

Chapter 15. ‘SAY HELLO TO THIS AD’: THE PERSUASIVE RHETORIC OF FICTIVE INTERACTION IN MARKETING¹

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This chapter deals with strategically motivated discourse to show the fundamental role of the conversation frame in language for specific purposes. We focus on imagined speech acts in which advertised products and/or the ‘problems’ they tackle are fictively addressed through non-genuine yes-no responses (e.g. “*Say no to wrinkles, say yes to this cream*”) and non-actual greetings (e.g. “*Hello wireless music. Goodbye wires*”), as well as marketing slogans and brands involving intra-sentential fictive speech ascribed to a consumer, the advertiser, and/or the advertised product, service, or behavior (e.g. “*I-Love-Art-Tour*”). This study is based on our own database of printed advertisements, TV commercials, and brands in five different languages.

Keywords: advertisement, embedded fictive interaction, fictive assertions/negations, fictive greetings, marketing strategy.

...what talkers undertake to do is not to provide information to a recipient but to present dramas to an audience. Indeed, it seems that we spend most of our time not engaged in giving information but in giving shows.

(Goffman 1974, p. 508)

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1. Introduction

Fictive interaction or ‘FI’ (Pascual 2002, 2006, 2014) is characterized by non-genuine conversational turns at the discourse and grammatical levels. In both realms, fictive interaction is noticed in professional communication: everywhere on the spectrum from marked forms of creativity, as in literature and comic TV shows, to persuasion, as in legal or political argumentation (see overview in Pascual 2014 and Pascual and Sandler, this volume).

What is the cognitive rationale for utilizing FI in creative and persuasive discourse? In the following, we address this question by examining examples of a type of public communication characterized by both creativity and persuasion. This is the strategically motivated discourse of marketing, designed for promoting particular agendas or commercial products. We discuss FI utterances with respect to their grammatical and communicative function in branding and advertising campaigns.

2. Database

This study is based on hundreds of attested examples of branding and especially of advertising in English, Dutch, Danish, German, and Spanish. We also collected similar examples from Catalan, French, and Portuguese, not discussed here. The examples comprise advertisements and TV commercials to sell products or services, as well as campaigns for donations or to induce social or healthy behavior. About three quarters of the examples were gathered through a search engine, trying combinations like “Say Hello to”, “Say Goodbye to”, “Say Yes to”, or “Say No to” in diffe-

rent languages. We further scanned advertisement websites (*Adsoftheworld.com*, *Rec-lamewereld.blog*, *Adeevee.com*). Some examples were selected from Pascual's own database of over 10,000 examples in different languages, collected over a span of fifteen years.

3. Non-genuine conversational turns as strategy in advertising

It is a well-attested advertising strategy to have individuals who may or may not actually exist speak in favor of a product. This aims at affecting the face-value credibility of the claims made, by substituting the editorial speaker's voice (the communicative sender, e.g. a company) with that of a seemingly non-biased party with no obvious agenda other than to share a positive experience of a product with others. In a Danish advertisement for Hair Volume, "Trine" engages us in a first person narrative praising this hair supplement ("*My hair was shedding terribly*", etc.). Trine is quite possibly a non-existing person, fabricated for the express purpose of "bearing witness" to the advantages gained by using the product advertised. "*It was actually my hairdresser who recommended I start taking Hair Volume*", we are told. In this manner, the reader's attention is moved away from the company selling the product, whose editorial framing is inherently biased. By embedding the viewpoint of an alleged satisfied consumer (Trine) as well as the viewpoint (embedded in Trine's enunciation) of her alleged hairdresser, who likewise does not stand to gain anything, the seller of the product advertised aims to capitalize on the credibility of the Trine character – under the guise of experiential evidence – and of the professional hairdresser, bearing the supposed objectivity of an expert opinion. The company, the benefactor of the com-

mercial persuasion, thus positions itself to inherit the ethos of these portrayed champions of unbiased evidence. The mercantile interest of the seller is placed out of focus in favor of the employed conversation frame and its referents, embedded viewpoints creating in this way the illusion that the company merely reports the favorable testimony of commercially disinterested parties.

By contrast to such strategies staging a fictive conversation as genuine (e.g. presenting non-existing people's statements as actual testimonies, as in advertorials), we consider strategies where the presented conversations are intended to be recognized as unambiguously non-actual instances of communication, as imagined conversational turns.

In a Spanish campaign for a non-governmental organization, printed ads and TV commercials encourage citizens to (our translation) “Tell hunger to mess with someone its own size”.² The proposed conversation between the generic citizen (the addresser) and hunger (the addressee) metaphorically casts child hunger as a bully and citizens as having the power to stop that bullying by telling off hunger. Hunger is personified as a fictive conversational partner, scolding it corresponding to taking action (through donating to the organization) to end it.

² See: http://www.ayudaenaccion.org/wp-content/uploads/31263_2510200718157.pdf. This and all subsequent links accessed January 2015.



