

15. Critical analysis on advertising discourses¹

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Abstract

Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) appeared in the early 1990s and has become increasingly popular as an interdisciplinary approach to analyzing various types of discourse. The roots of CDA lie in classical Rhetoric, Textlinguistics and Sociolinguistics, as well as in Applied Linguistics and Pragmatics (Wodak, 2002, p.7-8). It sees discourse as language use in speech and writing and as a social practice. Its feature of being social practice means discursive cases have a dialectical interaction with social situations, institutions, and structures that surround them. They constantly influence and shape each other. CDA focuses on the relationship between language and power and is primarily concerned with investigating the explicit and implicit structural relations of domination, discrimination, power, and control as manifested in language. As transferred from Wodak (2001, p. 2), for Habermas, “Language is also a medium of domination and social force. It serves to legitimize relations of organized power. In so far as the legitimations of power relations, . . . are not articulated, . . . language is also ideological.” Ideologies are the fundamental frameworks for organizing the social cognitions that members of social groups, organizations, or institutions share. CDA seeks to demystify discourses by deciphering ideologies (Dijk, 1995, p. 18; Wodak, 2002, p.10). This paper aims to explore the relationship between discourse and social cognition, to analyze critically the language of advertisement, and to clarify how social structure and institutions are affected by advertising discourses.

Keywords: Critical Discourse Analysis, advertising discourse, persuasion, manipulation.

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Reklam söylemleri üzerine eleştirel çözümleme³

Öz

Eleştirel Söylem Çözümlemesi (EŞÇ) 1990'ların başında ortaya çıkmış ve çeşitli söylem türlerini analiz etmeye yönelik disiplinlerarası bir yaklaşım olarak giderek daha popüler hale gelmiştir. EŞÇ'nin kökleri klasik Retorik, Metindilbilim ve Toplumdilbilim yanı sıra Uygulamalı Dilbilim ve Edimbilime dayanmaktadır (Wodak, 2002, p. 7-8). Söylemi, konuşma ve yazmada kullanılan dil ve toplumsal bir pratik olarak görür. Sosyal pratik olma özelliği, söylemsel olgular ile onları çevreleyen sosyal durumlar, kurumlar ve yapılar arasında diyalektik bir ilişki olduğu anlamına gelir. Sürekli olarak birbirlerini etkiler ve şekillendirirler. EŞÇ, dil ve güç arasındaki ilişkiye özel önem verir ve temelde dilde ortaya çıktığı şekliyle tahakküm, ayrımcılık, güç ve kontrol gibi açık ve örtük yapısal ilişkilerin analiziyle ilgilenir. Wodak (2001, p. 2)'den alıntılandığı üzere, Habermas'a göre, "Dil aynı zamanda bir tahakküm ve toplumsal güç aracıdır. Organize güç ilişkilerini meşrulaştırmaya hizmet eder. Güç ilişkilerinin meşrulaştırılmasına gelince, . . . açıkça ifade edilmez, . . . dil aynı zamanda ideolojiktir.". İdeolojiler, sosyal grupların, örgütlerin veya kurumların üyelerince paylaşılan sosyal bilişleri organize etmek için kullanılan temel çerçevelerdir. EŞÇ, ideolojileri yorumlayarak söylemlerin gizemini çözmeye çalışır (Dijk, 1995, p. 18; Wodak, 2002, p.10). Bu çalışma, söylem ve sosyal biliş arasındaki ilişkiyi açıklamayı, reklam söylemlerinin dilini EŞÇ ışığında eleştirel bir şekilde analiz etmeyi ve buna bağlı olarak sosyal yapı ve kurumların reklam söylemleri tarafından nasıl şekillendiğini açıklığa kavuşturmayı amaçlamaktadır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Eleştirel Söylem Çözümlemesi, reklam söylemi, ikna, manipülasyon

1. Introduction

Industry, technology, and communication, which develop in parallel with scientific progress, have increased the competition between product and service brands. In this competition, the importance of the advertisement has gained increasing momentum. Efforts to increase the effectiveness of advertising discourses have brought the concept of rhetoric back to the agenda.

