

## **THE LANGUAGE OF JOURNALISM: PARTICULARITIES AND INTERPRETATION OF ITS COEXISTENCE WITH OTHER LANGUAGES**

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*Abstract: The language of journalism is a fascinating field to analyze, because it offers a challenging outlook on its subtleties and power in each journalistic genre. This type of language helps understand how journalists create their stories or reports, shape points of view, deliver expected news and how media language is different from other languages we encounter. Investigating, interviewing and fact-checking activities are basic components of journalism, transmitted to media consumers, in order to inform, persuade, but also to reinforce public beliefs, using manipulating techniques.*

*Journalists can also use in their reports coded messages through their carefully selected words and sentences. Self-censorship in using words is often practised by journalists creating a provocative and uncomfortable situation for themselves. This involves expressing sentences differently in order to avoid threats against them and their writings. So, a comprehensive vocabulary will bring stories and broadcasts to life, enabling journalists to better describe the world around them. Using words correctly might provide a shade of meaning and understanding to the journalistic lexical level they aim to reach.*

*Whether the journalistic purpose is writing for newspapers, magazines or new media, all categories of publicists have the fundamental mission to learn and practise their language as specialists with all linguistic nuances required in their profession.*

**Keywords:** media language, linguistic components, news editing, written text, discourse

The use of language in the presentation of news and elsewhere in the presentation of media, represents a form of interaction between language and society which affects us all. We

are interested in how media work, how language works and particularly how the two interact. Its contents should be accessible to people who have interest in these issues as well as to people who study such matters. Responsive communication among people and between nations is worth striving for. The language of news media is prominent in society and it is interesting to find out how it is produced, how it is shaped by values and how it affects our perceptions.

Mass communication is a process in which a person, group of people, or an organization sends a message through a channel of communication to a large group of anonymous and heterogeneous people and organizations. You can think of a large group of anonymous and heterogeneous people as either the general public or a segment of the general public. Channels of communication include broadcast television, radio, social media, and print. The sender of the message is usually a professional communicator that often represents an organization. Mass communication is an expensive process. Unlike interpersonal communication, feedback for mass communication is usually slow and indirect. Journalism language is perfectly reflected in mass communication as concerns its organization within the journalistic system.

The analysis of journalistic language leads to an overview of the components of journalists' language structure, enriched with information aimed at removing some confusion that exists in its respect. The study of this kind of language involves identifying different types of media language by different broadcast channels and creating a type of writing required by stylistic qualities such as brevity, clarity and pragmatism of the discourse. The journalistic style is distinguished mainly by accuracy, freshness of the language, honesty, appropriateness and efficiency<sup>1</sup>.

A professional, civic and even patriotic duty of all journalists is to use and promote the language in an exemplary manner. In other words, to draw the text or talk on the radio and television in a literary language, as it is orderly set by grammars and normative and academic dictionaries.

The relevance of language in our social existence was stressed by sociolinguist and philosophers. The German philosophers emphasized the link between language and nation, the first one being the basis of the second one. The national consciousness is also related to

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<sup>1</sup> Preda, Sorin, *Tehnici de redactare în presa scrisă*, Editura Polirom, Iași, 2006, pp. 43-44

language, even there are voices denouncing “the trend towards the creation of national consciousness based on language as ‘tribalism’” (Steton-Watson, 1977:472)<sup>2</sup>.

The publicist style is used in public speeches and printed public works which are addressed to a broad audience and devoted to important social or political events, public problems of cultural or moral character.

It falls into three varieties, each having its own distinctive features. Unlike other formal styles, the publicist style has spoken varieties, in particular, the *oratorical* sub-style. The development of radio and television has brought into being a new spoken variety – the radio and television commentary. The other two are the *essay* and *articles* in newspapers, journals and magazines.

The general aim of the publicist style is to exert influence on public opinion, to convince the reader or the listener that the interpretation given by the writer or the speaker is the only correct one and to cause him to accept the point of view expressed in the speech, essay or article not merely by logical argumentation, but by emotional appeal as well<sup>3</sup>.