Figure 1. “Tell hunger to mess with someone its own size”

Personification in fictive interaction can also occur without metaphor, and with a fictive *speaker* rather than a fictive addressee. A postcard advertising by Rose, a Danish brand of poultry, shows a text that reads (our translation) “It’s what’s inside that counts” and a picture of a chicken with a speech bubble that says (our translation) “*I eat lots of corn every day...*”. Through its fictive utterance, a chicken is thus framed as advertising the quality of its meat, which is determined by the quality of the feed (“what’s inside”). In actuality, neither the chicken’s fictive message, nor the overall message of the ad, serve the interests of the speaking chicken (since, if believed, the addressee’s conviction means death for the chicken); only the company and the buyer stand to benefit. Regardless of this limitation to the logic, the personification of the chicken and the staging of a fictive interaction between carnivore consumers and their prospective meal, serves its purpose: to convey the impression that this brand of poultry is extra palatable due to the chickens being cornfed.

4. Conversational participants in the construal of non-genuine verbal interaction

In everyday life, usually without giving it much thought, we witness the staging of easily parsed fictive interactions with clear pragmatic implications. For instance, a recycling bin at Amsterdam Schiphol airport reads “*Feed me, I am hungry for recycling*”, casting it as an organism verbally appealing to the conscience of passers-by who might otherwise litter. Another example is the utterance “*PICK ME / I’M SINGLE!!!*” printed on a sign advertising bananas in the fruits and vegetables section of a Dutch supermarket to let shoppers know bananas are sold individually (notice also the code switch from the Dutch, the standard, to English, aiding the evocation of a playful dating frame). Common to these examples of inanimate objects addressing citizens in public is the choice of communicating the pragmatic message (a directive, an invitation) in an *indirect* manner, by embedding in the matrix enunciation (that of the airport or supermarket management) a fictive enunciation ascribed to an individual not capable of verbal expression.

Embedded fictive enunciation can be observed in many aspects of marketing, including the presentation of the product itself. On a juice bottle one might find an instruction like “*Shake me to wake me! / And serve me chilled!*”, which lets the consumer know how to handle the product, without expecting the consumer to actually believe that it is the juice talking. That comprehension is uninhibited by factuality in this sense is evident for instance in the branding of the Canadian/American manufacturer of smoothies *drinkme*TM Beverage Company, where the trademarked ‘drink me’ – much like the fictive utterances in “*Shake me bottles*” (Pascual 2002, p. 223) or

“*Wash Me Car Wash*” – evokes a conversation as a fiction to be entertained for communicative purposes (cf. Xiang, this volume).

The construal of non-genuine enunciation involves the putting-on-stage of non-actual utterances (or actual ones not functioning as genuine quotes in the new context). This “non-actuality” can be implemented in various ways. A non-actual utterance may simply not have actually occurred (it is hypothetical or counterfactual), or, as we have seen, it may carry an impossible premise (e.g. an inanimate entity being able to speak). Impossibility may also be invoked by the presentation of a temporal gap in the communication. An example is an advertisement reading “1.5 million Armenian victims cry out from their grave: *‘How long will you deny our genocide just to appease the Turkish tyrant?’*”,³ in which a large group of already deceased individuals appear engaged in choral dialogue (Tannen 1989) in a clearly fictive enunciation addressed to the living, which is a conceit of a sort commonly reserved for literature and legal argumentation (Pascual 2014, p. 4, 129).

The relevant components in embedded fictive conversations consist of: the verbal enunciation itself, the conversational turns, and the interactants (i.e. the addresser and addressee). Invocation of a *fictive addressee* appears to be the most rare in advertising, though in its most trivial sense, it is the most common: the ultimate addressee in all advertisements is a *generic second person* (a public *you* rather than, as in personal communication, a particular *you*). However, more rarely, an addressee can be concocted as a fictive construct, as in a Dutch state lottery advertisement that reads (our translation) “*A very, very, very good morning, Record Jackpot winner*” (Leushuis

³ See link at: <http://www.thecaliforniacourier.com/rabbi-shmuley-and-centennial-committee-depict-obama-as-liar-in-ny-times-ad/>.

2015, p. 22). At the rhetorical level, we have a fictive greeting from the Staatsloterij to the one lucky winner of the lottery, who may never read the ad in question. This involves staging a fictive addressee and a fictive address. The state lottery does not actually have any specific person in mind, nor would a campaign ever be directed at just one person. The indirect rhetorical goal is to get people to imagine themselves filling that role, i.e. being a jackpot winner, and therefore to desire – in hopes of winning – to participate in the lottery.

More common, when we look at the realm of commerce and marketing, is a dramatization involving the *addresser* in a non-actual conversation. This fictive addresser may take on three characteristic forms of identity; the fictive enunciation typically belongs either to a *product* or to the *consumer* as speaker (addresser), or to an object of direct relevance for the product, located within the consumer's sphere of interest. The common consumer-as-speaker strategy was implemented in the in-store sales strategy of a Danish grocery store, placing a speech bubble sticker on the transparent container lid where the ice cream is located on which was printed an expressive utterance followed by an exclamation mark: "Yum!" ("*Uhm!*"). The hypothetical enunciation, expressing delight at the taste of the contents of the ice cream bin, is ascribed to prospective consumers; the addresser speaks *for* the individual consumer – construed as a generic role to be filled by particular values over time. Similarly, an ad for the American skin care product series Kiss My Face shows a couple kissing in the sun and reads "WE LOVE TO KMF [*KISS MY FACE*] IN THE SUN" (playing on the metaphor of "sun-kissed" skin). The brand name, Kiss My Face, is itself a fictive command attributed to consumers of the product line. The copy in the ad then cleverly turns the name Kiss My Face into a sentence in the infinitive functioning as a verb in

the clause (“We love to...”). The message is thus for the addressee of the ad to identify with the (fictitious) “we” and purchase the product so as to be kissed as well, literally and by the sun. The skin care brand Hema similarly uses FI utterances with the consumer as speaker as proper nouns. Product lines are named “*it’s my beautiful skin day*” and “*hello mirror guess my age*”, the first person enunciation being ascribed to the consumer using the product. A well-known example of this strategy is “*I Can’t Believe It’s Not Butter*”, a sandwich spread, again involving a fictive utterance functioning as proper noun in the commercial naming of a product.

