

EFFECTIVE WRITING (GRAMMAR AND VOCABULARY) IN ROMANIAN JOURNALISTIC TEXTS

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Abstract: The journalistic language represents a special discourse, because it is, at the same time, controversial and fascinating. The essence of language is to get renewed every day. The borrowings from other languages, the internal changes and their correct use are vital. We can see that the media promotes the language the most, as it is aware of its tendencies and can influence it every day, along with its speakers.

The study underlines the tendencies in journalistic language and the real aspects regarding the general language evolution, aspects imposed by common speakers and by trend.

It is emphasized the evolution of the mediatic language approached in several publications.

Nowadays, we can talk about a linguistic fashion that is approached especially in the journalistic language. While the public receiver is attracted by this linguistic fashion, the press language becomes a familiar one, extremely accessible. From this perspective, the mediatic language gains its role of „a nonformal guide of effective writing”.

Keywords: effective writing, mediatic language, linguistic fashion, journalistic language.

The language, as a whole, forms a system of signs that reflects a system of ideas (Graur 1965:207). The concept of *system* denotes the existence of certain elements that influence each other mutually and that are co-coordinated one with the other, for the purpose of fulfilling their common function. Taken all round, the language has a systemic character and this feature is to be found in all its constitutive parts: phonetics, vocabulary, grammar. The linguist Al. Graur (1972:11) speaks of the three main functions of the language: *of communication, of denomination, and of expression*, explaining the way in which they act and underlining the fact that the *denomination function* is the most important one, because it concerns the externalization of the marks by words, in order to make the difference between words. *The communication function* consists of the speaker's ability to communicate an idea, an opinion or any type of message. *The expression function* insures the communication, with the help of language, of the speaker's feelings. Al. Graur (1972: 12) underlines the importance of this function, but he draws the attention to the fact that it was the denomination function, and not the expression function that formed the basis for creating the language.

The journalistic text is the result of the journalist's activity; it appears under its final form, following the activity of gathering, selecting, hierarchically differentiating and condensing the information. Therefore, the journalistic text doesn't offer gross information in the communication process, because it is "filtered", "treated" by the journalist, so that it corresponds to the needs of the public.

Any attempt to approach the syntagm *journalistic text*, including here defining and characterizing it, involves a primary definition of the notion of text. The text is perceived as follows, in different understandings and concepts:

- * A written document; what is expressed in writing; the content of a literary, scientific work; original writing.

- * Verbal or written communication unit, of variable dimensions.

- * Significant practice.
- * Ordered succession of words, sentences, compound sentences, communicating different ideas (Cornea 1998:17).

From this perspective, the essential features of the journalistic writing can be presented as follows:

- ★ reduced complexity, maximum legibility;
- ★ credibility, concision, clarity;
- ★ sentences / short compound sentences;
- ★ lack of figures of speech, gerunds, genitive enumerations;
- ★ reducing phrases up to disappearance of the subjectivism elements;
- ★ using key words, with a strong impact on the receiver public;
- ★ context saturation, generated by the existence of answers to elementary questions:

Who? What? When? Where? How? Why?.

The stylistic construction of the journalistic writings is made up of simple, telegraphic sentences, containing a lexical diversity and less specific elements of vocabulary, than in the other functional styles. The existence of neologisms forms another fundamental feature of the journalistic writing.

In the theory of the functional styles of language, Ion Coteanu (Coteanu 1973:16) denies the existence of the journalistic style, as independent style. Moreover, the linguist was of the opinion that the journalist style doesn't form a functional unit of the language, because it is situated at the incidence between the belletrist-literary style and the technical-scientific style. In other words, the journalistic style was considered "a branch" of a main style, being subordinated to it.

Starting from the premise of the existence of journalism (that functions separately from the belletristic literature or from the scientific one), the researcher Gheorghe Bolocan (1961:37-43) adopted a critical position referring to the thesis of Ion Coteanu, proving the independent functionality of the journalistic style, as independent style. By the study accomplished, Bolocan proved that the journalistic style "doesn't lack individuality". Using the statistical method and having as analysis sample, publications from two distinct periods of the Romanian press (1920-1939 and 1950-1960), Gheorghe Bolocan proved the assertion of the journalistic style among the other language styles. Starting from the idea that the journalistic style "changes from a lexical point of view, quicker than any other style, being dependant on the political-social life" (Bolocan 1961:41), the researcher performed a quality and quantity press study on texts belonging to different journalistic species (news articles, press releases, comments, editorials, reports, parodies, chronics etc.). The quantity press study consisted of classifying the words extracted from the press speech, according to parts of speech, and the quality study followed the identification of the main vocabulary features, resulted from the frequency of using some words. Following these researches, the main conclusion was that the journalist style represents an alert, dynamic style, characterised by the large number of neologisms (a feature specific to the technical-scientific style). As concerns the relation noun – verb, in the journalistic style, the frequency of the nouns is more increased, and the verbs used are fewer. From the point of view of topics, it is an objective one, where the accent is on action; the sentences / complex sentences have a short or average length, and the figures of speech play a minor part. The approached speech implies the

existence of a common knowledge code that allows the receiver to quickly decipher and assimilate the transmitted message. From our point of view, the configuration of the journalistic style was and is a pragmatic, mathematical one, well calculated (at the level of the text construction, as well as from the point of view of using the language), different from the narrative structures existing in literature. If in literature, there exist diverse procedures for configuring the message (literary text), depending on the author's intentions/motivations, the journalism preserves the basic condition of its existence: the message is conceived exclusively for the receiver. In this sense, we can observe the fact that the journalistic style is clearly distinct from the belletrist-literary style, as approach/composition, as well as motivation.

