CONSUMER LINGUISTICS:
A FRAMEWORK TO UNDERSTAND LANGUAGE EFFECTS IN CONSUMER BEHAVIOR
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Abstract
A conceptual framework examines how the different aspects of language can influence human behavior in a consumption context. Our framework maps the language-related disciplines of linguistics, psycholinguistics, semiotics, and sociolinguistics to brand-related managerial concerns and theory-based consumer behavior constructs. Through this framework, we define the domain of consumer linguistics, the study of language in consumption- and brand-related settings. It is different from any of the traditional disciplines associated with linguistics in that its focus is the consumer as a unit of analysis and it has a multidisciplinary, holistic approach to theory and methodology.
INTRODUCTION

Language is ubiquitous in human communications. It organizes individuals’ thought, activates unique meaning systems that govern our social world, and plays an important role in reflecting cultural norms and beliefs (Bandura 1989; Ringberg, Luna, Reihlen, & Peracchio, 2010). The importance of investigating how individuals process language is highlighted by (a) the globalization that has brought multicultural and multilingual consumers closer together, if not physically at least virtually, and (b) the role played by social and digital media in supporting direct and immediate communications with and among consumers. Digital and social media are inherently global and provide a communication forum in which responses must be provided quickly, almost reflexively. Therefore, much attention needs to be spent at providing an adequate voice for the organization and its brands in the digital world; a voice based on a very clear brand and organizational identity.

Language is also crucial in managing multinational corporations as it is used in virtually every aspect of their business activities (Marschan, Welch, & Welch, 1997). To a large degree, the success of multinational corporations, which are in reality multilingual communities (Luo & Shenkar, 2006), increasingly depends on the appropriate use of symbols and language to convey meaning across a variety of cultural and language settings (Ringberg et al., 2010). Therefore, language needs to be considered in activities that range from efficiently transferring knowledge within the organization (which we could call the internal use of language within a corporation), to planning and implementing global branding strategies and communication activities (a more external, outward-oriented use of language). This paper focuses on such external usage of language and, specifically, on its implications for branding and marketing communications.

We propose an integrative framework that takes the different aspects of language and pinpoints how they affect human behavior in a consumption context. Our framework maps the
language-related disciplines of linguistics, psycholinguistics, semiotics, and sociolinguistics to brand-related managerial concerns and theory-based consumer behavior constructs. Some of those disciplines are better suited to the study of certain concerns and constructs than others because of the research questions investigated within the discipline and the methodology that has been developed to answer them. Areas where research has succeeded in shedding light into managerial and theoretical issues will be highlighted, and so will areas that need further research. Ultimately, our goal is to define through this framework the domain of consumer linguistics, the study of language in consumption- and brand-related settings. It is different from any of the traditional disciplines associated with linguistics in its focus on the consumer as a unit of analysis and its multidisciplinary, holistic approach to theory and methodology. The paper is organized according to the framework presented in Table 1.

Table 1 goes about here

First, we will briefly describe the field of consumer behavior and the areas of language-related inquiry, including their main research questions and methodologies. Then, we will discuss how language can influence consumers in the marketplace via the multidimensional constructs of brand equity and brand identity. We also provide a discussion on the role of language in interactions with customers. Along the way, we identify areas where further research in consumer linguistics is needed. We conclude the paper with a brief review of another language-related domain, organizational linguistics.

CONSUMER RESEARCH AND THE AREAS OF LINGUISTIC INQUIRY

Consumer Behavior

How consumers make decisions in the marketplace, the psychological processes involved, and the external factors that influence those decisions is studied by the discipline of
consumer behavior. Consumer behavior researchers have studied issues like the type of advertising that tends to be more effective in different circumstances (MacInnis & Jaworski, 1989), or how discounts, promotions, or different pricing strategies drive product purchase (Monroe & Lee, 1999). Consumer behavior is a multidisciplinary field, drawing from such diverse disciplines as anthropology or psychology (Frank, 1974). However, individual researchers usually specialize in one methodology and approach to the study of consumers; for instance, using mainly experiments (if they are inspired by psychological theory) or ethnographies (if they follow an anthropological approach). In general, we can say that different research questions can be answered by using different methods and approaches. For example, the question of “Would consumers choose a product with a price of $29.99 more often than a product that costs $30.00?” might be better answered with an experiment, but the question of “Why do consumers go white-water rafting?” could be answered by an ethnography.

If consumer behavior is a relatively young discipline, the theory-based study of language within consumer research is, by analogy, in its infancy. Academic articles on the topic began emerging in the 1990’s (Koslow, Shamdasani, & Touchstone, 1994; Schmitt, Pan, & Tavassoli, 1994). In the last 20 years, however, it has produced a significant body of work. This paper attempts to integrate that research into a framework.

There are different ways of thinking about language and relatedly, different types of research questions we can ask. For instance, in a marketing context we could focus on how breaking the rules of grammar influences consumers’ memory of an advertising tagline (e.g., “Got Milk?”) or on how the repetition of certain sounds (e.g., “luxurious lather”) influences perceptions of a brand, or on what language is better to target bilingual consumers or consumers living in a foreign country. We turn now to a description of the different areas of linguistic
Linguistics

Linguistics can be thought of as the original discipline studying language. It lays a sort of operating system with all the rules of what can and cannot be done with language, and theorizes about how language has evolved over time (Pinker, 1999). Over the centuries, linguists have followed different traditions or approaches to the study of language. Which approach is followed by a particular researcher depends on the dominant paradigm of philosophy of science that they follow and/or is dominant at the time. For instance, over the centuries linguists have added a more data-driven approach to their purely analytical focus in the study of language (Chomsky, 1957). In Corpus Linguistics, for instance, parts of speech are tagged and analyzed with computer algorithms and then insight into the meaning of specific terms or expressions gleaned from the words that tend to co-occur with the target expression (Renouf & Kehoe, 2006). In general, most linguists try to find how humans generate language and what rules are followed in the process.

One example of how linguistic theory can help us understand the way consumers process language is a study by Bradley and Meeds (2002), in which they examined some of the implications of Chomsky’s Transformational Grammar (1957). One of the central claims of Transformational Grammar is the distinction between deep and surface structure of language. Deep structure is how the mind organizes a thought, and surface structure is how we later express it. Thus, we can utilize many different linguistic surface structures to express one deep structure thought. For example, we could use the active voice or the passive voice. The passive
voice, according to Bradley and Meeds, represents a more complex surface structure than the active voice. In their study, they found that slogans with moderate syntactic complexity resulted in greater recall and attitude toward the ad than both low-complexity and high-complexity slogans.