Equally common are, as mentioned, instances where the fictive speaker is identified as the product. On a poster advertising flowers on a Dutch billboard is the utterance “*Blooming once a year is not enough for me*” (our translation), presented as signed by “Campanula” (‘bellflowers’); the flower sells itself. In a German campaign for Hakle, boxes of tissue fictively introduce themselves: “*Hello! I am the new Kleenex*” (our translation). Also, in an English print ad, an image of a pack of Hakle toilet paper is accompanied by information that the product is made from recycled paper, and in the center of the ad we are met by a “*See you later*”. The social cycle of meeting, parting, and reuniting, metonymically accessed by the greeting, is here mapped onto the product feature in focus: reuseability.

The third option is the target object of the product: the fictive addresser is the benefactor of the advertised product, objects within the consumer’s sphere of interest, claimed to benefit from the product. Such objects might be part of the consumer’s own body, as in several product lines of the American hair product company Herbal Essences, the names of which are FI utterances “spoken” by the consumer’s hair. One series of products is called “*Tousle Me Softly*”, “tousle” being the act of rustling up

one's hair using one's fingers. The addresser is thus the hair and the addressee the hair's owner, the consumer. Other product lines are "*Color Me Vibrant*" and "*Honey, I'm Strong*" (shampoo and conditioner containing honey, so the form of address has a double meaning).

5. The *Say X to Y* subscript: Directives embedding FI conversations

The FI communicative strategy disposes over any culturally available styles and pragmatic scripts with a fixed turn-taking structure. An example of a subscript frequently employed in argumentation discourse is the *Say yes/no to [addressee]* construction, where taking a stand and deciding for or against something is framed in terms of being implicitly propositioned and responding to the offer with a yes/no answer, as in "*Say No to Wrinkles!*" (Wall Street Botox NYC), which is also the title of a book and appears as the headline of a number of different products worldwide. Here, and in similar examples, having one's appearance artificially altered is framed in conversational terms ("Say No [to...]"), as a turn in an imagined verbal interaction, coming to *stand for* something that does not in itself involve speaking. An ad for the anti-smoking organization Say-No Org reads: "Smoking kills more than 5 million every year. *Say no to the deadliest weapon of mass destruction*" – restating the anti-smoking message also communicated by the very name of the organization. The approach is reminiscent of Nancy Reagan's *Just Say No* anti-drug campaign, where youths were encouraged to actually say no when offered drugs, as well as to take a negative stance toward drugs in general. Similarly, a Dutch advertisement for Chocomel (a beverage) addresses the viewer with "You try to say no to this" (our translation). The challenge,

to refuse consumption, is to resist the irresistible. As with the “Just Say No anti-drug” campaign, saying no can be interpreted both as literally refusing any offers (in actual interactions) and as making a permanent choice for oneself (not involving any actual verbal interaction).

The Say-no construction is widely used in advertisement campaigns (“Say no” to fur/anorexia/piracy/violence/homophobia/bullying...). This is one of several variations on the same subscript, which also permits other utterances in the direct object slot, each activating a different variation of the conversational subscript, as in this ad for nail polish: “*SAY HELLO to Shellac*” (CND). The construction prompts two different acts of verbal communication, one embedded in the other. In the matrix frame, the addresser in the overall communication is the advertiser (the sender of the message), and the addressee the prospective buyer, consumer, or audience (the recipient). This addresser is the enunciator, which is comparable to the earlier “Tell hunger to mess with someone its own size”⁴ example (cf. Sullivan, this volume). The communicative function of this verbal act is *conative* (Jakobson 1960); it is oriented toward an addressee to be engaged. Embedded in the matrix frame is the proposed “conversation” in which the addressee in the matrix frame becomes an addresser fictively engaging someone (or something) by saying yes/no/hello/(good)bye. The addressee at the matrix level is thus explicitly urged to become the addresser in a new, fictive conversation evoked and structured by the script. The embedded “conversation” is characterized by an utterance that is typically, if not always, *phatic*, e.g. in the form of a greeting or some other form of address whose meaning depends on the conversation

⁴ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BZtXTj0jZDM>

itself (i.e. its use has a social function). The fictive conversation evoked is a metaphor for some action to be taken on the part of the audience of the advertisement (the speaker of *no*, *hello*, etc. in the embedded script), and the overall function of the communicative act expressed by the *Say X to Y* construction is thus conative; the argumentative-appellative discourse (Arcand and Bourbeau 1995, p. 28) aims to convince the audience to do something, to act.