Rhetoric is the name for the study of writing or speaking as a means of persuasion in communication. Although scientific research is relatively new, ideas about the art of persuasion were on the agenda even of ancient philosophers. So, rhetorical studies date back to the 5th century BC since philosophers such as Plato and Aristotle addressed these issues. More interestingly, in *Rhetoric*, written by Aristotle in the 4th century BC, the methods of persuasion put forward by the famous philosopher are still seen as the foundations of the art of persuasion today. Rhetoric by Aristotle has had a huge impact on the development of rhetorical art. As Beaugrande and Dressler (1981, p. 15) expressed, rhetoric, dating from

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Ancient Greece and Rome through the Middle Ages right up to the present, was the art of discourse of systematically and artfully thinking through the five canons of rhetoric: *invention*, the discovery of ideas; *disposition*, the arrangement of ideas; *elocution*, the discovery of appropriate expressions for ideas; and *memorization* prior to *delivery* on the actual occasion of speaking.

As the art of discovering all the available means of persuasion, Rhetoric by Aristotle has had a nonpareil impact on the development of the art of rhetoric. Not only authors writing in the peripatetic tradition, but also famous Roman rhetorical teachers such as Cicero and Quintilian, used Aristotelian doctrine elements frequently. Over time, scholars became aware that Aristotle's rhetorical analysis of persuasion used many concepts and ideas addressed in his logical, ethical, political, and psychological writings, so rhetoric has been perceived as an integrated part of Aristotelian work. Rhetoric is tightly bound with the history of ancient logic and is frequently mentioned as an important inspiration for modern argumentation theory (Rapp, 2022).

“Rhetoric may be defined as the faculty of observing in any given case the available means of persuasion.” (Aristotle, n.d., p. 7) According to Aristotle, “Of the modes of persuasion furnished by the spoken word there are three kinds... Persuasion is achieved by the speaker's personal character when the speech is spoken to make us think of him as credible [Ethos]... Secondly, persuasion may come through the hearers when the speech stirs their emotions [pathos]... Thirdly persuasion is effected through the speech itself we have proved a truth or an apparent truth by means of the persuasive arguments suitable to the case in question [logos]” (Aristotle, n.d., p. 8). As understood from Glatch (2023), in addition, another device, *kairos*, directly appeals to the hearers' sense of time. It is a call to immediacy, to a sense of 'now'. Used ethically, it convinces the audience that they need to take immediate action for the better.

2. Is advertising discourse persuasion or manipulation?

Beyond the ordinary communication function, the use of language within the framework of several strategies for persuasion can be observed in many areas such as advertising and politics. In advertising discourses where persuasion is the sine qua non, rhetorical appeals (ethos, logos, pathos, kairos), syntactic, argumentative, emphatic, and stylistic rhetorical devices are influential linguistic strategies. Rhetorical appeals directly address the reader's emotions, thoughts, morals, and perception of time. Syntactic devices use sentence structures to convey or simplify complex ideas or to draw attention to a certain idea by playing with sentence structure. Argumentative rhetorical devices use forms that help advance a particular argument. Emphatic rhetorical devices are used to emphasize particular ideas. Stylistic rhetorical devices use wordplay and diction to advance an argument.

Advertising discourses have a very important role in promoting, marketing, increasing brand awareness, and selling a product. They use the rhetoric quite a lot because the main purpose is to evoke irresistible interest, attention, or admiration for the product or service to be marketed. As of today, according to Merriam Webster, rhetoric is the art of speaking or writing effectively. It is the study of principles and rules of composition formulated by critics of ancient times. It is also the study of writing or speaking as a means of communication or persuasion. At the same time, it is a skill in the effective use of speech; a type, or mode of language or speech, and additionally, it can be insincere or grandiloquent language (merriam-webster.com).