**Psycholinguistics**

Psycholinguistics focuses on what happens in the mind when individuals process language. More formally, it is the study of the acquisition, storage, comprehension, and production of language. Psycholinguistics—considered an area of psychology and not linguistics—has been a prolific area of research (Carroll, 1994). In fact, psychologists derive a lot of their knowledge of how the mind works from the study of how it processes language. For instance, much of the evidence for the division of memory into short-term (or working) memory and long-term memory (Baddeley, 1986), and our knowledge of the capacity of the short-term memory store (Baddeley, Thomson, & Buchanan, 1975; Miller, 1956), comes from experiments that use language (i.e., words) as stimuli, and thus would be considered psycholinguistic in nature. Because of its roots in experimental psychology, psycholinguistics studies tend to use controlled experiments, usually in the lab, as a methodology. This allows experimenters to present carefully selected stimuli like brand names to respondents, who can then process them and provide their response to them, according to the manipulations of the researchers. In this fashion, we can establish a strong causal link between the manipulation and the respondent’s reaction. Typical insights from these studies are limited to memory and processing measures, and are perhaps somewhat limited in their external validity because social phenomena are not usually included in the equation.

In a branding context, psycholinguistics is relevant in a variety of instances, from the development of new brand names (Lerman, 2006a) to the composition of longer
communications, like ads, brochures, or web sites (Luna, 2005). For the most part, the effects studied by psycholinguistic-oriented research are on brand or copy memory. In the brand naming area, for example, the spelling of a brand has an impact on its memorability: ambiguous spellings can lead to greater memory if clues are provided to consumers as to how the brand is really spelled (Luna, Carnevale, & Lerman, in press).

**Sociolinguistics**

Sociolinguistics deals with how language reflects and helps define societal dynamics and interpersonal relationships; it includes the study of the interrelationships of language and social structure, of linguistic variation, and of attitudes toward language. In a sense, while psycholinguistics studies language inside the mind, sociolinguistics studies language outside the mind, in the act of communications with other individuals. In the broad perspective used in this paper, people who study language from a sociolinguistic angle include researchers within the disciplines of linguistics, but also anthropology, cultural studies, or even cognitive social psychology. Therefore, the panoply of methodologies used in sociolinguistic studies is much broader than in the field of psycholinguistics. One could easily employ ethnographies, semi-structured interviews, or experimentation to answer sociolinguistics research questions, like: How does the attitude toward a dominant language influence a minority’s purchase of a product with labeling in that language, versus another product with labeling in the minority language?

The style of language used during service encounters could be studied via sociolinguistics. For example, customers with a polite interaction style are not only less likely to complain about poor service quality but will also engage in different types of complaining behavior when they do complain, versus customers with impolite interaction styles (Lerman, 2006b). As another example, if a rental car clerk were to interact with customers using Vernacular English, middle-class or upper-middle class customers might perceive the brand as
unprofessional and unreliable (Schau, Dellande, & Gilly, 2007). Even more radically, researchers in psychology and consumer behavior have found that bilingual-bicultural individuals switch social identities when they switch languages (from being individualistic and assertive in one language to being more group-oriented in another language; Luna, Ringberg, & Peracchio, 2008).

Sociolinguistics can be used to go beyond the influence of language on memory processes, which is the general domain of psycholinguistics. Thus, using sociolinguistics methods and theory we can study how language influences attitudes toward a brand, or a consumer’s relationship with the brand. Hence, combining both psycholinguistic and sociolinguistic insights can add up to a fuller account of the behavior of individuals in the marketplace or at work.

Semiotics

Defining semiotics is not a simple matter. Its definition varies depending on who is writing, where, and from what research tradition. The way we use the term in this paper, we consider it to be the study of how language can be manipulated to communicate certain meanings. As we see it, semiotics studies how the signs of language (words and their parts, phrases, and sentences) are interpreted by individuals; how do consumers create meaning from language—how do they “get” the meaning from an ad, or how a particular set of brand symbols is developed, for example.

The two aspects of semiotics that we will focus on are semantics and pragmatics. Semantics deals with the relationship of words to their meaning; for example, how do words get to have the generally-accepted meanings that one might find in a dictionary. Pragmatics refers to the relationship of words to their interpreters; for example, each of us can understand the word “table” in a different way. One consumer might think of a kitchen table and another of a
beautifully set upscale restaurant. So if marketers are going to use a deceptively simple word like “table” in their ads, or in a website, they have to know that such a word may evoke different meanings in different people. One has to know how to lead consumers to picture the right table in their minds. Both areas of semiotics can also help us understand the role of rhetorical figures like metaphors and other signs in branding. In fact, the emerging area of linguistics mentioned above, corpus linguistics, can provide some insights. Thus, Deignan’s (2006) approach is to define certain words based on the words that co-occur with them. For instance, if “table” co-occurs with “steel” in a disproportionate number of occasions, it means that consumers think of tables as being made of steel, so a prototype of a table in consumers’ minds is likely to contain the association table-steel (Rosch, 1975; 2002). Hence, corpus linguistics work can shed light on the use of rhetorical figures, deriving the meaning of key terms based on neighboring words.

Research methodologies in semiotics range from the qualitative approach of hermeneutics (Arnould & Fischer, 1994; Mick, 1986) to the experimental (McQuarrie & Mick, 1996), depending on the research question tackled in the study. For instance, Thompson and Tambyah (1999) examine what it means to a group of expatriates to pursue cosmopolitanism, and the relationship between that pursuit and their consumption. The authors use a qualitative method involving in-depth interviews and a hermeneutic approach to interpret the texts from the transcribed interviews.

**Consumer Linguistics must be Multi-Disciplinary**

Authors and researchers in each of the four areas of linguistic inquiry typically focus on their own area and rarely look outside of it. This is not a fault of their own. It is a result of the process of modern scientific methods. Research topics tend to be very narrow and the literature about them already so dense, that it is hard enough to know what has been done about a topic in one discipline, let alone combine theories and current thought from multiple disciplines.
However, when considering consumer decisions in real life, staying within one discipline is not an option. We need to step outside the disciplinary boxes, and consider the use of language from a variety of angles. For instance, when targeting Moroccan immigrants in Tarragona (a provincial capital on the Mediterranean coast), in order to know which language we should use, we not only need to know about how fluent they are in Spanish or Catalan (the regional language, co-official with Spanish), but also how they feel about each of the cultures (native, Spanish, and Catalan) and their respective languages, or the meanings we would convey if we were to communicate in one of the languages versus the others. Fluency would be the domain of psycholinguistics, attitudes toward the languages would be a sociolinguistics topic, and meaning creation would be an area for semiotics.