Note that the addressee (e.g. wrinkles, anorexia, nail polish) in the fictive interaction set up by the *Say X to [addressee]* construction is not assumed to be a realistic interactant, but rather something toward which the receiver of the message is urged to adopt a particular attitude and course of action. The branding of Si Giorgio Armani Eau de Parfum for women is a case in point. In this commercial, the woman who wears Si says “si” (‘yes’) “to Strength”, “to Dreams”, “to Freedom”, “to Love”, “to Myself”, “to Life!”— she is accepting of and celebrates these. Similarly, the woman who is encouraged by the “SAY HELLO to Shellac”, is not thereby expected to carry an actual conversation with make-up but to get acquainted with the product. A Dutch travel agency advertised safari trips to South Africa with a magazine ad that read (our translation) “SAY Hello! TO SOUTH AFRICA” (Leushuis 2015, p. 1, 8), featuring a picture of a man making eye contact and waving, thereby engaging in a fictive gestural interaction (see Figure 2). An act of greeting sets up a fictive face-to-face dialogue that signifies arriving in and visiting the advertised location.



Figure 2. ‘SAY Hello! TO SOUTH AFRICA’

(Sawadee, <http://www.zeghallotegenzuidafrika.nl/#/intro/>, 11 November 2014).

An advertising campaign for Clearasil anti-acne skin products showed images of wardrobe malfunctions (e.g. a shirt buttoned wrong) that may not have happened had the person depicted not been avoiding the mirror (because of the problematic acne, according to the narrative logic). At the bottom, the text says “*SAY HELLO TO YOUR MIRROR*”; if the advertised skin product is used, a person’s skin will clear up so that he is able to stand checking himself in the mirror. The act of beginning to use a mirror (the fictive addressee in the conversation frame) is conceptualized as saying *hello* – the beginning of a conversation.

Similarly, the Herbal Essences “*Hello Hydration*” collection has a slogan that, in addition to the name itself, is characterized by verbal fictive interaction. It sets up a fictive conversation in which the hair greets the product, stating as fact its hydrating powers. The slogan, by contrast, is spoken by the company and is directed at prospective consumers: “*Say YES, YES, YES to SCENTSUAL pleasure*” (the neologism

“scentsual” being a phonetic and semantic blend of the words *scent* and *sensual*). A conversation frame is evoked in which the consumer is urged to embrace the product by enthusiastically “saying yes” to it (note the exclamative iteration and use of capitals).

That the addressee in the fictive interaction set up by the *Say [X: yes/no/hello/goodbye...]* to [addressee] subscript is often a non-realistic interactant is evident from the examined data, as also illustrated in this sample:

- (1) a. Say goodbye to your glasses with the latest in laser technology
(Novius Eye Clinic)
- (2) b. goodbye cavities (Promise Toothpaste)
- c. ZEG HET MET EEN PRALINE: *NEE* TEGEN PESTEN, GAY BASHING, DISCRIMINATIE & SCHENDING VAN MENSENRECHTEN!
‘Say it with a praline: NO to bullying, gay bashing, discrimination & violation of human rights’ (chocolate-filled pieces of candy, for the occasion dubbed *NO pralines* (‘NEE’-pralines))
- d. SAY NO TO USELESS CURIOSITY / READ GALILEU (Galileu Magazine Brazil)
- e. Zeg ook vaker nee tegen te veel eten en te weinig bewegen.
‘Say no more often to overeating and too little exercise’ (SIRE (‘Stichting Ideele Reclame’) multimedia campaign against childhood obesity called “ZEG VAKER NEE” *‘Say no more often’*)

Presenting multiple turns may not be possible specifically in the case of the *Say X* construction, since the enunciator is the actual sender of the message (in the matrix conversation frame), but in the embedded (non-actual) conversational frame,

multiple utterances are possible (within the same turn), as previously witnessed (e.g. in the Si perfume example above). Other attested examples of FI metonymy in advertising with more than one utterance include:

- (2) a. Say goodbye to Middle tones / Say 'I do' to a Kodak All-In-One printer [...](Kodak)
- b. Hello wireless music. Goodbye wires. Hello R0KR Z6 music phone. Say hello to a new way of listening. Hello Moto. (Motorola phone)
- c. GOODBYE 3AM GREASE FEST / HELLO SUNDAY MORNING
HelloSundayMorning.org against excessive drinking: Change your relationship with alcohol (HelloSundayMorning.org)
- d. Vaarwel echtgenote. Hallo midlife crisis.
'Goodbye wife. Hello midlife crisis' (TV show *Californication*)

In the last example it is noticeably not the addressee in the matrix communication that is urged to utter the phatic *goodbye* and *hello*; the utterances are attributed to the protagonist on the advertised TV show to (metaphorically) describe the premise of the show (the end of his marriage, the beginning of renewed bachelorhood).

6. Intra-sentential fictive interaction in marketing

Just as a few of the FI examples we have examined so far, at the intra-sentential level, the conversation frame may be prompted by more than one conversational turn. Consider this American real estate ad, which embeds several turn-taking events (Pascual 2002, p. 264; Pascual and Sandler, this volume):

- (3) Presenting the *love-the-location, what-a-view, perfectly-priced, you-better-hurry* home.

The prospective buyer fictively says, upon viewing the property, “(I) love the location!” and exclaims “What a view!”, and the real estate agent brings to the buyer’s attention that the property is “perfectly priced” (not something a buyer would typically say) and advises the buyer “You better hurry!”.

