

NAMES OF FOOD PRODUCTS IN ROMANIA IN THE CONTEXT OF GLOBALISATION

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Abstract

While proposing a semantic and grammatical analysis of names of food products, my paper aims at underlining the discursive functionality of this onomastic category (i.e. what and how this variety of trade names communicates). The illustrative material is discussed from a psycho- and sociolinguistic perspective, in the context of globalisation and the effects it has on contemporary Romanian public space. Names of food products in this country are indicative of this aspect, as they are defined by the intercultural and interlinguistic contacts that have occurred in Romanian public space with the 1990s onwards.

Keywords: globalisation, product names, public space, psycholinguistics, sociolinguistics

1. Introduction

The present paper deals with names of food products as indicators of the process of negotiation between spheres of meaning and identity, which occurs at the level of Romanian public space as a macro-discursive context that developed a variety of facets after 1989, when the communist regime was suppressed. The approach adopted starts from a lexical and grammatical overview of product names, and draws chiefly on semiotics (names of products are considered as iconic, indexical and symbolic signs) (Smith 2006: 19) and on pragmatics (relating to the referential intentionality underlying name-giving of products and the factors that it depends on) (Kleiber 1981 *ap.* Miron-Fulea 2005: 42-43; Coates 2006: 30).

The framework within which this onomastic sub-class (names of food products < product names < commercial names) is analysed pertains to psycho- and sociolinguistics, as the point on this occasion is to delineate and describe how these designations function in use (what is the psychological behaviour that name givers rely on when choosing a name in this field) and what they tell about the society in which they exist. To this end, of the ever-increasing variety of food products (and of corresponding name groups implicitly), the current article consists in sweets and their designations, aiming at offering a bird's-eye view of the onomastic behaviour of this segment of public space. Examples were selected predominantly from specialised websites like *Algida* (http://www.iubesteinghetata.ro/ro_ro/products/napoca/default.aspx), *Heidi Chocolate* (<http://heidi-chocolate.com/ro/>), *Kandia Dulce* (<http://www.kandia-dulce.ro>), *Mondēlez International* (<http://www.mondelezinternational.com/ro/ro/Brands/largest-brands/index.aspx>), *Romdil* (<http://www.romdil.ro>).

2. Names of food products in context and in co-text

2.1. Public space “at a crossroads”

Socio-culturally, names of products exist and function in public space; in their capacity as commercial designations, product names are markers of society's evolution, of the changes that it is subject to at a given (more or less extended) time span, usually on several

planes, since the dimensions of society are interdependent, interrelated causally (e.g. the transformations in the field of IT that have occurred since the mid-20th century, which have affected notably, essentially activities in domains like economics, mass media, technology, and medicine, to name just a few).

In agreement with Stănescu (2012: 39, orig. Romanian, my translation), public space “implies exchanges of ideas, communication, participation, involvement, and raising awareness [...] for common wellbeing”; therefore, “public space is a plurality of micro-spaces, a mosaic of components, which is defined by confluences, intersections and expansions, positions, attachments and dismissals, pressures, collisions and conflicts of interest.” In other words, public space outlines the common ground between the general and the particular, between the popular and the individual, as it results from the consensus of the members of a community, while it is also influenced by values and customs that derive from private spheres, co-existing by virtue of the relation identity-otherness (i.e. relating to one’s other in order to sort out the parameters of his/her self). Consequently, public space is formed from negotiations of meanings, which occur both “by storm” and “by stealth” (cf. Ryan 2004: 218), that is, both explicitly, overtly, “in the foreground of discussion”, and implicitly (truly noticeable only in diachrony, after events unfold), in an undeclared manner, “in the background of discussion. Of the two forms of negotiation, however, negotiation by stealth is the most important, for while negotiation by storm is an occasional process, negotiation by stealth is a continual one, and accordingly provides the greatest negotiating power. (Indeed negotiation by storm occurs only when negotiation by stealth breaks down.)” (Ryan 2004: 218). (For instance, when intentions behind a speaker’s utterances are misunderstood by the listener, and they are clarified, or when commercial names appear unmotivated, opaque to language users, and they are shed light upon by advertisements and slogans that point to the associations that these names are meant to convey).