Or consider the case of multilingual package labels. Their design will not only be influenced by whether individuals understand Spanish, Portuguese, or Greek (a psycholinguistic issue), but also on their attitudes towards and perceptions of the language (a sociolinguistic issue), and on what language is placed first or in a larger font (a semiotics issue). In sum, strategic branding must consider language from a variety of perspectives and disciplines. Only then we will be able to communicate exactly what we want. From a researcher’s perspective, however, this has deep implications: not only do we need to consider a variety of theoretical traditions when investigating a real-life problem, but we also need to become adept at the research methodologies that come with them. Therefore, consumer linguistics is a multidisciplinary, multi-method area that takes the consumer as a unit of analysis. That is, it studies how language influences the processes involved in the consumption of goods and services.

Having defined the areas of linguistic inquiry, we will now review and categorize the research that we consider to fall within consumer linguistics, or customer linguistics, domain.
This is a strategic review of published research that we have deemed to be particularly relevant to illustrate our framework. It is not meant to be a comprehensive review of the field. In addition, it is worth noting that some of the studies reviewed here could fit in multiple categories, but we have chosen the categories where we believe they make the largest contribution.

**Consumer Behavior Constructs**

The mapping of linguistic areas of inquiry to consumer behavior research and constructs can benefit from an information processing perspective (MacInnis & Jaworski, 1989). Such a perspective considers how individuals acquire, process, store, and use information. The key mechanisms that the information processing approach in consumer research considers are perception (how the world is perceived through the senses and attended to), memory (how consumers remember information about objects) and attitudes (how consumers feel about brands and may be persuaded). Traditional models of decision making like the hierarchy of effects rely on a sequential process from perception to decision (Lavidge & Steiner, 1961). More current models allow for non-conscious processing (Schwarz & Bohner, 2002) as well as alternative routes to decision making—for example, models that do not rely on rational thought, but rather on affective transfer (Cohen, Pham, & Andrade, 2008). However, even though they may disagree on how consumers actually use information, most if not all consumer behavior models feature certain constructs as central. The constructs we have chosen to include in our framework are those that we see are most relevant for language processing. They are (a) memory effects such as brand awareness; (b) brand and organizational associations, including brand personality and symbolism, and (c) brand attitudes. In addition, we have included in our framework a topic that arises naturally from the study of language: customer interactions. Language use is about human interaction so it is only logical that we would include it as a stand-alone process worthy of being studied from a variety of linguistic-based perspectives.
BRAND EQUITY AND CONSUMER LINGUISTICS

The theoretical constructs of consumer behavior mentioned above could be aggregated into two areas of managerial concern: brand equity and brand identity. Aaker’s conceptualization of brand equity includes constructs like brand awareness and memory, brand associations, and brand attitudes (Aaker, 1991). Brand identity is the driver of one of the dimensions of brand equity, brand associations (Aaker, 1996, p. 68). A brand’s identity includes several components such as organizational associations, brand personality and brand symbolism. All of these dimensions can be influenced through language, as we will see in this section and the next. It is the task of the consumer linguist to study those effects.

Brand Awareness and Other Cognitive Effects

As would be expected from our prior discussion, the bulk of consumer linguistics research involving brand awareness has a psycholinguistic basis. Research questions related to brand awareness and memory have a strong cognitive component; for example, what kind of brand names are better remembered and in what advertising context (Lerman & Garbarino, 2002; Lowrey, Shrum, & Dubitsky, 2003)? Typical dependent measures examined by this research include brand recall, recognition, processing time, and comprehension. Such measures provide insight into the type and depth of brand and brand name processing that consumers engage in.

A great deal of research inspired by psycholinguistic theories has focused on bilingual or biscriptal consumers. Likely, this is the result of the relevance of the bilingual phenomenon; the majority of the world’s consumers speak at least two languages (Grosjean, 1982; Luna & Peracchio, 2001) with 20% of US citizens speaking fluently at least two languages (Grosjean, 2010). In the first theory-based investigation of advertising targeting bilinguals, Luna and Peracchio (2001) found that first-language messages tend to be better remembered than second-language messages (Luna & Peracchio, 2001). This memory asymmetry could be reduced,
however, by facilitating conceptual processing of second-language messages. One way to do so is to have high level of congruity between picture and text (i.e., a product attribute featured in the ad claim expressing similar concepts as the ad picture). This suggests that the effect of pictures on ad memory varies depending on whether the ad is presented in the consumer’s first or second language. Although most of the work on advertising to bilinguals has focused on fluent bilinguals, research suggests that bilingualism might be a matter of degree (Zhang & Schmitt 2004). Future research studies must also examine the processing difference between fluent bilinguals and individuals with less competence in a second language.

In addition, many bilinguals are not just bilingual: They can use multiple writing systems, so they are biscriptal. From a theoretical perspective, one of the most interesting cases of biscriptals are those individuals who can write in both an alphabetic and a character-based system such as Chinese. A number of consumer researchers have examined how such biscriptal bilinguals process information. For instance, Tavassoli and Han (2002) found that visual cues that support the verbal information in an ad, such as color logos, are most effective when the marketer uses the character-based Chinese style of writing, whereas auditory cues such as jingles or other sounds supporting the verbal information work better with the English alphabet. The authors theorize that the processing of words written in alphabetic scripts relies more heavily on the phonological loop of working memory. In contrast, the processing of words written in character-based scripts relies more on visual working memory. Therefore, a caveat emerges from another of the authors’ articles (Tavassoli & Han, 2001): auditory contextual interference (stimuli that are not related to the target verbal information) is higher for alphabetic words than for character-based words, and vice versa for visual distracters. This suggests, for example, that ads containing alphabetic words should be designed to minimize the use of distracting auditory information, which may potentially compete for the cognitive resources required in order to learn
printed alphabetic information. In contrast, ads containing character-based words should be
designed to minimize the use of distracting graphics or complex visual displays. Hence, different
stimuli could interfere with biscriptal individuals' ability to process an ad (or any other verbal
stimulus), depending on the language/script in which it is written.