Do journalists have their own methods of writing and presenting events? Can we speak about certain own recipes or patterns specific to journalists? Does the journalistic text have certain features which set it apart from other types of texts, giving it a distinct status among various types of writings? We will try to provide answers in this article, enlarging upon the approach from journalistic language perspective as an individualized language among other languages.

Learning to write is a hard and solitary work, which requires, beyond the talent and skill, a longer expertise. And that means listening, reading, studying and writing as much. All good journalists know this, as they know that all of quality writings have several common points: they are clear, easy to read, they use a common language, stimulate interest and “entertain” the readers. Meanwhile, writing well is to write appropriately: adequacy to public, to the media channel, as well as to the genre’s requirements.

Journalistic or publicist style is specific to mass media because it is intended for a heterogeneous audience, with a different professional training or various levels of culture. This

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<sup>2</sup> Goudenhoft, Gabriela, *Diaspora is going online. Identity, language and digital communication*, în **JRLS Journal of Roumanian Literary Studies**, Volume 6/2015, p.153

<sup>3</sup> Goumovskaya, Galina, *Publicistic Style*, published in **English for Specific Purposes**, no 6/2007

style includes a wide variety of texts. The aim it pursues is a public information one, but also of commenting different aspects related to social life, aspects of economic and political interest, explained for a general comprehension.

Each article must be clear in concept, organization and language, otherwise it needs to be rethought and rewritten. This rule is most appropriate to the journalistic style than to any other style. Newspapers are often read in crowded and noisy places by people who have other things to do and who use to read the news in a more superficial way, so things must be clearly presented on the paper. We must take care to include every stage in a narrative, every event in a sequence and every step in a reasoning. When the idea of a journalistic text jumps from A to C and leaves the reader the task of realizing that between the two there is a B this is irritating and creates confusion and misleading. We must not assume that the reader already knows the subject<sup>4</sup>.

Harmonization of the journalistic text is matching the style, tone and rhythm of the article and its subject. Naturally, not all topics require a special treatment, but some need to be addressed with sensitivity. Issues of life and death, for example, should always be treated seriously. The language and construction should be cohesive, the verbs active and direct sentences-reduced, with just a few adjectives.

Coherence is understood in relation to the reader's language skills, communication situation, its social and psychological status, communication purpose and other situations (sickness, inner experience etc.). It finds that a text is coherent for some readers and anomalous for others, which is explained by everyone's ability to accede or not to the world of the text.

A text is not coherent in "itself" as abstract entity, it awakens expectations and is consistent with respect to a receiver or a community of receptors to whose expectations the text does respond. The coherent journalistic text circulates messages which consistently meet the expectations and needs for information and entertainment. Cohesion can be defined as a link between linguistic units that make up a text, link that is expressed by grammatical and semantic features and relationships (e.g. "a table in the middle based on calculations and probabilities") is a proper formulation in terms from grammar rules view, but aberrant in meaning from the perspective of the terms' meaning associated in the enunciation.

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<sup>4</sup> *Randall, David, Jurnalul universal*, (ediția a II-a, revăzută și adăugită), Editura Polirom, Iași, 2007 pp. 248-250

There are features as a sine qua non condition for a journalistic text written in a correct and accurate language:

- The use of the literary language alongside everyday language use, a mixture of elements coming from the other functional styles: administrative, scientific, fiction (artistic) or colloquial
- The variety and richness of vocabulary caused by the diversity of the thematic area which was approached
- Using accessible language determined by the variety of the target audience to whom it is addressed
- Using linguistic clichés such as (Bucharest – the little Paris or Russia- the Mother country)
- Calls to processes designed to capture reader's attention such as: exciting titles and subtitles, usage of pictures and graphics (the color)
- Exclusion of personal and scientific concepts and explanations of strict specialization
- Accuracy - is style' ability to use words strictly necessary to communication, to find the words to perfectly express the idea that the speaker wishes to transmit. Deviations: tiring crowding of words and digression (deviation from the topic);
- Purity - is given by the strict usage of the words admitted by the cultivated style of language. Deviations arise from ignorance, lack of reading, unconscious imitation and abusive use of neologisms and barbarisms.
- Naturalness - a clear expression with a connection. Deviations lead to a theatrical and affected style ;
- Simplicity - is obtained by the use of accessible words, common terms, an ordinary everyday style and by choosing the word that best expresses the idea.