Aristotle's Rhetoric is, as mentioned above, mainly concerned with elaborating on the many components of persuasion since the nature and details of persuasiveness are at the heart of rhetorical art. The art of persuasion of an audience requires the three criteria that Aristotle first described as being ethos (credibility of the speaker), pathos (emotional state of the audience), and logos (logical argument

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proving or seemingly proving what is true). Since rhetoric is the use of language to persuade or influence others, advertising discourse can be considered a power that affects the audience's thoughts, actions, and attitudes through words. In this case, the message of advertising discourse is designed to arouse great interest, excitement, or admiration by focusing consumers' attention on new products or services through words, actions, images, sound, and role-playing (pathos). For this purpose, the media, billboards, and brochures are used to deliver messages of the discourses to different audiences; these messages should conform to the habits of the target audience, and their presentation in the media should be consistent. So, in the advertisements, famous people loved, respected, admired, or modeled by society are used (ethos). In persuasive discourse, words are collocated in such a way as to prove or seem to prove the truth using the connotations of the words besides their denotations, rhetorical tools, and language games (logos).

Language and other semiotic forms are increasingly combined in discourses whose primary semiotic form is language. The most prominent example of language combined with visual signs, music, and sound effects is in advertising discourses. As Dijk (2006, p. 365) indicates, to understand words, clauses, sentences, expressions, and non-verbal signs, discourse in general and manipulative discourse, in particular, necessitates processing information in short-term memory (STM). He emphasizes that "specific features of text and talk – such as its visual representation – may specifically affect the management of strategic understanding in STM so that readers pay more attention to some pieces of information than others." An advertising discourse is primarily a work in which different semiotic forms co-presented with linguistic signs interact with each other to form an effective discourse. So, the persuasive language of the advertisement can turn into a form of manipulative power and discursive power abuse that is domination is created because most manipulation takes place by written, spoken, especially multisemiotic discourses.

Manipulation, in particular, means creating a kind of illegitimate influence through discourse because those in power make people believe things that are in their interest and contrary to the interests of the manipulated. This influence can also be realized with pictures, photographs, movies, or other media since contemporary forms of communicative manipulation of the mass media are multimodal, as is in advertising. "Those being manipulated are human beings, and this typically occurs through the manipulation of their 'minds', so that a cognitive account is also able to shed light on the processes of manipulation. ... manipulation always involves a form of mental manipulation" and, "is a communication and interactional practice, in which a manipulator exercises control over other people, usually against their will or against their best interests." (Dijk, 2006, p. 360). As a short discourse type, advertising discourses shape social cognition, which is the system of mental representations and processes shared by group members, and the cultural ecosystem because all advertisement tries to persuade the target audience to buy a company's products and services or support an organization.

As understood from Dijk's sentences (2006, p. 361-364), there is a fine line between persuasion and manipulation. In persuasion, the interlocutors are free to believe or not as they please, the arguments of the persuader while in manipulation, they are typically more passive and victims of the manipulation when they stand unable to understand the real intention of the manipulator. Manipulation is a bad practice because it breaks social norms. This does not mean that the advertisement must not be done but it should be done with arguments and facts, that is, through adequate information and persuasion not through manipulation, omitting important information, lying or distorting the facts, and so on.

Based on the fact that the use of spoken or written language is a social practice and discursive events shape situations, institutions and social structures, and they are shaped by them, advertising discourses can be evaluated as effective discourse forms that shape social structure. This will be tried to be

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exemplified with some randomly selected advertisements such as Yemek Sepeti (Food Basket), Coca-Cola, Zen, etc.

Yemeksepeti, Turkey's fast trading platform, with its slogan 'If it's in your mind, it's at your door', promises to bring every product its users want to their door quickly and reliably. With this slogan it is claimed that orders will be delivered to the door in seconds (kairos). Danilo Zanna, Merve Dizdar, and Sergen Deveci known and loved by the people (ethos), starred in the Yemeksepeti advertising film. The advertisement, standing out with the slogan 'If it is in your mind, it is at your door' starts with the expression of Sergen Deveci's girlfriend "Are we not too hungry?" Deveci answers, "I have some dishes in mind," and the scene moves from the Yemeksepeti logo on the phone screen to the street. While the food orders, prepared quickly, are delivered by the Yemeksepeti field team within seconds, a wail of cry is heard inside the flat and Merve Dizdar says that the dishwashing liquid has run out. The employees at the Yemeksepeti Banabi warehouse also join the choir and continue the song by showing the cleaning products in their hands. It's time for food products. When coffee is mentioned, the logo in the warehouse is passed to Merve Dizdar's phone. Among many different types of coffee, Merve Dizdar prefers filter coffee.