Theory on the psychology of language has also informed research on brand naming. For
example, a number of studies have built on the effects of sound symbolism—that is, the
meanings conveyed by the smallest units of sound (i.e., phonemes). One way to classify the
effects of meanings conveyed by sounds is based on distinctions within vowel (i.e., front vs.
back) and within consonants (fricatives vs. stops). Klink (2000) shows that brand names
containing front (back) vowels may elicit perceptions such as smallness (largeness) or lightness
(heaviness). Similarly, fricative (vs. stop) consonants help elicit the idea of smaller (rather than
bigger) sizes, as well as femininity (rather than masculinity) concepts (Klink, 2000). Yorkston
and Menon (2004) extend Klink's findings by showing that the cues provided about the attribute
dimensions of the product may influence consumers' attitude towards the brand, as well as their
purchase intentions. Most recently, research suggests that the fit between meanings conveyed by
the sound of the brand name and product attributes enhances consumer preference (Lowrey &
Shrum, 2007) as well as memory for brand names (Luna, Carnevale, & Lerman, forthcoming).
Thus, for instance, if smallness represents a desirable attribute for the product category (e.g.,
cell-phones), the brand name Len should be preferred to Lon as it contains a front vowel (rather
than a back one) and consumers will therefore like it more and remember it better.

Although recent studies suggest that phonetic symbolism effects can be generalized
across languages (Shrum, Lowrey, Luna, Lerman, & Liu, 2012), unique design features of
languages shed light on some interesting yet unexplored topics that future research might want to
investigate. In essence, research suggests that just as there are there sound symbolism effects
based on distinctions within vowels and consonants, there also are some other effects resulting from language-specific features. For instance, the use of two genders (masculine and feminine) for noun and adjectives characterizes Romance languages (e.g., Italian, Spanish, and French; Kess, 1993). Masculinity versus femininity traits have been found to characterize brand personalities, and research suggests that these traits significantly influence consumers’ perceptions and evaluations (Aaker, 1997; Grohmann, 2009). Therefore, it might be worth to investigate whether the effects of masculinity and femininity brand personality traits are moderated by language-specific features, such as the presence (vs. absence) of gender usage within the language (e.g., Spanish, Italian, and French vs. English).

Another language-specific feature relates to the use of tone differences belonging to the Chinese languages. To illustrate, consider that Mandarin Chinese has very few possible syllables (approximately 400 vs. 12,000 in English). As a result, there are many words with the same sound expressing different meanings. Four pitched tones and a "toneless" tone are thus used to identify the intended meaning of these homophones. Similar to the case of gender, these peculiarities of Chinese might shed light on consumer research that explores the effects of brand personality traits (e.g., excitement, sincerity).

While sound symbolism provides evidence for the potential meanings conveyed by the mere sound of a novel brand name, another stream of psycholinguistic research helps us explore the way the sounds in brand names are transcribed into visual signs—that is, how they are spelled. Luna et al. (forthcoming) illustrate and show how spelling-related characteristics of brand names and factors related to the context in which brand names are presented (e.g., spelling primes) will make the brands more or less memorable.

The authors show that how a brand name is spelled will influence whether consumers remember it at the store or when they are searching for it online. Moreover, they find that when a
person hears about a new brand with an ambiguous spelling, like the detergent Gain (which could be spelled Gane or Gain), they will remember it better than if the brand is easily spelled. As a result, they will be able to recognize the brand in the supermarket, or type it in a search engine more accurately. The trick, however, is for marketers to provide clues about the spelling in the brand’s context—for example in the ad where the brand is initially presented. Those clues could be other, more familiar words that have the same spelling as the brand, or making sure the brand includes sounds that make sense for its product category (e.g., a back vowel for a large product or front vowel for a small product).

**Brand Associations**

Consumer research has examined the issue of brand associations to different languages. There are the more straightforward effects of language as a proxy for a country of origin—an ad that uses some French language could prompt associations typically attached to France, like “sophistication”, “savoir vivre” or “excellent cooking.” Also, brand names themselves, if they sound like they belong to a specific language, could benefit from these associations if they are congruent with the brand’s true country of origin (Leclerc, Schmitt, & Dubé, 1994; Martín & Cerviño, 2011) but may become hindered if the associations are incongruent with the true country of origin and consumers become aware of it (Balabanis & Diamantopoulos, 2008). Several studies have investigated the underlying processes of how some associations are linked to one language versus another. Both psycholinguistic and cognitive-based sociolinguistic research has investigated this topic.

For instance, Luna, Ringberg, and Peracchio (2008) develop a theoretical model to understand why certain languages are attached to different types of associations. The authors base their model on sociolinguistic research that explains the tight links between language and identity. Language and culture are intrinsically related (Foucault, 1972). Language influences the
formation of mental frames (i.e., cognitive structures) through which higher mental functions, such as interpretations of the self and others, are developed. Thus, self- and other-interpretations become culturally situated and language-specific (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992; D’Andrade, 1992; Schwartz, White, & Lutz, 1992; Sperber, 1985).

Luna et al. (2008) also make use of psycholinguistic research that has examined the notion of the differential activation of concepts by each language known by a bilingual / bicultural. In particular, the Conceptual Feature Model, or CFM (Kroll & De Groot, 1997), suggests that a word’s translation is likely to have an interpretation different from that of the original. According to the CFM, words in each language known by a bicultural activate a series of conceptual features. Words are connected to a number of these features that represent the subjective interpretation of the word for each individual. Those conceptual features, if unified under a theme or category, could be considered distinct mental frames. Mental frames are implicit interpretations and models which manage and organize the comprehension of abstract processes (Holland & Quinn, 1993, Holland & Valsiner, 1988) and which are frequent, well organized, persistent, memorable, can be made from minimal cues (D’Andrade, 1992).

Hence, biculturals may possess two different culture-specific mental frames, each of which is connected, in its respective language, to a word that appears to be the same in the two different languages (translation-equivalent words). To illustrate, consider that in each language one word is connected to a number of concepts that ultimately define the subjective meaning of the word for each individual. For example, the meanings activated by the word home (e.g., “insurance” and “safety”) are not necessarily the same as those activated by its Spanish-language translation equivalent, casa (e.g., “safety” and “family”). This is important as it suggests that in a marketing setting even the perfect translation of a marketing communication may not have the same meaning as the original (Luna & Peracchio, 2002).
Recent sociolinguistic-based studies show that language-triggered frame switching occurs only with bilinguals who are also bicultural and therefore have internalized two cultures (Lau-Gesk, 2003), and not with bilinguals who are not bicultural (Luna et al, 2008). The reason why this occurs has to do with the fact that the content of each culture might be seen as a pool of mental frames. Biculturals who typically have been exposed to two cultural value systems also have identity-related mental models related to both cultures (Luna et al., 2008). When each of the two cultures is also associated to a corresponding language, as in the case of bicultural individuals, both languages are likely to be tied to culture-specific identify frames. Then, when exposed to a particular language, bicultural bilingual individuals activate distinct language- and culture-specific mental frames, which include aspects of their identities (Luna et al., 2008). When bilinguals’ languages are not linked to distinct cultures (i.e., monoculturals) then only one language taps identity related mental frames.