As regards contemporary Romanian public space, the process that has sparked off significant meaning negotiations is globalisation, the first seeds of which were planted in Romanian mentality along with the airing, during the communist regime, of *Dallas*, a famous American soap opera (although the purpose of its broadcasting was to highlight the decadent lifestyle encouraged in/by capitalist societies). From the 1990s onwards (namely after the fall of the regime), Romanianness visibly lost its firmness and became a potpourri of features appropriated from distinctive models. Of these, the American one exerted the most generous influence socio-culturally and linguistically, as most Romanians link it to positive values like advancement, freedom of expression (and other liberties), fairness, equality, and, last but not least, flexibility (Blommaert 2011: 5), all of which are said to be core aspects of the global community. According to Blommaert (2012: 5), “We believe we observe globalization processes whenever we encounter ‘English’ in various parts of the world. We do indeed encounter globalization, because what we see is *en-globalized forms*, semiotic forms (such as the gaming codes) that were at some level prepared to go global, so to speak. But when we look at their actual deployment, we can see them only through the actual phenomenology of *de-globalization*”, which can be defined both as the adaptation of globalisation elements and policies to communities that are geographically and socio-politically localised, and as the tendency to turn to values treasured locally for their alleged higher degree of idiosyncrasy.

By definition, any talk about globalisation is a talk about negotiated meanings, due to the interlinguistic and intercultural contacts that it gives way to. The negotiation crops up along the lines of the pairs of variables that have already been introduced: common-particular, other-individual, global-local, and (to different extents) within all the fields of contemporary Romanian public space, such as economy, technology, politics, social studies, language, or commerce. All of these have passed through subsequent changes in the post-Revolutionary period, and especially along with the second half of the 1990s that brought about the actual boom of assimilation of Western culture and of English as its lingua franca (i.e. the Westernisation of society in the wide sense). Onomastics is one of the domains that clearly mirror these changes, both in its traditional sectors (especially in anthroponymy, if one thinks about the numerous trends that can be traced in the choice of forenames), and in its unconventional ones. It is in the context of this latter situation that the present paper deals with product names (viz. designations of food products, as a sub-division of the more comprehensive class of commercial names), in order to illustrate the influence of globalisation-related processes on contemporary Romanian public space linguistically- and culturally-wise.

2.2. A multi-dimensional and multi-disciplinary characterisation of names of sweets

Without aiming at an exhaustive presentation of names of food products, the present paper deals with names of sweets (confections like chocolate, ice cream, candy, toffee, wafers, biscuits, etc.), as this is one of the sectors of Romanian public space that recorded the most conspicuous variegation due to the diffusion in the local market of international companies that opened subsidiaries in Romania, sometimes encompassing their local correspondents in the field, which were unable to cope with competitiveness and economic pressure (atypical of Romania prior to 1989). Confections also developed on sociological-marketing grounds: in the capitalist society that Romania has strived to become (following the American model imposed by globalisation), children can be considered as a distinct target group of consumers (which is not to say that sweets are meant for children alone). Advances in the domain of mass media – i.e. its becoming more age-group oriented, and its availability in different formats and by different means – contributed largely to this situation.

The type of semiotic and pragmatic behaviour underlying negotiation mechanisms can also be observed on assessing the evolution and diversification of the system of onomastics, which in view of the aforementioned developed (enriched and generated) less lexically, semantically and discursively specific categories, which could therefore be referred to as *border names*: e.g., user names, chat names, nicknames, pseudonyms, company names, firm names, brand names, and product names (sweets names, respectively).

2.2.1. From the perspective of onomastic theory, one could consider names of food products as *chrematonyms*, a “catch-all category” that comprises names of commercial, administrative, economic, and cultural institutions, as well as the objects or services that they offer (Rzetelska-Feleszko 2008: 595). Similarly, names of food products are *pragmatonyms* (Kryukova 2008: 397), names of things or commodities that often fall under the scope of trademark laws. Names of this kind “denote the objects subjected to advertising”, and in their case, “the probable impact on the addressee is taken into account at the stage of invention.

