Ljubljana" which express the Fulfilment. To equal the importance of the information in the clause expressed with a marked Theme, which in fact presents the OD, and Rheme, F, the Object of Desire is salient through typography, while the Fulfilment is already stressed by its placement in the Rheme (Starc 2007, 2008).



makes

Wax candles Seemann in Ljubljana.

Edinost, 7 Jan. 1888

Figure 4

2.4

The layout of the following advert (Figure 5) attracts the reader's attention by its frame and by composition obtained by the placement of the salient words (typographic salience) and the use of an initial (or the logotype of the remedy). The salient words are bold, of different

size and font, making the verbal text more vivid and distinctive. Let us take into consideration only the first noun phrase which consists of the nucleus "remedy" and a preand post-modifier. Both modifiers lend the noun an explicit positive meaning. The preposition "against" in the post modifier denies the negative semantics of the noun phrase "violent and acute pains". So, as such it functions as a solution or an object of desire for those who still have pains. Thus the structure of the text is that of the Desire Arousal-Fulfilment pattern. But the salience seemingly changes the pattern to Problem-Solution, because the noun phrase that expresses the trouble has been printed in bigger and capital letters which provide salience in comparison to the rest of the verbal text. Thus the salience exposes two components: the Problem, "violent and acute pains", and the Solution, "Neuroxylin", the remedy.

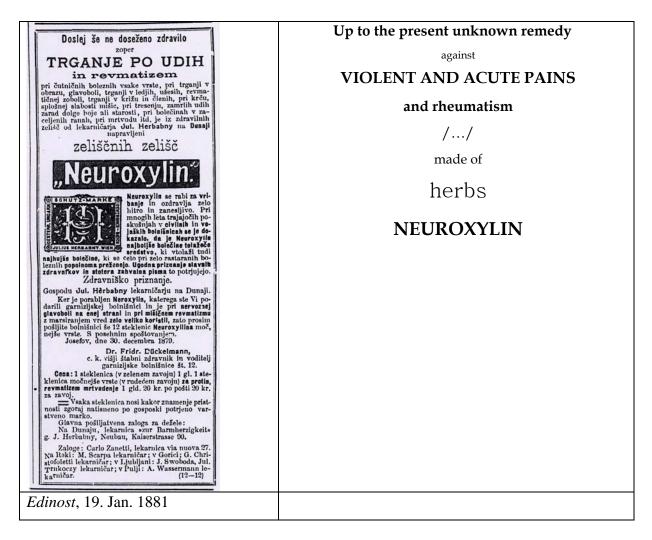


Figure 5

2.5

In the following advert (Figure 6) the salient noun phrase is the object of desire "Kwizde the ointment against bone-ache", and it presents the structure of the Desire Arousal-Fulfilment pattern. Nevertheless, the post-modifier has the same structure as the sample discussed above (in Figure 5). In this composition the salient noun phrase is furthermore repeated three times, placed on top, middle and bottom, as a refrain, providing additional salience to the text, strengthening the weight of the advert.

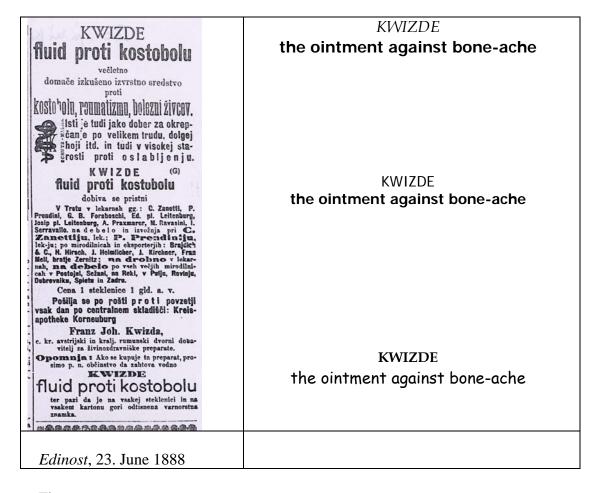


Figure 6

2.6

The next advert we are interested in is for Singer sewing machines (Figure 7) in which salience is obtained by typography and repetition, in this case anaphoric: "Singer sewing machine (Singerjevi šivalni stroji)" as marked Themes at the top of the composition. The logotypes (also non-verbal signs) somehow frame the verbal text in the middle of which on the left and right there are the pointed fingers to the non-salient verbal signs that say that the "Singer electro motors, specially for use in sewing machines, can be found in all sizes