Research in cross-cultural psychology and consumer behavior has identified different types of biculturals. A first classification accounts for various degrees to which biculturals view their two identities as compatible and integrate both cultures within their lives (Benet-Martinez & Haritatos, 2005; Benet-Martinez, Leu, Lee, & Morris, 2002). This is important as individuals who view their identities as less compatible might strategically attempt to avoid frame switching (Luna et al, 2008). Future research should further investigate how these populations of bicultural individuals are differently affected by frame-switching.

Ringberg et al. (2010) further show that the degree of overlap between concepts across languages is larger for concrete than for abstract words, but that it is never perfect. A consequence to these findings is that true translation equivalence may not exist as the same person might perceive a word differently depending on the language in which it is presented. Indeed, Puntoni, de Langhe and van Osselaer (2009) find that texts (such as advertising slogans)
in a person’s native language are always perceived as more emotional than texts in a second language. This finding is directly applicable to research methodology with bilingual respondents. Because words in an individual’s native language are intrinsically more emotional, when a survey scale is in their second language, bilinguals will tend to provide more extreme ratings, compared to a scale in their first language (de Langhe, Puntoni, Fernandes, & van Osselaer, 2011).

**Brand Attitudes**

An attitude can be defined as an object–evaluation association; that is, “an association in memory between a given object and a given summary evaluation of the object” (Fazio, 1995, p. 247). A person’s attitude toward the brand Coca-Cola, for example, can be represented by the association between Coca-Cola and evaluations such as bad/good, unpleasant/pleasant, as well as more affective evaluations such as dislike/like or hate/love. Therefore, research on brand attitudes naturally builds on the literature on brand associations reviewed earlier.

Persuasion refers to provoking changes in attitudes through exposure to particular stimuli (Hoyer & MacInnis, 2008). In a consumer behavior context, the construct of interest in studies of persuasion is generally brand attitudes. Language-triggered persuasion is the domain of sociolinguistics—psycholinguistics may explain some of the underlying processes, but will not fully explain changes in brand attitudes, which necessitate social-psychological concepts like acculturation, accommodation, and attitudes toward particular languages.

Perhaps one of the most researched topics in the persuasion literature relevant to language is that of which language is most effective to influence the attitudes of a particular target market, particularly if it is a bilingual market (Koslow et al, 1994). In such markets, the degree of acculturation of the minority consumer into the majority culture has emerged as a consistent moderator of language effects on consumer behavior. For instance, in an investigation
of advertising targeting U.S. Hispanics, Ueltschy and Krampf (1997) find that language and acculturation interact with respect to attitudes toward an ad. In particular, more assimilated Hispanics tend to like ads in English, and less assimilated Hispanics tend to prefer ads in Spanish. We should note, however, that acculturation is not necessarily a linear process and that not always results in the same outcome. Thus, a minority consumer could end up assimilated into the majority culture, or segregated from it (Berry, 1980; Penaloza, 1994; Lerman, Maldonado, & Luna, 2009).

Koslow et al. (1994) study another factor that interacts with language with respect to affect toward the advertisement: perceived accommodation; that is, if consumers believe the advertiser is making an effort to communicate in their language. The authors conclude that such perceived advertiser sensitivity mediates the positive effects of using Spanish when targeting U.S. Hispanics. If consumers do not feel the advertiser is genuine in their use of language, ad attitudes will not benefit.

Two streams of research provide more nuanced approaches to the study of advertising to bilingual consumers. They investigate (a) in which situations should we advertise in a consumer’s first versus second language, and (b) whether mixed-language communications, also known as code-switching, will lead to changes in attitudes. Both of those streams make use of the term language schema. Those schemas include “individuals’ perceptions about the kind of people that speak a certain language, the situations and language and occasion when that language can be chosen, the topics for which the language is more appropriate, beliefs on how the language may be perceived by others, and the meanings that may be communicated by choosing that language” (Luna & Peracchio, 2005b, p. 45).

Noriega and Blair (2008) showed that the language chosen in advertising messages generated different types of thoughts among bilingual individuals. Specifically, native-language
advertising has been found to more likely elicit thoughts about family, friends, and home, which can then have an influence on attitude toward the ad and behavioral intentions. Carroll and Luna (2011) extend Noriega and Blair’s (2008) findings by showing that the use of different languages can influence the accessibility of specific concepts. Thus, certain words are shown to have greater accessibility in bilinguals’ nonnative language and therefore can lead to higher evaluations of the advertisement because of processing fluency (Schwarz, 2004).

Mimicking the behavior of many bilingual speakers, advertisers often recur to the use of multiple languages within an ad. For example, a foreign word or expression is used into an ad slogan. This practice is generally known as code-switching. Code-switching can be studied from several perspectives. Thus, Luna, Lerman, and Peracchio (2005) investigate the structural constraints (grammar) of code-switching in advertising, therefore following a strict linguistic approach. Or code-switching could be studied from a sociolinguistic perspective, examining the motivations and interpersonal consequences of its use in marketing communications. There are a series of social motivations underlying language choice in code switching; generally, language becomes a way of communicating ideal or perceived group memberships (Myers-Scotton, 1991; 1993). Also, certain languages (e.g., Italian) might be linked to certain concepts (e.g., food) and the speaker’s choice of language will reflect the same concept when the latter is salient to the event spoken of (e.g., grocery).

Following a sociolinguistic approach, several studies have taken as a starting point that when code-switching occurs, language schemas are activated and deactivated by switching to and from a language to another (Luna & Peracchio, 2005a; 2005b). The associations in those schemas impact the valence of consumers elaboration consistently such that if the language the slogan switches to is positively (negatively) perceived, consumers engage in positive (negative) elaboration and evaluate ads more positively.
Another area of persuasion research that highlights the role of language as a schema of interpretation has investigated the effects of the accent of a communication sender (i.e., salesperson) on the receiver purchase intentions and perceptions (DeShields, Kara, & Kaynak, 1996). This work suggests that salesperson with a standard accent or dialect are perceived more favorably and create more favorable purchase intentions than foreign-accented salespersons. The reason why this occurs has to do with the fact that the receiver perceives the salesperson by comparing him/her along the dimensions of attractiveness and accent to himself/herself based upon the standards of the dominant group (e.g., English speaking in the U.S.; Tajfel, 1981, DeShields et al, 1996).

