

BUILDING THE NARRATIVE STRUCTURE OF THE JOURNALISTIC WRITING. STUDY CASE: *DECAT O REVISTA* MAGAZINE

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Abstract: When writing a narrative story, the journalist uses the five W's & H: Who, What, When, Where, Why, How. In other words, he first chooses the action/the plot (what is happening/happened). After this, it will naturally appear the source of the tension or problem - which is the beginning of the rising action of the story and the characters (who is involved). Second, the author has to include geographical and cultural, religious or political background that serves as a backdrop that supports the story's action (where and when). Then, the author has to choose the perspective of the story, meaning a specific technique for a given effect or purpose - including symbolism, irony, tone, mood, atmosphere - as well as the writing style, including figurative language, sentence type, diction, rhetorical devices and effects (why). In this matter, the journalism borrowed everything from the literary language (novel, short story etc.).

The study emphasizes the way in which the journalistic stories published in Decat o Revista magazine are built, from the perspective of narrativity.

Keywords: Journalistic Writing, Narrativity, Narrative Story, Narrative Structure

Being an independent magazine, printed by Media DoR Association, *Decat o Revista* reveals the readers real journalistic stories. The articles are attractive and they are built in following the narrative structure of the non-fictional stories. Previous documentation and selecting the essential information form the main step in outlining the successful narrative structure, in accomplishing the report / journalistic text. Structuring the basic ideas, depending on the main theme, is an important step, just as selecting the approach angle (equivalent of the techniques of looking at a picture: vue-avec technique, fisheye technique, overview technique, scarab-eye technique etc.) is. Choosing the opening (lead or chapeau) is made depending on the degree of impact it will have on the target public (proximity principle, human interest, shock and unusual character of the proposal etc.).

The structure of the journalistic stories of the magazine configure two main types of narrative plan and they are:

The Three-Motion plan :

- *introduction*: exposing **the main theme** (or its subject, in short).
- *development*: widening the theme by **developing the conflict**, focus on the issue (event) from more angles, witnesses, testimonies etc.
- *closing*: **consequences**, possible effects, dilemmas ...

The standard order of the plan is overset or counter-pointed, depending on the focus needs specific to each issue, but without burdening the main theme with secondary topics and without drowning it in opinion "considerations".

This plan is revealed in the article *The Man from Bucharest: Bingo seller* (<http://www.decatorevista.ro/bucuresteanul-vanzatorul-de-bingo/>).

The Five-Motion plan:

- *introduction* or **exposing the main theme in short** (or the global subject).
- argumentative *development* of the main theme.

- *exposing* in short the secondary theme (themes) or **introducing the witness-characters and their testimonies.**

- *conflict*: **motivating the intersection relations of the main theme with the secondary themes**; argumentative-conflictual valorisation of the testimonies, depending on their relevance for the main theme.

-*conclusion*: obvious consequences and possible effects of the fact presented.

The standard order is sometimes overset, counter-pointed, re-dimensioned, depending on the focus, on the emotional and intellectual significance, that one of the sections had from the consignee's perspective. The more the true or emotional value of a paragraph is increased, the more it will be moved towards the beginning / attack section (lead), or, if the stylistic requirements impose it, to the conclusion area.

The chronological order for developing the facts / events presented, has to be thought from the time of determining the approach angle in the report. The obligation to keep the chronological order in case of reports with marked active impact is essential. The sequence chronology is made depending on the dramatic intensity of the events and on the significant accents the main theme directs.

The importance of observing the exact chronology of events is also valid in case of such texts, such as the article *The Man from Bucharest: Grandpa Jean's Livingroom* (<http://www.decatorevista.ro/bucuresteanul-vanzatorul-de-bingo/>) that motivate a thesis, an opinion, a hypothetical, but probable cause-effect relation. The decoupage of the exact chronology of the events is made on the selection of elements of the main theme and of the secondary themes.