In the next plan, Danilo Zanna, holding his pan by the stove, says, "Taste requires a local butcher." While the neighborhood butcher is beating and mincing meat, we catch our eye on the souvenir photograph taken with Danilo Zanna on the wall. This time, Danilo Zanna says, "Vegetables need to be fresh." Neighborhood greengrocer comes to the screen with its counter of fresh fruits and vegetables. Yemeksepeti field team delivers the orders to the doors of the houses. Deveci and his girlfriend have their meals. Merve Dizdar, whose dishwasher is working, enjoys coffee and chocolate, and Danilo Zanna takes orders from the neighborhood shopkeepers and cuts the meat.

At the end of the advertisement, a large choir of artisans that services many different dishes of the world cuisines such as tantuni, pizza, fried potatoes, hamburgers, döner kebab, kokoreç, kebabs, Chinese dishes, ravioli, and rice sings on the street: 'Don't stop, say. Yemeksepeti is next to you, come on say, 'If it's in your mind, it's at your door'. Pointing to product and service diversity, the slogan gives the message: "We are ready to supply instantly whatever comes to your mind." With this advertisement, Yemeksepeti explains its services that make life easier for its users, support the local economy, and contribute to employment. It strongly asserts its claim to deliver orders to the door in seconds and emphasizes that it now offers much more than just food order delivery with its expanding range of services. Both the service personnel and the service recipients seem to be satisfied.

Time is very valuable for modern-day people in the hustle and bustle of daily life. Especially, the emphasis on the fast service of the advertisement, suitable for the postmodern life of modern humans, attracts people, although the argument of quickness is exaggerated a little bit. The fact that the advertising discourse focuses on fast service increases the situationality and acceptability of the discourse. Emphasis on the neighborhood butcher and greengrocer; the participation of well-known actors are the factors that increase the reliability of the products. Increasing access to services through phone orders has established the habit of ordering needs such as food by phone, and has also changed the traditional culinary habits of the society. Through the discursive fact, the message is given to society: 'You do not need to cook at home, do not waste time cooking; we do it for you. Be happy by drinking coffee instead of cooking.' (pathos). While the advertising character Dizdar's preference for filter coffee also conveys the subliminal message that filter coffee should be drunk instead of traditional Turkish coffee, the advertising discourse shapes the social structure and culture. The conditional sentence 'If it is in your mind, it is at your door' is a syntactic style that implies 'Whatever it is, wherever you are, it is enough that it comes to your mind' and that promises unlimited service.

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Parallelism, that is, the repetition of the same grammatical structure with different contents, as in Coca-Cola's 1939 advertising discourse 'Whoever You Are, Whatever You Do, Wherever You May Be, When You Think of Refreshment Think of Ice Cold Coca-Cola' (coca-colacompany.com), are the rhetorical mechanisms that make the discourse unforgettable. This syntactic style is widely used in advertising discourses because it increases memorability. This spoken text becomes all the more appealing and impressive when supplemented with a visual sign of a handsome, sporty, and strong young man drinking Coca-Cola after a sporting activity on a sunny day. The most basic human need is nutrition. When advertising discourses on food products are supported by non-linguistic signs such as color, light, sound effects, and music; their persuasive or manipulative power increases more.