Finally, psycholinguistics-based work has also led to interesting insights in the area of persuasion. For example, the most recent research on sound symbolism mentioned above (e.g., Lowrey & Shrum, 2007; Shrum et al, 2012) has identified phonetic symbolism effects on brand preferences, such that if how a brand name sounds is congruent with the attributes deemed important with its category, it will be preferred to brand names that do not sound like they fit the product category.

BRAND IDENTITY AND CONSUMER LINGUISTICS

A brand’s identity is a set of associations in consumers’ minds that shapes their perceptions of the brand. It is the most important set of brand associations, the driver of that component of brand equity (Aaker, 1996). Several consumer research streams have investigated the topic of brand identity in a general sense (Escalas, 2004; Fournier, 1998). Three categories of associations are particularly relevant to consumer linguistics: associations related to the brand as a person, as an organization, and as a symbol.
Brand Personality

If the brand was a person, what kind of a person would it be? What would the brand do in its spare time? What would the brand wear, eat and read? In a hyper-competitive marketplace where brands must work hard to distinguish themselves, exercises such as these can help brand managers in developing and communicating a strong brand identity. Brand personality is an important issue from a consumer linguistics perspective because the personality of the brand will dictate the kind of language, including the tone of voice, that should be used in all its communications (Doig, 2012). If a brand is positioned as solid, established, trustworthy, it should certainly use different language than a brand that is positioned as creative, irreverent, and trendy. Differences will include length of sentences and type of vocabulary, use of contractions, a formal versus informal tone, type of punctuation, and (non)use of literary devices such as alliteration among others. Similarly, if the brand were to be positioned as a global powerhouse, it would likely use some English in its communications (for example, in its tagline, like “Life is Good” or “Connecting People”), and its name would be different from a brand positioned as a local alternative (Seven Up vs. La Casera, a Spanish brand similar in attributes to diet Seven Up).

Unfortunately, the academic research literature has not yet explored this area of consumer linguistics to its full potential. There are several theoretical approaches that could be used to do so. For example, the brand-as-a-person premise is itself a metaphor, equating the brand to a real-life individual. Therefore, research rooted in the semiotics framework could tackle how consumers abstract personality characteristics from the language used in advertising, social media, or even from user-generated comments posted on blogs: how consumers interpret the brand could become a rich source of data to be analyzed in a hermeneutics of blogs.
In addition, the psycholinguistic literature on analogical processing (Gentner, 1983), could be tapped to examine what attributes are indeed transferred to the target domain (personality) from the base domain (brand). Once the analogy is inferred by the consumer—that is, once the consumer “gets” what kind of a person the brand would be based on the language it uses, which attributes are inferred directly and what features of language are most effective in helping consumers map key attributes from one domain to the other? These and other questions could be investigated by studies rooted in psycholinguistics.

**Brand Symbolism**

This area of brand identity can best be studied through semiotic inquiry, the study of how people create meaning and symbols. In general, there are two traditions in semiotics: a Continental semiotics, which is rationalist, structuralist and derives from Saussure’s thought (1959), and American semiotics, more behaviorist and positivistic in its approach, deriving from Peirce’s (1958) work. These two semiotic traditions differ in their approaches to communication (Botan & Soto, 1998). Saussurean semiotics describes language by focusing on the role of the sign as the unit of the message. From this tradition, the distinction has emerged between the signified (e.g., the need to stop a car) and the signifier (e.g., a stop sign). Peircean semiotics, on the other hand, focuses on communication as an ongoing process of signification. This tradition distinguishes three categories of signifiers: icon (a symbol that stands for an object by resembling it, like a map, picture, or diagram), index (signs that use causal links between sign and objects; smoke is a sign and also the index of fire), and symbol (signs that have an arbitrary nature). By its very focus of inquiry, the Peircean approach lends itself more naturally to the study of the process of how language-as-a-symbol influences consumption behavior.

A brand can be conceptualized as a system of signs and symbols that engage consumers in an imaginary or symbolic process. Symbolic communication is relevant for advertising, digital
and social media, packaging and logos. For instance, McDonald’s golden arches—signifying the M in the brand name McDonalds—are a complex matrix of signifying and signified elements. When consumers see the logo, it consistently signifies the company and brand offerings (burger and fries) and serves as a reminder of the product itself—i.e., the color of the French fries. A semiotic analysis can help unpack the elements that act as signifiers and signified. Naturally, the signified elements (or, in psycholinguistic terms, the associations activated by the brand and its language) will be culturally-specific. For example, yellow, the color of the golden arches, signifies royalty in China, courage in Japan and sadness in Greece.

A great deal of research rooted both in the semiotic and psychological traditions has investigated the use of rhetorical figures in consumer marketing. A rhetorical figure is a word or a phrase that artfully deviates from the audience expectation (McQuarrie & Mick, 1996). Rhetorical figures act as stylistic devices that may attract interest to the message being transmitted (McQuarrie & Mick, 1999). Examples of rhetorical figures include rhymes, antithesis, puns, and metaphors. Their widespread use is easily traceable in our daily language, as well as in advertising. The phrase “a child needs room to grow” or the ad claim “today Slim at very slim price” may provide some examples. Rhetorical figures play, indeed, an important role in advertising—fundamental, if you consider that they are used in 74% of magazine ads (Leigh, 1994). This tendency is not expected to decrease, as the percentage of visual rhetorical figures used in ads almost doubled in the last fifty years of the twenty-first century (Philips & McQuarrie, 2004). The extensive use in advertising of rhetorical figures finds a theoretical "dominant explanation" (Ahluwalia & Burnkrant, 2004, p. 26) in the elaboration consumers engage into in response to an artful deviation, a veer from expectations (McQuarrie & Mick, 1996) whose interest value stimulates deeper levels of processing (Morgan & Reichert, 1999).
and curiosity about the brand (MacInnis et al, 1991). In other words, consumers gain pleasure in elaborating upon a picture that artfully deviates from what expected (McQuarrie & Mick, 1996).

Organizational Associations

One important element of brand identity relates to how consumers perceive the organization behind a brand (Aaker, 1996). Organizational identity is formed by the associations that consumers evoke when thinking of the organization. Two main managerial activities that influence those associations are the organization’s Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) strategy and their public relations strategy.