The article *The Man from Bucharest: Maia Bread* (<http://www.decatorevista.ro/bucuresteanul-vanzatorul-de-bingo/>) is an excellent example for observing the way in which the chronotope of the story and the descriptions are configured.

The space-time (**chronotope**) is a context unit of the theme in the articles of the magazine. The focus is on space, when it is relevant for the main theme, because it forms a causal factor or an immediate condition for explaining the events. Reducing the special descriptions may concern the essential, choosing the most relevant visual elements reveals the image with symbolic meaning.

Predicative stimulation of the descriptive paragraphs is made by live, factual verbs that enter into the rhythm with the unfolding of the narrated action.

Educating the eye for the significant detail vitalises at the same time the event flow (the time), as well as the description rhythm, forming at the same time, a factor of emotional coupling for the consignee.

The textual game space-time is given by the description paragraphs, alternating with paragraphs of the temporal flux of the events. The factual accent is on the lead, which is accomplished by a direct, but emotional description of the unfolding space, and by the dynamic and synthetic narration of the event that reveals the theme; it is very efficient because the following paragraph balances the register in the other direction, to propose entering into the exact chronologic action.

The reversed chronology used in the article *The Man from Bucharest: The Library from "Cezar Petrescu"* (<http://www.decatorevista.ro/bucuresteanul-biblioteca-de-la-cezar-petrescu/>) becomes a structuring means of the text with demonstrative or emotional intention.

To start from the effects (consequences) implies, on one hand, a good fixation into the previous plan of the main theme, and, on the other hand, a closely sequenced part of the events and descriptions that have relevance for the fascicle of intentional significances. The reversed chronology is, stylistically, effective, because the ending will offer, retrospectively, a surprise or a change of attitude or of vision in the reader's eyes.

The title, the chapeau and the chronotope have a specific construction, given by: the importance of the element of space-time in the title, the relation between the title with the spatial-temporal mark and the ensemble of the page, or the technical ensemble of the newspaper number (news show, magazine etc.).

The balance between the dominant part of the theme (narration paradigm) and organising the ideas in paragraphs are relevant in building the reports of *Decat o Revista* Magazine. The balance between the actual narration passages and granting the information is, also, essential.

Organising the textual structure is accomplished on the play of the theme elements with the context elements. There isn't any good story without a credible and plastically exposed context, and that is the reason why *Decat o Revista* focuses on real stories about people living in Bucharest.

The logical relation between paragraphs and ideas ordered according to the thematic and syntagmatic paradigm of the chronotope is followed while configuring the journalistic stories. Each paragraph contains a central idea, or an event (narration, description or motivation context).

Even if, sometimes, the text structure doesn't observe a chronological order of the events, it is chose the counterpoint exposure of the deeds, or the reversed chronotope, from effects to causes, between the narration passages there always exists a **logical chain** from the point of view of the consignee.

For some of the stories, the **ending** is an opportunity to re-launch the whole text, because the journalist-storyteller keeps for it an essential fact, with conclusive or dubitative role.

The endings of the narrative structures in the report are of many kinds: *close endings* (with clear solving), *open endings* (with foreseeing certain possibilities), *the conclusive-synthetic ending*, *the ending resulted from deductions*, *the ending that verifies the hypothesis*, *the shock ending (in interrupted action)*, *the ending for the "follow up" (to be continued, we will keep you posted)*, *the affective ending (with the consignee "quoted as witness", in an imaginary dialogue)*, *the joke ending*, *the ending that surprises (because it overturns the argumentation (ironical-sarcastic), or contradicts the facts, detecting hidden significances, or last-minute pieces of information)*.

In the dramaturgy of the narrative text, the focus is on the character and action, the need to fix the character in the context field, becomes natural in this framework. Educating the ear for the essential line, that characterises the character, is compulsory. The major reducing of the character's portrait is limited to those plastic features that make it live for the reader. Because the central character coincides with the subject itself, the storyteller is not obliged to grant priority to the descriptive or definition discourse, in balance of a narration journalistic text, but to try to vitalise the exposure, insisting upon the facts that characterise it.