Languages are made up of a sum of texts, languages contain texts and any text has the language features it represents. In this optic, the journalistic text has the journalistic language features, namely an amount of verbal expressions, characteristics of this area. Journalistic texts (press articles) generally have a narrative structure, characterized by the introduction of the informative subject within the presentation, its development and conclusion of the text of the press.

The introduction in the text of the press (which some specialists call attack) is extremely important because of this sequence depends the capture of readers' attention. The beginning from

the very first words must be like a gunshot, as an "attack", that causes astonishment or raise a question mark. The beginning of the journalistic text should be interesting, concise, provocative, intelligent, informative and incentive.

It must contain a paradox, a smart meaning overturning or an extremely powerful image. In the introduction (attack) the most important element of the article is directly or indirectly (suggestive) stated, In writing journalistic texts techniques, there are stated, as introduction forms, the attacks in the form of interrogation, storytelling, quotation, description or as observant, humorous, philosophical and paradoxical form, directly and significantly addressable, counting on reader' curiosity. The first sentence is the most important, because if it does not urge us to read the rest of the text, the article may be considered "dead".

Many of journalistic style characteristics are determined by the fundamental need of publishers to provide new elements, to produce surprises in order to arouse the reader's interest and to continue a communication always threatened by haste, boredom and overtraining. As novelty does not always occur in ideas or information, few and repetitive in the sphere of everyday life, seeking novelty often transfers on the language. There's nothing new in saying that speakers may refer in many ways to the same person or to the same events and that the selection of a designation or a description of several possible, is a manifestation of subjectivity in language.

An old theoretical concern has been updated by the research on the political and journalistic language, in this case, choosing "tags" for persons and events is sometimes accepted "as a natural result of the existence of different perspectives on the same reality", but it is often regarded with suspicion as a form of manipulation ("designation tendentious")<sup>5</sup>.

With the motto of unity in diversity, the EU insists on the contribution of many cultures, traditions and languages to the project of a united Europe. On the other hand, in recent years (especially in the context of the economic crisis) many voices assert the failure of the European multicultural project, due to the EU's failure to achieve a real integration.<sup>6</sup> But irrespective of the European economic Crisis, people all over the European continent find time to spend a considerable proportion of their leisure hours with mass media, together totaling more hours than

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<sup>5</sup> Zafiu, Rodica, *Diversitate stilistică în româna actuală*, Universitatea din București, 2003

<sup>6</sup> Matiuța, Cristina, *Identity and Multiculturalism in the European Union*, in vol. **Studies on Literature, Discourse and Multicultural Dialogue**, ARHIPELAG Publishing House, XXI, 2013, p. 29

children spend in school or families spend in conversation. Through the media, people are positioned, or position themselves, in relation to a flood of images and information about both worlds distant in space or time as well as the world close to home. A considerable body of research from diverse disciplines over the past century has traced the complex and subtle ways in which the media have become an integral part of our everyday lives, implicated in the structuring of our domestic practices, our social relationships, our very identity<sup>7</sup>.

People in Western countries probably learn more language from media publications than from oral communication with their fellows. The production of media language is huge and its language is heard not only by a few persons but by mass audiences. Media are dominating presenters of language in our society at large. News is determined by values and the kind of language in which that news is told, reflects and expresses these values. The readers feel that the way in which language is used, must affect the content of what we receive from media.

Media communication has several particularities which distinguish it from face-to-face communication and offer advantages to the linguist: multiple originators, a mass simultaneous audience, a fragmented audience, absence of feedback and general accessibility to the public. All these particularities have a deep effect on the shape of media language, on how it is produced, on audience's ability to perceive media content and on communicators' ability to make themselves understood.