Corporate Social Responsibility. CSR can be defined as “a commitment to improve community well-being through discretionary business practices and contributions of corporate resources” (Kotler & Lee, 2004, p. 3). Such practices can lead to favorable consumer reactions, particularly with regard to brand attitudes. Thus, the CSR record of a company has a positive effect on a consumer’s evaluations of the company and their intent to purchase the company’s products (Bhattacharya, Korschun, & Sen, 2009; Sen & Bhattacharya, 2001).

Language is a key part of how CSR is implemented throughout an organization, of how its employees create, disseminate, and internalize the meaning of such an abstract concept. Thus, new words are created, sometimes within an organization, to understand how the company is tackling CSR. Catchy terms like “People, Planet Profit”, or “the 3 P’s” are coined and transmitted to help employees understand what the company is trying to do, and motivate them to do it. In one study, for instance, Cramer, Jonker, and van der Heijden (2004) engage in an interesting semiotics-based exploration of several companies and their understandings of CSR. They explore how words and expressions become vehicles of meaning-making, and how the process is not as straightforward as it may seem. Consumer linguistics can not only be used to understand how employees internalize the meaning of CSR for their own organization, but it
could also be used to understand the types of words, sentence constructions, and rhetorical devices that could lead to maximal impact of CSR initiatives on consumer perceptions of the organization and its brands. This becomes critical for MNCs in that a global strategy needs to be planned, especially in the face of social and other digital media that is accessible to anyone in the planet. A common language needs to be developed for its subsidiaries, and decisions about whether to translate and how to translate certain critical terms and expressions need to be made, with an appreciations of cultural and linguistic differences, as outlined in previous sections (e.g., will an English emotion word be perceived too extreme for a Korean speaker of English as a second language?).

Public Relations. Public relations is a strategic communication tool that focuses on reaching out to all stakeholders of a corporation, and its message is typically not centered upon any of the company’s brands—rather, the corporation as a whole is hailed and in theory benefits from any given public relations initiative (Moriarty, Mitchell, & Wells, 2008). Public relations is part of a continued strategic process, but it certainly intensifies when a crisis occurs (e.g., Shell Corporation and the Gulf of Mexico 2010 crisis).

Similar to CSR, after public relations professionals decide what basic message needs to be communicated and choose the channels to do so (sponsorships, publicity,…), they need to be conscious of language in two ways: First, as outlined by Botan and Soto (1998), they need to keep in mind that meaning making, as described by the Peircean tradition (Peirce, 1959), is interactive, dynamic, and meaning is co-constructed by the different publics of a communication. The terms, phrases, and tone of voice used to communicate the desired meanings must therefore be tested and revised in an interactive fashion prior to using it. Second, the language used in the actual communication is critical and requires much care. This is not an easy task because in a world of Twitter feeds and real-time sentiment analysis, public relations professionals often need
to react quickly and decisively. It is important, therefore, to create a strong sense of organizational personality and to become adept at thinking, speaking, and writing as an embodied incarnation of the organization. In other words, the public relations professional needs to learn to speak as the organization would speak, if it were a real person. Syntactic constructions, word choice, and tone of voice needs to be pitch-perfect, fine-tuned after testing with members of the relevant publics. Public relations personnel must use those terms reflexively and without hesitation. For MNCs this becomes extraordinarily challenging even when a global communication strategy is in place, given that some of the meanings co-constructed with publics in different countries may not be equivalent.

We now move beyond the brand equity and brand identity framework to examine an area that is of great importance to marketers, customer interactions. This is an area where consumer linguistics can shed light on both theoretical and strategic issues because language is essential to customer interactions.

**CUSTOMER INTERACTIONS AND CONSUMER LINGUISTICS**

Service marketing researchers have long emphasized the importance of the service encounter as a crucial part of the customer experience and a driver of constructs like service quality, customer satisfaction, attitudes toward the service provider, intentions to purchase, store loyalty, and ultimately firm profits (Holmqvist & Grönroos, 2012; Zeithaml, Berry, & Parasuraman, 1996).

The service encounter is based on the interaction between the service provider and the customer and, naturally, language plays a large role in the process (Holmqvist & Grönroos, 2012). Surprisingly, given their importance for firm performance, not a lot of theory-based academic work has examined the use of language in service encounters. There are, however, insightful studies based on the analysis of encounter video and audio recordings (e.g., Mattsson
& den Haring, 1998) or on more comprehensive ethnographic methods of the experience, like Schau et al. (2007). In that study, the authors examined the practice of code-switching in a service environment, and found differences in the outcomes of switching language (English-Spanish) versus switching dialect (Standard English-Vernacular English), in relation to their deviation from a scripted encounter.

The study of service encounters lends itself naturally to a sociolinguistic approach because it is based on the interaction between two or more people. The extant literature can be divided into two groups: (a) studies of intralanguage phenomena like the semiotics of pub naming and signage (Clarke, Kell, Schmidt, & Vignali, 1998), including the effect of accent and dialects (Rao, Hill, & Tombs, 2011), and (b) studies of interlinguistic effects (Holmqvist & Grönroos, 2012; Schau et al., 2007).

The area of customer interactions has become ripe for further research, as interactions with customers are not merely the domain of service encounters, but occur more frequently in a virtual, online context. Thus, shoppers today shift much of their browsing, information gathering, and purchasing online. The form these interactions will take are enormously varied, ranging from synchronous online chats with telephone company artificial intelligence agents or customer service representatives, to asynchronous email correspondence. One relevant area with virtually no research conducted in the consumer behavior literature relates to the fact that nonverbal cues are removed from online communications, so verbal language takes an even more central role. The signaling cues of nonverbal communications that help make meaning in a person-to-person interaction can be at least partially substituted by managing response times (e.g., chronemics, Walther, 2006). Such effects must still be addressed from a theoretical and practical perspective. Similarly, the implications of interactions with artificial intelligence agents beg for further research, not only in text-based online communications, but also in voice-based systems, like
Apple’s Siri. Has the form customers use language changed to accommodate to interactions with software systems capable of natural-language processing? Given the relationship between language and cognition (Whorf, 1956), if we simplify our language, do we also simplify our product expectations, our customer choice and satisfaction criteria?