(Singerjevi elektromotorji, specialno za uporabo pri šivalnih strojih, se dobe v vseh velikostih)". Yet the typographical sign "pointed fingers" gives salience to the typographically non-salient clause. Below this we find – likewise salient, in bigger size and bold – the name of the company that can provide the Object of Desire.: "Singer. Co., shareholding company for sewing machines (Singer. Co., delniška družba za šivalne stroje)". Under that line are listed in three columns the Singer shop addresses in two towns (Ljubljana and Graz/Gradec), and as a fourth column (on the right) there is a framed clause: "The original Singer sewing machines can be found only in our shops (Izvirni Singerjevi šivalni stroji se dobijo samo v naših lastnih prodajalnicah)".

The three columns (list of the shop addresses) are made salient by the empty space around them, while the frame in the fourth column lends salience to the sentence that sums up the meaning of the left logotype and the verbal text.

Because of the salience the reader can read the advert randomly. This means that he/she does not have to follow the information lineally to understand the meaning, and to decode the advert as a coherent text. We understand all salient parts of the advert as chunks of information that can be read in different sequences without damaging the message of the text. Thus we can read the salient parts of the text from the bottom to the top, or vice versa, or diagonally from the top left logo to the one at the bottom right, and so on.



Figure 7

The adverts in Figures 5, 6 and 7 can be understood as multimodal texts because of their verbal and non-verbal signs (logotypes) and the outstanding composition that was obtained by salience.

2.7

In Figure 8 we deal with another advert that consists of the verbal and non-verbal (pictorial) and is thus an example of a multimodal text (Kress & van Leeuwen 2005 [1996]).



Electrical light appliances

of different shapes.

Fin de siècle!

R. DITMAR

Vienna.

Slovenski narod, 1. December 1900

Figure 8

The advert is framed by the drawing in the *fin de siècle* style on the left, and with the lines on the other sides. The drawing itself gives salience to the advert.

Kress and van Leeuwen (2005 [1996]) discuss such placements of elements in composition in terms of the informative value of the meaning of the composition. Thus at the top (i.e. 'ideal') the most important information is placed, while at the bottom (i.e. 'real') we find less important information. In the advert analysed here, the Object of Desire ("Electrical light appliances") is placed at the top, its positive Evaluation in the verbal ("Fin de siècle") is expressed in the middle, while in the pictorial mode of the style itself, at the bottom (real) the subject who can realize/fulfill the desire is placed. Thus considering the value of the placement of the elements in the composition, the Fulfilment

("Ditmar", "Vienna") would not be stressed enough by means of placement only, which may be the reason why the Fulfilment was made salient by typography (as well). In this case the salient part of the verbal text gives the balance to the picture of the young girl on the left at the bottom of the composition, which represents the real, while the ideal, the Object of Desire ("Electrical light appliances"), which still has to be gained, is placed at the top. The composition of the verbal on the right side equals the composition of the pictorial on the left: at the bottom the drawing of a person, a girl, and the lexemes that express the owner of the shop are placed (i.e. Fulfilment), at the top the drawing of the light, and the lexemes that express "the light appliances", both represent the Object of Desire. Hence in this Desire Arousal-Fulfilment pattern of the text only the Fulfilment is salient, through typography, but only if we read the verbal separately from the pictorial. Yet the two modes interact and thereby construe meaning (Halliday 2004; Kress & van Leeuwen 2005 [1996]). We have already noticed the parallelism in both compositions. The drawing of the light has an illustrative function; it represents the object expressed by lexemes. Yet the pictorial also has another function: the vector of the girl's sight makes salient the Object of Desire, expressed by lexemes. In this case also the Object of Desire ("Electrical light appliances") that is typographically less stressed than Fulfilment ("Ditmar") becomes salient, and it gains back the importance obtained by the top position, which was diminished by the typographic salience of the Fulfilment placed at the bottom. Thus the advert can be read as illustrated by the arrows in Figure 9.