The use of the imperative mood in the advertising discourses such as 'Connect to life with Turkcell (Turkcell)', 'Drink Coca-Cola', 'Refresh Yourself', 'Enjoy Thirst', 'Open Happiness' (Coca-Cola), 'Think different' (Apple), 'Just do it' (Nike), and many more, implicitly conveys a subliminal message ordering the masses to purchase the product or service. "A subliminal message is a technique used in marketing and other media to influence people without their being aware of what the messenger is doing. This may involve the use of split second flashes of text, hidden images, or subtle cues that affect the audience at a level below conscious awareness." Subliminal, which literally means 'below the threshold' comes from the Latin *sub limen*, in this case below the threshold of conscious awareness (dictionary.com).

The fact that the advertisement discourse is short and repeated over and over with its logo and slogan also makes it memorable. Slogan, as a short, catchy phrase that expresses an idea in a memorable and reproducible way, is one of the most important elements that ensure the formation of corporate identity and the establishment of the institution/brand in the minds of the target audience. It succinctly defines the goals and means of the community, organization, or institutions. The slogan is of great importance for a brand to be remembered by the consumer. Rhyme and harmony increase the catchy of the slogan. When consumers hear or remember a slogan, they directly associate the slogan with that brand. So, thanks to the slogan, an image of the brand and its products/services are formed in the mind of the consumer. In addition, in the advertisements such as Turkcell, Coca-Cola emphasis on family ties and cultural sensitivities such as 'family at the iftar table, religious holidays' are strategies that increase the acceptability of the advertisement.

The slogan 'Not without Zen' in a diamond advertising discourse gives the message that a man should buy the product for the woman he will marry at all costs. In the deep structure of the discourse, the subliminal message 'Not without Zen, but without you' is embedded. Zen is a Persian word that means 'woman'. The discourse directly orientates to the women. This brand's discourse in its replacement campaign, 'Branded or unbranded, diamond or gold, replace your unused jewelry with Zen diamonds at the best price' commands women to replace their old jewelry with new ones. The emphasis on installment sales in diamond advertisements is another strategy that encourages the purchase of the product. Through the implicit messages in the deep structure of such diamond discourses, a new generation has been created that does not want to marry without Zen because discourse helps maintain and reproduce the social status quo and transform it. Thus, advertisement discourse fulfills its duty of being an instrument of domination and social power.

3. Conclusion

Developing industry, technology, and communication parallel with scientific progress have increased the competition between product and service brands. In this competition, the importance of the advertisement has gained increasing momentum. When advertising discourses are supported by non-linguistic signs such as color, light, sound effects, and music, their power of influence increases even

more. As a social practice, discourse can shape the social structure as it wishes. Its force to shape social structure brings to mind its manipulative side. Manipulation is a social phenomenon, especially as it involves the interaction and abuse of power between groups and social actors. Manipulation is a cognitive phenomenon as it always refers to the manipulation of the minds of the participants.

The fact that the advertisement discourse is suitable for the wishes, desires, needs, plans, beliefs, and culture of the target audience/consumer is a factor that increases the acceptability of the discourse. Prioritizing the cultural, religious, and national values of the society in advertising discourses are rhetorical tools that increase the situationality and acceptability of the discourse. So discourse both helps maintain and reproduce the social status quo and contributes to transforming it.

The discourse of advertising is manipulative because as a power that dominates the social mind, it results in the actions of the individual, and therefore the society, to purchase and accumulate advertised products or services, even if there is no need. The interlocutors are typically more passive and victims of the manipulation since they are unable to understand the real intention of the manipulator. The pile of products that are consciously sold and unconsciously bought, and that the consumer does not want to throw away or give to someone else because he has paid for them, cause people to become more attached to the world due to the fear of losing them and to move away from the reality of death.

As supported by the findings of Erciř et al (2016: 110), the more an individual possesses the values desired and accepted in society or internalizes these values, the more death anxiety decreases. Again, purchases and consumption made to acquire those values reduce death anxiety, and as this anxiety decreases, the individual is dragged into more consumption. A person who is aware of his mortality turns to consumption in search of increasing his self-esteem. These behaviors are more common in people who measure their self-worth with materialist symbols, in societies where consumer culture dominates, and when death becomes apparent. In short, having more or purchasing some objects reduces the anxiety felt. A vicious cycle continues as the fear of death triggers the urge to buy again.

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