Third, they denote an individual object's symbol, which comprises verbal as well as non-verbal components" (Kryukova 2008: 397), pictures, signs, logos, and slogans, all of which contribute to the establishment of the product and its name within a target community (local, national, international). Thus, it is capital that product names be interpreted beyond their linguistic structure, in the light of their economic and advertising potential and intended effects. A product name is an *econym* (Brandl 2007: 88, cf. Christoph Platen, 1997, "Ökonymie": *Zur Produktnamen – Linguistik im Europäischen Binnenmarkt*, Tübingen: Niemeyer), a "special agent with clearly delineated tasks that depend on a multitude of factors mainly defined by its field of application and the underlying marketing and communication strategies" (Brandl 2007: 88).

2.2.2. Onomastic varieties that tend to behave unconventionally (*border names*) share an often arguable proprial status. Nevertheless, product designations (those of food products, or sweets, as far as this study is concerned) function as proper names, not necessarily as regards lexical construction and potential grammatical function (contextually, not in isolation) – since many names have a multifarious appellative basis, but in relation to language use. However, in time, due to repeated use within a community, some names of products gain recognition even on the level of language as a system. As Van Langendonck (2007b: 25-26) puts it, "[...] proper names denote a unique entity not only on the level of language use (discourse), [...] but also on the level of 'established linguistic convention' [...]. In other words, a proper name is a conventional linguistic unit, more or less 'entrenched' in the speech community as denoting a unique entity" (likewise Van Langendonck 2007a: 6-7).

Lexically and grammatically, names of sweets can derive from

(1) One word structures and compound names, consisting of

a) proper names (Romanian or international):

- anthroponyms: given names (full forms, mostly female: *Eugenia*, *Heidi*, *Laura*, *Silvana*) and hypocoristic forms (*Dănuț*; *Sugus* < Gus, the chameleon painted on the package in which the toffees are sold, but this name can also be linked to Rom. vb. *a suge* 'to suck', hence relating to a physical characteristic of the product; *Pippo* < It. *Filippo*; *Tess*);

- place names: continents (*Africana* < Africa), states (*Americana* < the U.S.A.), cities/towns (*Poiana* < Poiana Brașov, a ski resort in Brașov County, Romania), historical regions (*Kandia* < the Kingdom of Candia, the official name of Crete when the island was a Venetian colony; *Napoca* < ancient settlement from which the Romanian city of Cluj-Napoca developed), mountains (*Făgăraș* < a group of mountains in the Southern Carpathians, in Romania), and caves (*Scărișoara* < one of the biggest ice caves in the Apuseni Mountains, in Transylvania, Romania);

- cultural names from literature (*Scufița Roșie* 'Little Red Riding Hood') or commerce (other brands: *Petit Beurre*).

b) common nouns (most of which clearly point to containers in which confections are packed, and this is why they tend to not be perceived as proper names): *Cornet* (Rom., 'ice-cream cone'), *Dejavu* (< Fr. *déjà vu*, 'a feeling of having already experienced a situation'), *Desert* (Rom., 'dessert'), *Gemenii* (Rom., 'the twins'), *Joy* (and *Joy Lux*, Eng. + Rom.), *Leone* (It., 'lion'), *Măgura* (Rom., 'hill'), *Mousse* (< Fr. or Eng.), *Pahar* (Rom., 'glass' [here 'cup']), *Panda* (Rom., 'panda bear'), *Picnic* (Rom., 'picnic'), *Puf* (Rom., 'puff'), *ROM* (Rom., 'rum',

also sending to the name of the country, *Romania*), *Truffle* (Eng.), *Vafă* (Rom., ‘wafer’), *Vis* (Rom., ‘dream’);

c) adjectives: *First* (Eng.), *Majestic* (Eng.), *Șugubăț* (Rom., ‘facetious’), *Unica* (Rom., ‘the one and only’, from *unic* with feminine enclitic article *-a*);

d) adverbs: *Val Vârtej* (< Rom. *valvârtej* ‘tempestuously, flamingly’);

e) interjections: *WOW* (Eng.);

f) nonce formations (based either on sound or form associations, or on clusters resulting from truncation): *Anidor* (meant to sound French due to its ending, *-dor* < *d’or* ‘made of gold’, perhaps in relation to Swiss or Belgian chocolate, famous worldwide), *Cocobis* (Rom., *cocos* ‘coconut’ + *biscuiți* ‘biscuits’), *Cremita* (< Eng. *cream*, made to sound Spanish through its ending, *-ita*, a diminutive suffix), *Joypop* (Eng., < *joy* + *lollipop*), *Kand’or* (belongs to the same brand as *Anidor*, combining the name of the brand, *Kandia*, with Fr. *d’or*), *Prens* (intending to sound English and relating to *Prince*, a famous similar brand of sandwich biscuits), *Primola* (based perhaps on *Primula*, the Latin name of the English noun *primrose*, but there is no indication in this respect).