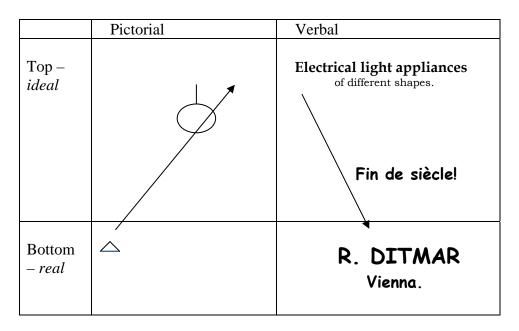


Figure 9: Possible reading of the advert *R. Ditmar*.

3. Conclusions

We observe that the old verbal advertisement texts, monomodal texts, try to stand out from the rest of the newspaper texts to attract the addressee and to expose the (most) important information by using salience. This can be obtained by different means: frame (made of lines, of different ornamental patterns or even a part of it pictorial (such as a drawing), empty space around lexemes, typography (different sizes and fonts, bold print, typographical markers) and by somehow exposed cohesive elements (recurrence - refrain, anaphora, flow of information, Theme'Rheme) of the stages of the text pattern that give importance to the message of the advert. Thus salient are lexemes that express Problem and/or Solution in the Problem-Solution pattern, or Object of Desire, positive Evaluation, Fulfilment of Desire in the Desire Arousal-Fulfilment pattern. As stated in Starc (2008) the phases of the text pattern in the newspaper adverts usually interlock with the Rhemes or marked Themes of the clause, thus being evenly salient, they point out the condensed message of the advert that follows one of the culturally popular text patterns. In this case the text enables the reader to read only the salient parts and still get the message. Furthermore, salience can apparently modify the reader's decoding of the culturally popular pattern of the text (as illustrated by sections 2.4 and 2.5). Thus it provides the opportunity for verbal adverts to become condensed, in which only the salient lexemes of the phases in the text pattern are expressed.

We can claim that salience in a verbal advertisement text (i.e monomodal text) is the first constituent element that displays the specific structure of advertisement as a genre. Salient parts of the text give the text a certain notion of composition, and thus an outstanding different layout that attracts the readers and provides them with the core information within the text pattern. We also understand that salience in the monomodal, verbal adverts paves the way for multimodal advertisements, because the text displays a new type of composition in which the placement of elements yields the opportunity to construe new or different meanings.

In the multimodal advertisements salience is created also by the incorporation of non-verbal signs into the predominantly verbal text; first the incorporation of logotypes which give salience to the text and point out the importance of the new phenomenon in the adverts – composition. In our analysis this is the case with the advert for Singer sewing machines.

And, finally the elements in the composition of multimodal texts can gain salience by different placement in the composition (top or centre), and by the interaction of different

textual cohesive elements, as is the case with the vector of the girl's gaze in Figure 8. Thus salience plays a cohesive role in the (multimodal) advertisement text.

We understand that salience has a crucial role in the process of the development of (printed) verbal adverts as a genre: because of its ability to draw attention to the structure of adverts and to the core information of the message it lends to the advert the possibility to obtain new formats in which the semiotic code can be either verbal, as in condensed adverts, or combined with pictorial material.

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Notes

¹ The Slovene clause *Voš* •*ene sve* •*e izdeluje Seemann v Ljubljani* is in the active voice in which the Theme (*Voš* •*ene sve* •*e*) is marked. To preserve the Theme^Rheme positioning and the voice we translated the clause into English literally, though it sounds like Slovene English: *Wax candles makes Seemann in Ljubljana*.

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