In the following we present some typical uses of FI units at the intra-sentential level, and propose a rationale for their use in advertising. Consider this transcription of a Haagen-Dazs ice cream commercial⁵:

- (4) Ice cream vendor (A): Hola. ‘Hi.’
Customer (B): Hola. Quería un helado con sabor a... *hoy no quiero hablar con nadie*. ‘Hi. I’d like an ice cream with an... *I don’t wanna talk to anybody today* flavor’
A: ¿Mediano o grande? ‘Medium or large’
B: Grande. ‘Large’
[A hands ice cream to B]
B: Esto no es lo que te he pedido. ‘This is not what I ordered’
A: Ya. Es sabor a... *tienes una sonrisa muy bonita*.
‘I know. This has a... *you have a beautiful smile* flavor’

Two conversational turns are used here as intra-phrasal linguistic units. First, the customer at the ice cream stand classifies the desired flavor as an “I don’t wanna talk to anybody today” flavor, and, flirtatiously, the vendor instead hands her an ice

⁵ Video with Spanish dubbed dialogue at: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0QXEYAMGJZI>

cream with a flavor “inspired by” her (cf. the slogan): a “you have a beautiful smile” flavor. The first innovative flavor expresses the customer’s, and the second innovation embeds a discreet compliment: the addresser and addressee in the “conversation” set up correspond directly to the speakers in the (mercantile) matrix frame, though since the interactants in the embedded frame are construed generically, the vendor’s articulated appreciation (of the customer’s smile) is subtle and unobtrusive. The flavor, though inspired by her, could also be served to other ice cream enthusiasts. Thus, the slogan (“Flavors inspired by you”) becomes ambiguously addressed to the customer in general as well as “you” as an individual with individual moods, features and preferences (“flavor” in a metaphorical sense). The FI constituent does thus not directly express the benefits of the product (as in “*Hello Hydration*”), but rather, its creativity and context dependence speaks to the product’s originality and customer friendliness. Similar uses of FI used to can be found in product names and brands such as “*Hey Dude Skin Care*”, “*Hey Honey Body Care*”, and “*GO SMiLE Body Care*”.

When, as in these examples, the conversational turn occurs as an intra-phrasal linguistic unit in a *nominal* phrase, there are two possible syntactical uses in English: the FI unit modifying the nominal head (determiner + *premodifier* + head) can function as a nominal classifier or as an adjectival descriptor. Exemplifying the latter is this inscription printed on a bottle of Aussie Frizz Miracle Shampoo: “for flyaway, frizzy, *‘please sit still’* hair”, which features an adjectival use of a fictive command. The FI, ambiguously ascribed to either the user of the product or the bottle of shampoo itself, addressing the unruly hair, means something like “unruly” and occurs in a list of adjectives equally describing the head noun.

Exemplifying the nominal classifier use, by contrast, is the international 2005 Microsoft Office “New Era” advertising campaign, which captures complex situations in very few words by using emblematic utterances to signify types of situations that implementation of the product (software) is alleged to alleviate or prevent: “The *WE’RE ALL ON A DIFFERENT PAGE / OOPS I HIT REPLY ALL / I’M OUT OF THE OFFICE AND OUT OF THE LOOP / I CAN’T DEAL WITH ALL THIS DATA* era is over”. These different fictive enunciations evoke all-too-familiar work scenarios, and, in combination with metaphorical imagery to ease comprehension (the soon-to-be-obsoliteness of the “era” is emphasized by the depicted office scenarios being populated by dinosaur-headed people), efficiently communicate the intended message.

Consider now the following examples from Danish (5a) and Dutch (5b, c), where the FI unit clearly functions as a classifier in a nominal compound, joined to the head by a hyphen, indicating that they together constitute one noun:

- (5)
- a. Kom-i-gang-lånet
‘The *Get-started-loan*’ (Danish Skjern Bank)
 - b. DE ZULLEN-WE-HET-TOETJE-ANDERS-BUITEN-ETEN-PLAID
‘The *shall-we-have-the-dessert-outside-blanket*’ (IKEA, Netherlands)
 - c. De Ik-begin-het-jaar-extra-gezond-rijst
‘The *I-start-off-the-year-extra-healthy-rice*’
(Lassie rice campaign, <http://www.epidemie.com/nieuws/Lassie-DeIkbeginhetjaarextragezondrijst/>)

Lassie-DeIkbeginhetjaarextragezondrijst/)

In (5a), the fictive command “Get-started”, specifying a type of loan, is ascribed to the bank, addressing a (generic) loan-taker.⁶ In (5b), “*shall-we-have-the-dessert-outside?*” specifies a suggested use for the product (on the part of the matrix enunciator) by evoking a conversation frame in which a generic speaker invites someone to engage in an activity involving the product. Example (5c), which belongs to a series of ads for rice, using FI compounds, presents a hypothetical positive motivation to use the product, as a new year’s resolution (“*I-start-off-the-year-extra-healthy*”) on the part of the addressee who thus becomes the fictive addresser in the embedded conversation frame. Functioning as classifying modifiers in the product names, these FI constituents hence designate a *kind* of loan, blanket, or rice. Made up of utterances, the material of the modifiers is conversational turns rather than nouns, each FI unit fulfilling a syntactical slot that would otherwise be realized by a (premodifying) noun phrase with a head noun in the singular or plural or in the genitive (a classifying genitive).