(2) Complex constructions (phrases and sentences). Although one can easily notice the tendency to give short, one word names to sweets (for the plain reason that such structures are effortlessly remembered by children, the main target-consumers of confections), there are cases of designations that derive from phrases or sentences for the sake of originality: *Poftă de...* (Rom., ‘craving for...’), *Mi-e gândul la...* (Rom., ‘I’m thinking about...’), followed by an appellative (e.g. *Poftă de... Ciocolată* ‘craving for... chocolate’) that functions as the description of the product, thereby identifying its sub-category.

According to Brandl (2007: 88), “Every name has a specific job profile. [...] Specific marketing strategies are correlated with the different job profiles of brand and product names: profiles such as umbrella brands, product brands, product group brands, taste varieties, packaging varieties and so on. At all levels within a brand hierarchy the strategy correlates with the message the brand is intended to convey. As a result, within the designation of one product, we typically find various levels of brands and brand names.” Based on the scheme Brandl (2007: 88) proposes for the identification of distinct levels in the hierarchy of brand designations, names of sweets in contemporary Romanian public space generally display the following stratification (which can be found with all brands that this paper takes into consideration – including *Romdil* and *Algida/Napoca* – not just the one that serves as an example on this occasion):

Table 1. *Name hierarchies comprising product designations and their subordinates, illustrated in relation to the brand Kandia Dulce (Rom., ‘Kandia sweet’)*

Product group	Product description	Variant (+ sub-variant)
<i>Kandia</i>	1. <i>Tabletă de ciocolată</i> (Rom., ‘chocolate tablet’) 2. <i>Praline</i> (Rom., ‘pralines’)	1.a <i>Cream & Biscuits</i> b. <i>Yoghurt & Sour Cherry</i> c. <i>75% Cocoa</i> etc. 2a. <i>Cu alune</i> (Rom., ‘with hazelnuts’) b. <i>Ambassador</i> (Rom., c.n., ‘ambassador’)
<i>Primola</i>	1. <i>Milk Chocolate</i>	1a. <i>Milk</i> b. <i>Cocoa & Cereals</i>

	2. <i>Dark Chocolate</i>	c. <i>Whipped cream</i> etc. 2a. <i>55% Cocoa</i> b. <i>Whipped Cream & Cocoa Cereals</i>
	3. <i>Pralines</i>	3a. <i>Assorted</i> b. <i>Cocoa & Cereals</i>
	4. <i>Primoline Pralines</i>	4a. <i>Assorted</i> b. <i>Whole Hazelnuts</i>
	5. <i>Papi</i>	5a. <i>Milk</i> b. <i>Strawberry</i>
	6. <i>Jaffa cake</i>	6a. <i>Orange</i> b. <i>Cherry</i>
	7. <i>Negresă</i> (Rom., ‘brownie’)	
	8. <i>American Cookies</i>	<i>Crispy Chocolate</i>
ROM	<i>Baton cu cremă de rom</i> (Rom., ‘chocolate bar with rum filling’)	a. <i>Autentic</i> (Rom., adj., ‘authentic’) b. <i>Biscuit</i> (Rom., c.n., ‘biscuit’) c. <i>cel Dublu</i> (Rom., m. art. + adj., ‘the double’) d. <i>cel Mare</i> (Rom., m. art. + adj., ‘the great’)
Făgăraș	<i>Stafide și rom</i> (Rom., [chocolate bar with] ‘raisins and rum’)	<i>cel Mare</i> (Rom., m. art. + adj., ‘the great’)
Sugus	1. <i>Bomboane gumate fructate</i> (Rom., ‘fruity soft candy’) 2. <i>JellyMania</i>	1a. <i>Tradițional</i> (Rom., ‘traditional’) b. <i>Exotic</i> 2a. <i>Viermișori</i> (Rom., diminutive form, ‘little worms’) b. <i>Ursuleți</i> (Rom., diminutive form, ‘little bears’) c. <i>Păianjeni</i> (Rom., ‘spiders’) d. <i>Cocktail de fructe</i> (Rom., ‘fruit cocktail’)