Therefore, in order for the communication process to be more efficient, the journalist has to take into account all these aspects. The sender – journalist has to bear the following in mind:



he legibility and understanding (decoding) of a text consists of its quality to facilitate its immediate understanding.



he legibility is given by:

- simpleness of style
- choosing the right words
- logical construction of the text;



n important element in judging the information value is the number of readers that will be interested by a certain subject;



he longer the effect of the information is, the better the receiving of the message is.

But we have to take into account those media contents that have as a purpose to convince the masses in one direction or another, used especially in the public field. Gheorghe Schwartz (2001:136), quoting Gilles Ferreol and Noel Flageul, referring to the relation sender-receiver, considers that the journalist builds the whole discourse on the receiver's interest, using certain techniques that may convince or manipulate.

It is presented a model for solving the objections, where:

a. There are used numbers, in order to clarify or classify an object aimed at and to obtain a method effect.

b. For the presentation of the conditions and obtaining an underlining effect there are used such words as: “*it is necessary ...*”, “*it has to ...*”.

c. There are used such questions as: “*How can you, on one hand ... and on the other hand ...?*,” in order to make difficulties, to obtain the effect of doubt.

d. For an involvement effect, the participation impression is aroused, by such statements as: “*you have noticed yourself ...*”.

e. In order to valorise own ideas, attitudes, and the effect to be of example, the sender ascertains: “*I, myself am using ...*”.

f. For favouring the understanding and obtaining the complicity effect, there are used such statements, as: “*I agree to you ...*”.

The journalistic language aims at exact rules, as concerns the process of drawing up news. Starting from the premise that the news becomes a very specific way of communication, one can say that this journalistic genre sends a referential message that is neutral, due to the degree of objectivity.

In the process of journalistic communication, the issuer-journalist uses the informational frame, by exploiting an average language, accessible to the receiving public, for the purpose of a quicker decoding.

For a better receiving from the public, the journalistic text has to fulfil three compulsory conditions (Pospai 2005:110):

-Presenting facts with exactness, according to the way in which they took place. In this sense, the exactness determines a few linguistic principles for drawing up the message. For example, there are eluded such formulations as “*it appears that ...*”, “*it is said that ...*”, “*it might ...*”, because of the idea of uncertainty that they build in the mind of the receiving-public.

The exactness of drawing up an item of news generates other features specific to this genre: simpleness, concision, precision – all being determined by the famous “*Quintilian’s rule*”, given by formulating some answers to the questions *Who? What? When? Where? Why? How?*. The answers generated by the six questions contain information elements that should find themselves in the first two paragraphs of the news texts (in the *lead* and *sublead*), being presented afterwards in decreasing order, according to their importance, in the structure of the “*reversed pyramid*”.

-The existence of a balance in presenting the facts of an item of news, so that the receiver builds for itself a more exact image of reality. The most frequent news are the ones generated by conflict situations (misunderstandings between the political parties, strikes, labour conflicts etc.) that have to be presented by exposing more points of view, for the purpose of outlining an objective vision of facts.

-The great clarity of the message generates the exact receiving and quick decoding of the news by the receiving-public. The clarity offers balance to the news text and efficiency in spreading and its receiving by the public.

Another particularity of the journalistic texts is that they have a very pragmatic, mathematic and well-calculated configuration (not only as regards their structure, but also as regards the language used) different from the literary texts.

Good news writing is concise, clear, and accurate. That sounds simple enough, but it’s actually quite challenging, because the reporters have a tendency to want to include everything they have learned in their stories.

Generally speaking, news stories have shorter sentences and paragraphs than most other types of writing. Each paragraph contains one main idea. A new paragraph begins when a new idea, character, or setting is introduced.

By taking into account the fact that they address their texts to a general audience, journalists must use simple, direct language that is easy to understand, with more nouns and verbs than adjectives and adverbs. Well-written news stories are not vague, ambiguous, or repetitious, because every word counts.

The vocabulary has to be well chosen, so that known terms are used.

Descriptive words that create visual sensations in the listener's mind are used by journalists.

Regional, trivial terms, jargon elements will be avoided. The journalist has to write for everyone. Using the language and the correct grammar rules is a basic condition for the journalist writing. This leads to the *credibility of the journalistic text*.

Words used in the journalistic text have to be clear, easily understandable.

Generally, the complex sentences built in a negative manner, form an obstacle for clarity. They are more difficult to be understood by the audience.

There is no better way to give colour to a text than by using active verbs. They are more efficient than the adjectives, because they create the feeling of action. Such verbs have to be used that tell the story and the adjectives have to be avoided, as possible. The adjectives harden the receiving of the journalistic text. The journalist Malcolm F. Mallette (1998:38) asserts that the well-written article doesn't need more adjectives or verbs, but a few good ones, used in the proper places. When nouns and verbs are combined properly, the complex sentences offer a complete description. Adjectives and adverbs qualify or modify. When an adjective or adverb is used, the noun or the verb has to have need of a qualification or modification. The same directing lines are applied to adjectives.

The qualifiers such as “also”, “very”, “enough”, “rather”, “a kind of”, “some” and “pretty much” will be avoided. They weaken the force of the article.

There have to be avoided the superfluous introductory adverbs that represent a useless accentuation. There exist examples of adverbs: *ironically, simply*.

If the complex sentence is written skilfully, it will show the coincidence, irony or simpleness, and the reader will not be confused by the adverb (Mallette 1998:38).

It is well known that, in the contemporary society, the valuable journalists are considered opinion-formers. “The impact of a press material is manifested when between a journalist and a receiver, there takes place a dialogue, when the latter lingers upon the information and looks for their place in its value system, when it doesn't forget everything it found out, immediately after having read the newspaper, having listened to the news or having seen the show on TV, when the new information confirms its prejudices or obliges it to a new analysis.” (Schwartz 2001:138).

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