We will now look at the rhetorics and some of the ways in which this type of FI compound can be utilized strategically as a persuasive means to advertise vastly different products and services. In a free airline magazine, a printed ad for Amsterdam Schiphol Airport presents different tours meant to help travelers pass the time while transferring planes or waiting for a delayed flight, which are named: “The *I-Love-Holland-Tour*”, “The *I-Want-To-Shop-Shop-Shop-Tour*”, “The *I-Love-Art-Tour*”, and “The *Let-Me-Totally-Relax-Tour*”. In the enunciation of each nominal modifier, the viewpoint shifts from an editorial viewpoint (cf. Brandt 2013, pp. 64–65) to the viewpoint of the targeted customer, whose first person enunciation (*me, I*) is embedded as a con-

⁶ This example is similar to the name of a product advertised by the wireless internet company CLEAR: “CLEAR *take-it-with-you* internet”.

versational turn in a fictive conversation. The addressee of the ad is thus invited to find the tour most suited to their personal preferences by speaking the utterances declaring their inclination. However, the utterances do more than merely *declare*. There is a noticeable expressive aspect to the statements. The FI modifier in the compound “The *Let-Me-Totally-Relax-Tour*” for instance, is an imperative sentence designed as a plea and an expression of the person’s psychological mood, further accentuated by the use of the adverb “totally”. Similarly, the hypothetical speaker of the utterance in “The *I-Want-To-Shop-Shop-Shop-Tour*” expresses agitation and excitement. The expressive aspect of FI is in fact a recurrent characteristic – not just of FI compounds but other FI phenomena as well – and one of the motivations for choosing fictive interaction over straightforward nomenclature or description, not least because it can serve many different desirable ends (Pascual et al. 2013). Expressing a favorable reaction to a product, or a psychological state motivating a purchase, are only two of several possibilities. One of these is the capacity of such utterances to elicit a vivid experience of a culturally entrenched frame evoked by the utterance itself, by virtue of its ‘contextual collocation’. The branding strategy of Ushuaia Ibiza Beach Hotel (a luxury hotel in Spain) is an example of the evocation, by FI compounds, of culturally entrenched scripts to elicit specific mental imagery as part of a scheme to make the product attractive. The hotel, describing itself as the “unexpected” hotel, brands itself as “THE *YOUR ROOM OR MINE* HOTEL” or “THE *DO YOU BELIEVE IN MAGIC* HOTEL”. These FI names serve both to name the product (including suite names) and appear as featured copy in advertisements showing pictures of the hotel décor (e.g. “THE *ANYTHING CAN HAPPEN* SUITE”, “THE *SIZE DOES MATTER* SUITE”). Most of the conversational turns in the nominal compound inventions more unequivocally

cally have the patron as speaker (e.g. “THE *I’M ON TOP OF THE WORLD* SUITE”, “THE *AY CARAMBA*⁷ SUITE”, “THE *OH MY GOD* SUITE”). The addresser in these staged verbal interactions is typically the hotel guest. The evocative utterances are often highly expressive by design. The FI modifiers are prosodically marked; for instance, *I’M ON TOP OF THE WORLD* is to be shouted triumphantly. The hotel restaurant, a steakhouse, is named “THE *CHECK OUT THE SIZE OF THAT...STEAK HOTEL*”. As can be surmised, ambiguity is a pronounced aspect of the signification and sexual innuendo a prominent aspect of the hotel’s aimed-for image (a party hotel, no children allowed).

In the world of selling insurance, the embedded utterances of FI compounds tend to signify prospective new customers’ motivation for acquiring the advertised products. This is not specific to insurance, per se, but is noticeable as a tendency for companies that offer a range of similar products (e.g. a variety of plans) to choose from. This was the case, for instance, in the Spanish Gas Natural Fenosa’s 2010 campaign, featuring newspaper ads and TV commercials advertising products called (our translation) “The *I get all in one* plan” (lit. ‘Plan *I get all in one*’) and “The *I no longer have to worry* plan” (lit. “Plan *I no longer have to worry*”)⁸: “I get all in one” is proposed as a customer’s reason to pick that plan. A campaign for the Dutch health insurance company Menzis included print ads, online tests and interactive PR in public spaces. The strategy of the Menzis campaign was to get the addressee involved in

⁷ The Spanish exclamation “¡Ay, caramba!” is used to express (positive) surprise.

⁸ <http://youtu.be/pIVkyI-8Xjw> ; http://youtu.be/eeIIR_woZ8.

deciding what kind of person ('menz'⁹) they might be, given certain choices. One of the options was "The *I'm just not yet ready for it* person" ("de daar ben ik nog niet aan toe menz" in the original). The Dutch linguistic unit "daar ben ik nog niet aan toe" (lit. 'I'm just not yet ready for it') is a standard phrase to express not yet feeling prepared to have children. This was thus a discreet way to communicate that this basic insurance plan includes birth control.