2.2.3. At this point in the analysis, two important observations need to be made:

- Firstly, it is not difficult to notice that name givers and brand designers tend to opt for short (usually one word) designations, derived from other proper names, appellative structures, or innovative (on the spot) constructions. Such choices are accounted for by cognitive arguments, i.e. names of this kind are easily remembered, because they provide customers with a broad enough range of associations, without making a given product too aloof (moreover, the product and its name are distinctive yet categorically frameable) (cf. Crutch and Warrington 2004: 592).

- Secondly, although Romanian public space is imbued with Anglicisms (on the level of language use and lexical enrichment) and Americanisms (on the level of conceptual representation), with some exceptions (e.g. *Joy*, *Majestic*, *Truffle*, *WOW*), names of product groups (and to some extent, names of product variants) seem to be able to keep away from this globalising trend, and steer toward French, German, Spanish, and Italian models (*Anidor*, *Kand’or*, *Pippo*, as well as *Heidi* and *Cremita*, international brands), simply because this field of products is not necessarily seen (in Europe, anyway) as one of the strongest points of this cultural background. Alongside names that claim their affiliation to the aforementioned languages, one also comes across Romanian names, which are rather numerous, contrary to what one may expect to find in a public space that, until not so very long ago (1989), was

forced to use Romanian alone in the naming of commercial objects/entities. Nevertheless, Romanian is used here for clarity and transparency (e.g. *Cornet, Desert, Pahar* etc.), for its connotations of tradition (*Eugenia*, which has developed into a common noun used to denote any oval sandwich biscuits with chocolate cream filling), or for tradition mixed with irony (*ROM*, associated with the ethnonym *rom* ‘a person of Rroma origin’). One could also mention here *Făgăraș cel Mare* (Rom., ‘Făgăraș the Great’), *Rom cel Dulce* (Rom., ‘Rom the Sweet’), *Rom cel Mare* (Rom., ‘Rom the Great’), ironically formed according to the Romanian pattern of names of rulers (given name + masculine article + adjective, e.g. *Mircea cel Bătrân* ‘Mircea the Old’, *Ștefan cel Mare* ‘Stephen the Great’), chosen for the associations with geographic and historical traditions, and for the innovative, humorous way of actually revealing that these are large size or particularly sweet varieties of the product.

What indeed appears in English (to an overwhelming extent) on packages of sweets is their descriptions and the name of (sub-)variants (Liuțe 2005: online). Most often one can see English used in this respect along with Romanian indicators of novelty (*Nou!* ‘new’, *Rețetă nouă!* ‘new recipe’ + *Primola* > *Milk Chocolate* > *Cocoa & Cereals*), or with other items that relate to tradition and prestige (*1890* < the year when Kandia, the business, was established). This situation results from the negotiation of meaning between global values and local ones, and illustrates the statement proffered by Blommaert (2012: 12): “It could be that a large area of objects and phenomena currently rather unhelpfully captured under the term ‘globalization’ is in actual fact *always* an instance of englobalization-and-deglobalization, which can be ethnographically investigated *as a dialect of globalizing cultural flows*, as ‘accents’ of otherwise relatively stable cultural patterns.”

All in all, names of sweets are given in view of the potential for associations and presuppositions that the underlying lexical components, put in a certain context, are bound to trigger. Therefore, semiotically, names of sweets develop three sign values (Smith 2006: 19):

- *iconic*: e.g., *WOW*, which ‘stands for’ the positive reaction customers get when eating this fruity ice cream;

- *indexical*: we *mean* the products when we say their names, or, in other words, names of sweets make us think of the things named;

- *symbolic*: names of sweets give way to associations. According to Smith (2006: 20), “Even though names are used in part, perhaps even primarily, as *indices* to refer to simple phenomena, as in *George Washington* or *Albuquerque*, the quintessential function of all words is *symbolic*; and so when used as names, words carry with themselves some measure of additional associations.” Of the most common ones, tradition (*Heidi, Kandia, Napoca*), prestige (*Anidor, Kand’or*), accessibility (*Laura, Pahar, Vafă*), youthfulness (*Joy, Primola, Vis*), and playfulness (*JellyMania, Sugus*) occur frequently.