Media generate a lot of the language that is heard in society. Media language is often criticized and the presumed bad effects are common in the public debates ironically conducted in the newspapers' own columns. Media language is the most essential tool and expression of its messages and offers lexical advantages over face-to-face communication. It is intended for mass public consumption and offer the potential for good quality recording of spoken language in radio or television situations.

Media language has a double function: it may tell things about media itself and about the language used by journalists. Sociolinguists have tended to consider media as a second class means of getting access to the conversational data. Social pressures are continually operating

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<sup>7</sup> Lunt, P., and Livingstone, S., *Language and the media: An emerging field for social psychology*. In H. Giles and P. Robinson (Eds.), **The New Handbook of Language and Social Psychology**, 2nd edition. London: John Wiley, 2001

upon language, not from some remote point in the past, but as an immanent social force acting in the living present.<sup>8</sup>

The news is seldom a solo performance. News media offer the classic case of language produced by multiple parties. Media audiences are large and multilayered, ranging from the interviewer whom a newsmaker addresses face to face, to the absentee mass audience, which itself consists of different segments. Social interaction in linguistic changes is also determined by media language<sup>9</sup>. News production processes mean we can gain access to language on the production line as it is composed and edited by journalists and newswriters. In the print media we now have a precise, large and consistent archive since the first modern newspapers were produced in the seventeenth century.

In recent decades the media have been an unprecedented amount of change in quantity, technology and wider public participation. New media modes have come to the forefront: newspapers and radio have been joined by television and the internet. The speed of transmission has increased and many more readers or viewers participate both passively or actively. A flood of publications have attempted to analyze the media in recent years. Relatively few have investigated the language of the media in any depth, surprisingly perhaps, since language is at the core of media communication. Even visual modes such as television and billboards are interwoven with broader trends and issues in speech, writing and sign. Language is central to the way the media operate<sup>10</sup>. Whether in written, spoken or graphical form, the linguistic and interactional properties of communication underpin all contemporary media genres.

To linguists, media language can provide data relevant to questions of theoretical importance. For instance, news stories are the common narratives of our time. Their discourse structure casts light on the way in which stories are generally told and structured<sup>11</sup>.

A synthetic overview on the links between language, identity and communication is still useful and might bring new interpretations on a very current phenomenon and maybe offer a key of understanding the way our world is dwelling in discourse, understood as spoken or written language, if we were to paraphrase a famous line of Hölderlin:” ... full of merit, yet poetically, man dwells on this earth”<sup>12</sup>.

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<sup>8</sup> Labov, William, *Sociolinguistic Patterns*, University of Pennsylvania Press, Philadelphia, 1991, p. 3

<sup>9</sup> Bell, Allan, *The Language of News Media*, Blackwell Publishers, Oxford, 1996, p. 17

<sup>10</sup> Aitchison, Jean and Lewis, Diana M., *New Media Language*, Routledge, London, 2003, p. 2

<sup>11</sup> Bell, Allan, *Op. cit.*, p. 6

In the news are carried the stories and images of our day. News is determined by values and the kind of language in which that news is told, reflect and expresses those values. Audience feels that the way in which language is used must affect the content of what we receive from the media. The linguistic means advertisers use to try and persuade us, the way news stories are told, these are all interesting uses of language in their own right. How the media use language often seems larger than life and research which describes such uses has its own interest. Language is an essential part of the content of what media purvey to us. Language is a tool and expression of media messages, media language offering the linguistic advantages over face-to-face communication. The language of journalism also reveals as a mirror of the wider society and culture, this kind of language affecting positively or negatively attitudes and opinions in society through the way it presents people and issues.

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<sup>12</sup> Goudenhoft, Gabriela, *Op. cit.*, p. 150

9. Zafiu, Rodica, *Diversitate stilistică în româna actuală*, Universitatea din București, 2003