Direct speech compounds like these invite identification and also provide fitting names for concepts that are new and difficult to pin down or describe (Pascual et al. 2013). These are some of the factors that make them particularly effective in the branding of companies and products. Consider also the examples below, defining different insurance plans in a series of advertisements for a US medical insurance provider (Pascual 2014, p. 71):

- (6) The AXA *'I want to retire from work not life'* plan
 The AXA *'I might be off work for a little while'* plan
 The AXA *'I wish my hard drive could be on the golf course'* plan
 The AXA *'I'm glad I won't have to wait months to see a specialist'* plan
 The AXA *'I want to be in control of my finances'* plan

These compounds are not only attention-gripping, they also provide informative names for insurance plans aimed at different demographic segments of the population. By speaking in the voices of representatives of the various segments, in each of the constructed non-genuine conversational turns, the advertisers manage to present

⁹ 'Menz' is a neologist composite of the Dutch *mens* ('person') and *zorg* ('care'), and Menzis (the advertised insurance company).

the range of possible incentives for signing up for each of the plans provided. This quasi-ventriloquial trick makes readers, including but not limited to future clients, inadvertent participants in a fictive, or hypothetical, scenario where they enact a speaker role, and possibly even the role of a satisfied customer. Parsimony is not the goal in this kind of rhetorical advertising strategy. AXA could conceivably simply call their “*I want to retire from work not life*’ plan” a “retirement plan”, but these two respective sequences of words are not equivalent and betoken different communicative strategies. The FI strategy inconspicuously coaxes addressees into asking themselves if they can relate to the FI utterance and the context it conjures up. The perhaps most important aspect of the use of FI in advertising is the propensity for *evoking a scenario* in which one can perhaps picture oneself as a participant (cf. Pascual et al. 2013).

A particularly notable example of how intra-sentential fictive interaction can be engaged creatively in advertising is Ogilvy’s 2013 interactive advertising campaign for Marabou chocolate in Denmark and abroad (see Figure 3). In an effort to rebrand Marabou chocolate, Ogilvy designed a comprehensive campaign, involving added labels on individual chocolate bars with orthographically hyphenated compounds consisting of an FI utterance in capital letters and the word ‘chocolate’:



Figure 3. Marabou chocolate ads (http://adsoftheworld.com/media/ambient/marabou_milk_chocolate_the_chocolate_bar_with_6000_excuses)

Ogilvy came up with a large number of different editions, each with its own expressive utterance modifying the word *chocolate*, and furthermore, on behalf of Marabou, encouraged consumers to come up with their own novel compounds. These appeared on billboard advertisements in public, in blogs and other social media, and in stores customers were able to print out labels with their own inventions. On Facebook, Marabou launched a contest inviting consumers to come up with their own fictive utterances, each evoking a whole conversational scenario as context for buying the chocolate. Many people participated, and winners were awarded a chocolate prize. The names of chocolate bars sold in the stores would either indicate some reason or purpose (e.g. our translations: “*THE-FLOWER-SHOP-WAS-CLOSED* chocolate”, “*IT LEAPED INTO MY GROCERY CART!* chocolate”) or provide an excuse, or justification, for why it is okay to indulge (e.g. “*I-DID-EAT-MY-BROCCOLI* chocolate”, “*IT-WILL-GROW-OUT-AGAIN* chocolate”, “*JUST-BECAUSE!* chocolate”). Both the scenario, the product itself, and the generically represented speaker would thus, in effect,

be classified by their one typical fictive utterance. By engagement in a storytelling kind of creativity, the audience was invited into an as-if state of mind, and by exposing weaknesses people tend to have, or comical interpersonal situations, humor came to play a key role in the mental enactment of the pretend interaction. The scenarios evoked by the FI modifiers would not necessarily provide relevant and sufficient motivation for buying the product (by contrast to the AXA insurance examples); oftentimes they would just be suggestions or humorous scenarios posed tongue-in-cheek for the fun of imagining – imagining, for instance, bringing someone the chocolate as a peace-offering as in the case of “*I-DIDN’T-KNOW-IT-WAS-YOUR-CAT*”-chocolate – an utterance evoking an unlikely and hopefully very rare conversational context. In many cases, the name of the chocolate would indirectly indicate what the chocolate was for; there would thus be a teleological relation between the premodifier and the head in the noun phrase. “The *KEEP-QUIET-IN-THE-BACKSEAT* chocolate”, for instance, prompts a culturally engrained scenario of a family driving together in the car, and parents bribing their children to be quiet or pacifying them with candy.

The fundamental premises on which Ogilvy based the design of the concept are the culturally well-attested facts that people often use chocolate as a way of communicating with each other (Get well soon, Thank you, Congratulations, etc.) and that consumers are always looking for an excuse to justify buying chocolate.¹⁰ Each individual name conjures up a meaningful context for the chocolate: as indulgence, as a present, as a token of appreciation, as an incentive; it provides a local frame of understanding within which the chocolate *means* something. The strategy thus casts the

¹⁰ Ogilvy Denmark explains this concept in this English-speaking video: <http://www.creamglobal.com/case-studies/latest/17798/34198/the-chocolate-with-6,000-names/>

product as a narrative object in some form of semiotic exchange: as compensation for giving someone a bad haircut, for example, or for causing them grief (e.g. the ominous example with the cat), or as bribery or appeasement (e.g. “*Honey, this REALLY is an important game-chocolate*”). By embedding an act of enunciation in the name of the product that metonymically¹¹ (by *synecdoche*) denotes a conversation frame, each bar of chocolate becoming part of an imagined *narrative*.

