

Angela Smith & Michael Higgins, *The Language of Journalism. A Multi-genre Perspective*, 2nd edition, Bloomsbury, London, 2020, 224 p.

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For more than four centuries, journalism has entered people's lives giving them accounts of battles, treaties, epidemics, economy, as well as court gossip. Ever since the first handwritten newsletters that were made public in late 16th century, journalism has developed to more complex forms in the 21st century. The book under scrutiny here is not so much about the history of journalism, but about journalism as a craft that has turned into a large community of practice which uses language as a tool to build stories that function as arguments and shape understanding. The second edition of this book is a special type of textbook since it focuses on how a particular type of language can be analysed in the context of a well-established framework (Critical Discourse Analysis) with traits from Conversation Analysis and extensions to Dialogue Studies. The book is organized into six large chapters, special attention being given to various media platforms that display written and spoken forms of language: broadcast, magazine, newspaper, sports, and digital journalism.

The authors start from the idea that language is complex, it is not the sum of the parts, but a whole that needs to be integrated with other human abilities. This reminds of Weigand's Mixed Game Model (2010) whose core idea is integration of interrelated issues—the mind, the body, perception, emotions, feelings, thinking, reasoning, speaking, the culture and the environment—in order to come to an understanding. In her theory, Weigand reconciles Wittgenstein's view (1953) of language games (understood as performance) and Searle's (1975) fundamental speech act types (understood as competence) considering that the two views can be settled at the level of competence-in-performance, i.e. in the minds of human beings "who are able to mediate between order and disorder, between fundamental types of competence and countless ways

of performance" (Weigand, 2010, p. 83). Since language is dynamic, the language of journalism in particular will be constantly changing so that it will reflect social contexts, trying to emphasize common social identity traits with the audience (p. 10). The authors devote almost half of the first chapter to explaining why they chose Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) as their main framework for analysing this particular type of language. First of all, they consider the journalistic text is enacted by means of particular discourse practices that are influenced and, in their turn, influence social practices. Since it is a social and cultural practice, language will display ideology understood as "a set of beliefs or values that can be explained through interest or position of some social group" (Elster, 1982, p. 123) as well as power. Thus, CDA focuses on language in its social context, looking at producer-consumer interaction (a view borrowed from economy). Yet, I can equate 'producing' with an *initiative action* (the speaker makes a dialogic claim), the fundamental concept of Dialogue Studies (Weigand, 2010), but I cannot help noticing that 'consuming' is only one way of fulfilling a dialogic claim by means of a *reactive action*. This idea can be further exploited if one takes into consideration the latest developments of digital journalism that allowed various voices to contribute to the narrative in a constant game of action and reaction, speakers and hearers constructing meaning, which is not necessarily clear and obvious from the outset, and trying to come to an understanding.

In the chapter entitled *Broadcast journalism*, the main aim of the authors is to discuss journalism as professional discourse as well as the various forms of engagement of audience. Before doing this, Smith and Higgins put together various answers to the question "What is news?" that were given in the past 50 years. It appears that most characteristics

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that were introduced in Galtung & Ruge (1965; e.g., frequency, magnitude, cultural meaningfulness, unexpectedness, human interest, negativity, i.e. scandal not routine) are still valid today together with Bell's (1991) suggestions for recency, competition, attribution, and facticity as well as Harcup & O'Neill's (2017) choice of celebrities, entertainment and shareability. From this point of view, I can say the book is well-documented and offers a bird's eye view of the main trends in the analysis of journalistic discourse both from the point of view of media studies and linguistic studies. The corpus of the analyses carried out by Smith and Higgins is comprised mainly of British and American data, with some excerpts from the international versions of Russia Today and Al Jazeera, models which seems to have influenced the way journalism is done throughout the world. When performing analyses of excerpts from various TV shows covering more than 30 years of broadcast journalism, the authors notice the shift towards mimicking face-to-face interaction and building a relationship with the audience based mainly on sociability. This pseudo-dialogue (Mustajoki *et al.*, 2018) or "para-social interaction" (Horton & Wohl, 1982) is achieved by quick phone-ins, text messages, tweets or fragments of Facebook posts, as well as by informal talk and direct address towards physically absent others, sometimes by staged or choreographed banter between co-presenters, and is meant to encourage empathy towards the emerging information. Although in news interviews roles are pre-allocated, it may happen that shifts in footing (alignment) appear and the animator (i.e., the producer of an utterance) turns into an author or a principal (i.e., the person whose stance the utterance expresses). Thus, the rigidity of a news interview dissipates and the only thing that remains is the fact that the speaker (the interviewer/ the journalist), the hearer (the interviewee), and the audience (the bystanders) are trying to come to an understanding. On the one hand, the journalist and the interviewee are acting and reacting in a specific environment and are trying to come to an understanding given the specific circumstances; on the other, the journalist is trying to come to an understanding with the audience, who is always on his/ her mind. Such an embodied performance is meant to trigger an emotional response from the audience that is also provoked by aural and visual stimuli such as graphics,

animations, and sound clips.