As concerns the central character in relation to the secondary characters, the characters with a major situation value are those voice-characters that give dynamics to the happening or bring a “bite of the real”. Those textual voices introduce new pieces of information, complete the vision with contradictory perspectives, determine actions of the central character, change the light on it.

Mark Miller says that storytelling is powerful because it has the ability to touch human beings at the most personal level. While facts are viewed from the lens of a microscope, stories are viewed from the lens of the soul. Stories address us on every level. They speak to the mind, the body, the emotions, the spirit, and the will. In a story a person can identify with situations he or she has never been in. The individual’s imagination is unlocked to dreaming what was previously unimaginable (Miller 2003:54).

The dramaturgical structure consists of dynamic development of the conflict and the attention on the climax. Setting the active passages is accomplished alternatively with “voice” passages or even dialogue (<http://www.decatorevista.ro/bucuresteanul-zi-frumoasa-in-vitan/>). The narration unfolding and cutting the paragraph-passages are conceived as a script.

The dramatic acceleration is accomplished in the action-description, dialogue relations. When the climax is on the dialogue, it is inevitably followed by an action reaction. This strategy reduces to the maximum the “off” comment, personally, and lets the voices activate themselves, distinguishing the characters or surprising the gesture or the action.

The reporters from *Decat o Revista* don’t avoid speculating the emotional, tensed value of the significance pauses. The verbal suspense may be loaded with infinitely greater significances, than a more detailed description.

Because the texts is more ample (as report-stories with a narration inquiry), the sequence frame is speculated by inter-titles, which give more information. The reading is thus facilitated and it is created a dramatic dynamics, “out of breath”.

In those narrative texts of the magazine, composed with dramaturgical structure, the conclusion comments are reduced to essential: it is more efficient that the conclusion area be left to the voice-characters, or to the consignee itself, by interrogations, dilemmatic sentences, implying the reasoning, reactions, and emotions.

The approach angle implies determining, from the start, a perspective that presents/narrates the events and represents the first step in writing the report. Hierarchically organising the ensemble of the information gathered along the documentation and selecting an assembly axle that orders facts and coordinates their selection is made carefully, so that the journalistic discourse is at the same time intelligible and alert.

Organising the frame or cutting out the (imaginary) frames is made depending on the unfolding rhythm of the actions and events surprised by the report.

Selecting the source “actors” and that of the effect “actors” generates the hierarchy of the direct transformations into “voices”.

Fixing a focus idea, preferably implicit (or explicit) is necessary, to motivate the type of construction, as well as the consignee’s interest.

Revealing the general plan forms another important strategy of *Decat o Revista* articles that details, in its turn, other essential steps:

- Writing the first passage, lead type (chapeau) that offers an attack angle in relation to the reader.

- Choosing and inserting the detail images that intensify the credibility and emotional character of the journalistic discourse.

- Building the ending.

- Choosing the right title and possible choice of the inter-titles.

A journalistic story is relevant when it teaches the readers something new and important about the world they live in. Therefore, in journalism, truth and relevance are not only determined by the relationship between the reader and the text – the bond between reality and the text is just as important. The text must point out important factors in the world. The readers should be able to get a clearer appreciation of reality through the journalistic text.

The writer Robert Ornstein affirmed that stories (in this case, the *journalistic stories*) are designed to embody—in their characters, plots, and imagery—patterns and relationships that nurture a part of the mind that’s unreachable in more direct ways, thus increasing our understanding and breadth of vision, in addition to fostering our ability to think critically. Stories activate the right side of the brain much more than ... reading normal prose. The right side of the brain provides “context,” the essential function of putting together the different components of experience. The left side provides the “text,” or the pieces themselves (Ornstein 1996:98).

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