This may help explain the alleged success of the campaign as a whole. Ogilvy (Copenhagen) and Marabou consumers together generated more than 6000 new names, and Marabou enjoyed a reported 24% increase in sales within one month. The reason the campaign managed to generate this kind of attention and bottom line profit would seem to be that consumers enjoyed participating in the playful activity of coming up with FI names. The concept was designed in such a way that, to actual and potential consumers of Marabou chocolate, inventing names with direct speech triggers became a *game*.

7. Fictive interaction and theatricality as linguistic strategy

Goffman (1974) pointed out two factors of relevance to the interpretation of this sort of phenomenon that relies on the use of direct speech. One is the *evocative* power of direct speech: the utterances, Goffman wrote, evoke the “frame” at hand, that is, evoke the definition of the situation, answering the question ‘What is it that is going on here?’ (ibid., pp. 1, 8). The other – related – factor is the aspect of “theatricality”.

¹¹ Cf. Pascual 2002, 2014; Brandt 2008, 2010, 2013.

Without the connective signal (e.g. “she said...”), i.e. the explicit bracket or initiator of the frame (in direct speech the reporting clause may be omitted altogether), the result of using direct speech is more *theatricality*.¹² The “altered expressive accompaniment” (Goffman 1974, p. 537) is a means for the theatricality to “stir” the addressee (p. 503), as the speaker projects “a figure not himself who is speaking” (p. 537). Direct speech, Goffman argues, in fact allows for heightened *mimicry*. Our FI phenomena of course do not display instances of actual quotation, and, we might add, may not even appear as grammatical embeddings (as when speech is ascribed to inanimate commercial objects), but the heightened allowance for mimicry may be considered a factor here as well.

Scollo (2007), inspired by Goffman’s pivotal idea of our commonplace communicative engagement in “giving shows” and based on her research on “mass media appropriations” (arguably a subgenre of the FI phenomenon), concludes that:

“Everyday talk [seems] to be peppered with theater-like shows, reported speech and impersonations, dramatizations and reenactments. And framing and metacommunication seem a central way in which these shifts and replayings in communication are accomplished.”

¹² As concerns the performance of the linguistic direct speech unit in prosodic realization, McGregor (1994) connects the *evocative* power of direct speech to the aspect of theatricality. See also P. Aa. Brandt on *theatricality* in Brandt (2004), and L. Brandt (2013, p. 156) on *dramatization* and *dramatized enunciation*. Indeed, in oral fictive interaction, a prosodic signal likewise typically occurs (Rocha and Arantes, this volume), even if the verbal signal (a verbal frame like “she said...”) is entirely absent.

Understanding the *theatrical* aspect of fictive interaction enlightens us on the persuasive quality of FI in argumentational discourse, and contributes to a bigger perspective on the *conversation frame*.¹³

8. Concluding remarks

The conversation frame is, as demonstrated, of central significance to imagined dialogue in discourse for the specific purpose of promoting a particular agenda or commercial product.

Brevity is evidently not the main priority of FI as a communicative strategy, if what we go by is a syllable count. However, when considering that, with just one utterance, an entire complex scenario can be evoked, and the speaker's own evaluation hereof conveyed, succinctness could nevertheless be argued to be employed, to the speaker's, e.g. the advertiser's, advantage. The chosen rhetorical solution is in fact brief and concise, given the high information load (cf. Pascual et al. 2013; Królak, this volume).

What is remarkable about the employment of imagined enunciations ascribed to animals, plants, or objects, the *Say X to Y* subscript, and intra-sentential FI in advertising, is that we willingly engage in these feats of imagination in our communication without feeling that we are, for that reason, playing around. These imaginative ways of framing things are in fact serious business. They are not fiction for fiction's sake, but a means to a communicative end (cf. Xiang, this volume). FI phenomena are yet

¹³ See also Sandler (this volume) on the “performative or dramatic aspect” of dialogue as such.

another example of “the crucial role of *imaginative* capacities” (Langacker 2001, p. 7), demonstrating the conceptual basis of linguistic meaning. As the last 35+ years of research in cognitive linguistics have shown, natural language use does not aspire to a maximum of “objectivity” or “factuality” (as historically assumed by some philosophers of language). To a great extent, in fact, language, in its actual use, relies on “the evocation of myriad entities of a *fictive* nature” (ibid.). As a linguistic and rhetorical resource, FI also exemplifies “constructions that are not intended to serve in direct matchups with the real world but can nevertheless yield important real-world inferences” (Fauconnier 1997, p. 69). Furthermore, the last 15 years of research on FI phenomena have refuted initial objections that fictive interaction constructions might be a peculiar feature of contemporary American casual spoken language, driving home the point that it occurs in modern and ancient written language as well, that it occurs cross-linguistically, and that it appears in decidedly non-casual language such as juridical discourse and in the rhetoric of marketing.

That FI is implemented in the costly, carefully planned communicative strategies of high-stakes enterprises like advertising campaigns and branding attest to its estimated effectiveness in communication and accentuates the point that *theatricality*, thus employed, can stir an audience, and possibly move them to the perlocutionary act of buying a product, donating to charity, or adopting a particular behavior. To sum up, it is evident that FI can be a compelling component in persuasive strategies, not least in the rhetoric of advertising and branding.

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