Unlike broadcast journalism, it appears that *magazine journalism*, the focus of Chapter 3, is more prone to multimodality, i.e., the use of language, image, colour, font, and placement. The authors first perform a thorough description of various types of magazines both from the point of view of the façade (cover) and their contents (topics covered), and discuss the use of colours, number of pages, layout and graphology (i.e., size and type of font), reaching the conclusion that serif fonts are mainly used in men's and sports magazines, while handwriting suggests spontaneity and dynamism and could be most frequently found in women's and cooking magazines. This has further led them to an analysis of gendered magazines, based on the stereotypes stemming from mainstream research carried out in the 1990s and early 2000s by Tannen (1991, 1995) and Coates (1995, 1996), and more recently by Talbot (2010) and Ward (2020). Given the time span under scrutiny and the fact that magazines migrated from print to online, the authors contend that, while content differs, the linguistic strategies seem to have diminished between men's and women's magazines (p. 71). In other words, no matter the community of readers, editors are trying to build a relationship with them, to create the impression of two-way interaction by employing informal language and urging readers to engage with the text. They are also displaying a high degree of entitlement by means of direct quotation of authorities, experts, by means of reporting verbs, free direct speech to paraphrase, and by means of time and person deictics.

Gender is further discussed in Chapter 4, *Newspaper journalism*. The analysis is thorough, relying on key terminology in linguistics, more precisely it focuses on lexical issues (with identification of preferred/ dispreferred words and phrases that build masculinity and femininity), morpho-syntax and pragmatics. The authors also analyse quality and popular (tabloid) newspapers from the point of view of headlines and structure of news stories, reaching the conclusion that the headlines "hook" the readers because they are short (up to seven letters), contain wordplay, and may be intertextual or humorous. When focusing on the structure of news stories, they comment on the differences between written and oral narratives, drawing the conclusion that the former develop in spiral and have the inverted

pyramid structure, i.e. from the most newsworthy information to background information. Although it is not clearly stated, when analysing quality and popular newspapers, the authors follow the rhetorical triangle (ethos, pathos, logos). Thus, one could draw the conclusion that tabloids favour pathos since their speakers (journalists) tend to create familiarity with the interlocutor by employing membership categories that exploit empathy and by engaging the passions of the readership, while quality newspapers journalists tend to use a more focused lexicon.

Chapter 5 is built around *Sports journalism*, more specifically on live and online commentaries because such a type of discourse favours the 'now' moment. Although sports journalism has not particularly attracted the attention of linguists, from the point of view of CDA, it interferes with discourses of militarism, race and nation as well as with formation of (national) identity. The structure of this type of journalism is not complex, but it can take the form of narration, evaluation, speculation, and summary (cf. Delin, 2000). It appears that in the past three decades, having a dialogue between a professional journalist and a (former) player has become the norm in sports journalism, building on the excitement of the actual game. The two speakers take various roles (e.g., subjective/ objective commentator, expert, evaluator) and build two layers of narration: about the actual game (narration and evaluation by the professional journalist) and about aspects that seem unrelated to the actual game (speculation and summary by the former player). The analyses are carried out from a conversational point of view with a focus on organization of turn-taking, overlaps, and interruptions, at the same time bringing to front the multimodal aspect of this particular type of language (e.g., the role of silence and use of images from the game). When it comes to discussing online reports and commentaries, the authors comment on the extensive use of emojis, hashtags, and capitalization in order to create involvement, to make people creatively engage with the content and thus create a sense of community. It appears that sports journalism has evolved a lot and nowadays requires a very high level of literacy from the readers since it has become a complex interweaving of static and dynamic text, social media and web pages, official and unofficial voices giving opinions.

These comments and analyses paved the way

for the final chapter of the book, *Digital journalism*, where the authors discuss how journalism has become more dynamic, fluid, and came to include a wider variety of voices as well as new forms of engagement. Throughout the chapter, Smith and Higgins try to answer the following question: *How did journalism change in the digital era?* It seems that digitalization meant an increased ease of access to information, an augmented sense of immediacy (the audience needs to be given updates about ongoing stories), but also deprofessionalization of journalism. Although journalese belongs to journalists, who are entitled to perform various specific speech acts or even to enact a persona for a specific story, the authors introduce and discuss the concept of 'citizen journalism' in close connection with the latest developments in the past decade when content tends to be created together by common users and professional journalists. In other words, agency and power changed: it is no longer the experiential voices that get to be heard in narratives, but other non-expert voices extend the news, widen the perspective and multiply the views in a game of persuasion, trying to influence the agenda of public discussion. Communities of readers seem to like 'citizen journalism' because it is uncultured, unschooled, uncut, i.e. it is authentic. A final point of interest is the rise of podcasts (a term coined in 2004 by Ben Hammersley, a BBC journalist) either for entertainment purposes, extension of broadcasts, or thematic news stories. From a linguistic perspective, podcasts rely on informal language and make the news more conversational, bringing it closer to a way of socializing.

The second edition of *The Language of Journalism* stands out by clarity and rigorous organization of information, while the analyses offer valuable insights into a specific language that has evolved tremendously since the turn of the century. Although each chapter contains a section dedicated to specific conclusions, I would have liked a final chapter where the authors could have presented, in a diachronic manner, the evolution of this type of discourse as well as suggestions for further research. What is more, a useful addition would have been the inclusion of other relevant texts to be considered for analysis using the suggested framework as well as the full transcripts of the texts used throughout the book. In spite of small typos and other editorial

concerns, the book is a valuable contribution to the field of discourse analysis that can be used by students in linguistics and mass communication as well as

by practitioners in the field of communication and practicing journalists.

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