2.2.4. The semiotic peculiarities of names of sweets determine their discursive behaviour. From this point of view, it is cardinal that one bears in mind the type of contact that is established between confection products and customers, and the context(s) in which it is founded. One generally buys sweets from shops and supermarkets, where customers have direct access to products, and where the representation of products (visual and/or sound-related) contributes to a customer’s choice of a certain product (which is also determined by previous contact with this food), and to the associations triggered by the name of the object in

question (in certain cases ‘suggested’ by advertisements regarding a given confectionery products). It is only within this bigger picture that we can see that “One of the principal duties of a name is to maximize the chances of successfully picking out a unique referent in some context, i.e. referential individuation” (Coates 2006: 28). Outside context, we are unable to talk about onymic referring (Coates 2006: 30).

Likewise, Kleiber (1981 *ap.* Miron-Fulea 2005: 42-43) states that referring to particular entities is one of the discursive functions of proper names (and of names of sweets by extension): to refer to a particular entity means to locate/isolate it discursively. Nonetheless, referring seen as such implies that there is a relationship between language user and named object (Kleiber 1981 *ap.* Miron-Fulea 2005: 44), which can be accounted for by the locutor’s ability to make and utter a series of associations regarding an object. These correlations are negotiated between name givers and customers (name users) by less explicit means: “Negotiation by stealth derives its importance from the fact that the process that constitutes the application of the rule of accommodation for meaning is, first, hearer-centred rather than speaker-centred, and second, continually rather than occasionally invoked. [...] The utility of engaging in negotiation by stealth is, therefore, that it maximises the chances of maintaining something like a consensus on the meaning of expressions over time” (Ryan 2004: 227), of establishing a named product within a (local or global) community. However, it is not only a name that facilitates this recognition, but other (verbal and paraverbal) elements, such as emblems, logos, slogans, or straplines. The role of these messages (e.g. *Kandia: Plăcerea intensă a ciocolatei* ‘the intense pleasure of chocolate’; *Anidor: Tout la tendresse du chocolat*; *Laura: Împarte din inimă* ‘share from the heart’ etc.) is to enable “people to recognise and remember both the slogan and the brand name it represents and often, particularly in the last fifty years in the confectionery industry, [it] stresses a key benefit of the product. It also raises positive feelings about the brand with the consumer and can have a considerable impact on how high consumers rate the product vis-à-vis those of competitors” (Hughes and Phillips 2007: 158).

Conclusion

The influence of globalisation on Romanian public space is still under way, with non-local elements of language and culture permeating every dimension of the local society, until identity (national identity in particular) becomes a blurred concept, since nothing is entirely or only Romanian. It is a different relationship that is formed between globalising and globalised parties, one based on a negotiation of meaning. One of the sectors of public space that mirrors this type of semantic-pragmatic transformation of communication is that of names of sweets (as sub-category of commercial names, an onomastic class).

While performing a lexical and grammatical analysis of names of sweets (to observe recent tendencies on this level), the present paper aimed at delineating a number of characteristics that make up a good name in this field: precision, identification, and association. The manner of triggering and establishing associations determines the semiotic behaviour of names of sweets as *iconic*, *indexical*, and *symbolic* signs. Similarly, the way in which associations are initiated and maintained defines the discursive behaviour of these onomastic elements that refer by identifying a particular entity, as a result of a negotiation of meaning. According to Ryan (2004: 228), “We can explain ‘reference-fixing’ by considering

the role that the speaker [i.e. the name giver] plays in the application of the rule [of accommodation], and ‘reference-borrowing’ by considering the role that the hearer [i.e. the name user/customer] plays in it. Further, we can observe that a ‘chain of communication’ from one speaker to another is forged (link by link) by repeated application of the rule.” Meaning negotiation in the case of names of sweets reveals the adoption and adaptation of “englobal” values to commercial, cultural, and linguistic Romanian public space, examined by means of a socio- and psycholinguistic pair of eyes.

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