And lastly, the platforms used by customers to interact with the brand have changed dramatically over the last decade. Research on the traditional person-to-person service encounter is becoming less and less relevant as consumer bypass that channel and communicate with the brand via tablet computers, smartphones. Desktop computers are no longer the norm as consumers migrate to mobile devices to search for information online. Does the change in platform bring with it a change in language? Some of the emerging literature on online communications documents how consumers use emoticons and abbreviations (Walther, 2006) but perhaps more significant for consumer research may be the creation of a new, stripped down, language to describe consumers’ experiences. Thus, the simplification of language by dropping descriptors of experiences and products may have certain implications for marketing theory and practice. In sum, the area of customer interactions is in sore need of further theoretical language-based research in order to understand the experience of the contemporary consumer.

Our discussion of customer interactions concludes our definition of consumer linguistics. To this point, we have laid out a number of ways in which the different research traditions dedicated to the study of language (linguistics, psycholinguistics, sociolinguistics, and semiotics) can help understand theoretical and managerial issues related to brand equity, brand identity, and customer interactions. We now turn to a brief discussion of how a similar approach could be followed to develop another area: organizational linguistics. A full discussion of this area is outside the scope of this paper so we will limit the next section to a brief review of extant research and some remarks.
TOWARD AN ORGANIZATIONAL LINGUISTICS

For multinational organizations, language has become central to the study of effective management (Peltokorpi and Vaara, 2010) and strategy (Luo and Shenkar, 2006). The strategic role of language for MNCs has been investigated in two areas: a macro-level and a micro-level (Louhiala-Salminen & Rogerson-Revell, 2010). Macro-level matters include the dynamics that happen at an organizational level (e.g., corporate communication strategies) whereas micro-level topics mostly occur at an individual level (e.g., nonnative vs. native speakers of corporate language and individual productivity).

At the micro-level, language has been explored as a carrier of cultural values (Agar, 1994; van den Born & Peltokorpi, 2010). Language thus influences the way employees communicate with each other and interpret information (Von Glinow, Shapiro, & Brett, 2004; van den Born & Peltokorpi, 2010) and whether, depending on individuals’ proficiency with the corporate language, they can operate efficiently in terms of value creation, learning processes, formal reporting (e.g., Luo and Shenkar, 2006). In a way, the dynamics that occur at an individual level largely explain the need to explore several issues at an organizational level. For example, the question of which language to implement within MNCs is a fundamental one, given individuals’ differing language fluency that is typical within multilingual communities.

With regard to macro-level topics, researchers have focused on two main issues: first, how MNCs can most effectively communicate to external stakeholders, such as the public (e.g., Isakkson and Flyvholm, 2012), investors (Conaway & Wardrope, 2010), and business clients (Usunier & Roulin, 2010). However, the majority of research has investigated which language choices and policies should MNCs implement in corporate communication and documentation to reduce the negative effects of interunit and intraunit language diversity (Marschan-Piekkari, Welch, & Welch, 1999; Rogerson-Revell, 2007; 2008; Van den Born & Peltokorpi, 2012) and
therefore positively impact coordination, control, performance, communication, knowledge transfer, and collective identity (Luo & Shenkar, 2006; Tietze, 2008; Peltokorpi & Vaara, 2012).

General consensus has been expressed in favor of MNCs designing language policies to integrate and reflect both global strategies and local adaptation (Luo & Shenkar, 2006). However, an important theoretical and empirical question has been which language to be implemented. Some researchers have explored the notion of a common corporate language (Fredriksson, Barner-Rasmussen, & Piekkari, 2006) and how to choose it (Lauring, 2008; Marschan-Piekkari et al., 1999), as well as its consequences on human resources management (Bjorkman & Lervik, 2007; Marschan-Piekkari et al., 1999). Others have focused on subsidiary-level language policies. In this case, research suggests that there might be three possible scenarios (Luo & Shenkar, 2006): parent-country language (e.g., Japanese for Japan-based Panasonic’s subsidiary in USA), host-country language (e.g., Italian for Kraft Foods’s subsidiary in Italy), or another, third language (e.g., French for Schlumberger’s subsidiary in Saudi Arabia; Peltokorpi & Vaara, 2012).

In sum, language has emerged as a strategic factor so language-related decisions within an MNC require a deliberate and systematic approach. Integrative work has already begun in the organizations literature (e.g., Piekkari & Zander, 2005; Tietze, 2003; Welch, Welch, & Piekkari, 2005) and research in the area shows a rich diversity of theoretical traditions and methodologies. Further integration of this large body of knowledge into a multidisciplinary framework might perhaps help to impose a structure on language-related strategic decisions and identify key issues in need of further research.

CONCLUSION

Consumer linguistics is the multidisciplinary study of how language influences consumer behavior. It takes models and findings from linguistics, psycholinguistics, sociolinguistics, and
semiotics and maps them to the consumption process. In this paper we focus on the influence of language on several key areas relevant to consumer behavior, specifically brand equity, brand identity and customer interactions, which is where the bulk of language-related research has occurred in marketing and consumer research. Research in consumer linguistics is characterized, in the aggregate, by a multi-method approach. The consumer experience is influenced by a myriad of factors, so consumers must be studied from a variety of perspectives and in a variety of ways in order to be fully understood. Each of the disciplines that inspire consumer linguistics brings with it a rich research tradition that is carried to the consumer domain. As Table 1 suggests, many areas within consumer linguistics remain largely unexplored.

The aim of consumer linguistics is not merely to apply knowledge from different disciplines to consumer behavior. Rather, good theoretical research in consumer linguistics must start with the consumption phenomenon (e.g., consumers’ interactions with artificial intelligence agents) and attempt to understand it with any of the theoretical and methodological tools in the consumer linguistics toolbox (Deighton, 2007). As a result of this process, new theories are developed, tested, and applied in a practical setting.

We have defined consumer linguistics and presented an integrative way of thinking about language effects in marketing. Although much research has been published in marketing and other business journals, especially during the last two decades, the field remained disaggregated, begging for an integrative framework to make it all fit together. We hope to have made a stride in the right direction with this paper.
REFERENCES


FIGURE 1

The areas of consumer linguistics and examples of issues relevant to each.

Linguistics
What rules govern language?
How can language be dissected?

Psycholinguistics
What happens inside their head when individuals read, write, hear, or speak?

Sociolinguistics
How do we get to understand each other? How do we take into consideration other people’s needs when we speak?

Semiotics
How do elements of style influence the way people build meaning from a text?
# TABLE 1
Consumer Linguistics Framework

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<th>Managerial Topic</th>
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<th>Variables</th>
<th>The Language-Related Disciplines</th>
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Note: The Table includes examples of published work in each area. Shaded areas are those in greater need for research.