

## INTRODUCTION

The interest expressed by the researchers in language sciences in respect to media corpora is not at all new. Although the first studies of media discourse go back to the 1970s, media discourse analysis, as a language phenomenon as well as a social and cultural practice, began in the 1980s. Without presuming to provide a definitive and complete overview, we will try to mark the major milestones achieved by media corpus research particularly in the Francophone area.

1. The research started around 1975, with the 28<sup>th</sup> issue of *Langue française*, which was centered on “nonliterary texts and discourses”. J. Peytard presents there his concept of “tabular reading” of the newspaper page while S. Moirand presents an anaphoric approach to the nominalization in the written press; S. Allaire discusses the “spoken French phrase in radio discourse” and M. Tardy addresses the linguistic and iconographic aspects of “television messages”. Finally, L. Porcher and K. Bochmann approach the linguistic characteristics of advertising texts that will be also analyzed, two years later, by V. Carvalho, A. Bentolila and N. Bachala in the 35<sup>th</sup> issue of the same journal but within the framework of a broader discussion on the “French functionalism and syntax”.

The 1980s mark an important achievement in the field through the publication of several seminal works: P. Charaudeau’s *Langage et discours* (1983) and the works of the Discourse Analysis Center of Paris 13, assembled in the volume *La presse: produit, production, réception* (1988). Also worthy of note are the following three approaches to journalistic texts, that made a significant contribution to a methodological level: C. Kerbrat-Orecchioni’s analysis at the end of chapter 2 in *L’énonciation* (1980), C. Fuchs’s analysis published in 1983 in *Langages*, and A. Petitjean’s study published in *Pratiques* in 1986<sup>1</sup>.

Starting with 1990, research on the media discourse undergoes a major expansion: entire books and journal issues are written on the subject. It is also the period when appear P. Charaudeau’s books – *La télévision* (1991), *Le discours d’information médiatique* (1997) –, and a series of studies on TV shows: *Le Trilogue* (1995) edited by C. Kerbrat-Orecchioni and C. Plantin, two books on the talk-show published by P. Charaudeau in collaboration with R. Ghiglione in 1997 and 1999, and the first works that F. Jost dedicates, between 1992 and 1999, to television analysis which will later become his favorite topic. The discourse and socio-political aspects of television communication equally interest linguists and

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<sup>1</sup> During the same period appeared, in the Anglo-Saxon area, T. Van Dijk’s (1983, 1988), N. Fairclough’s (1985) and A. H. Jucker’s (1986) works on media discourse.

sociologists: M. Tournier and the Saint-Cloud Group publish, between 1995 and 1999, two books concerning the settings during presidential elections, while P. Bourdieu writes in 1996 his famous essay *Sur la télévision* that will be widely diffused. That being said, it is up to the specialists in the field to complete this series of studies – which will be reopened after 2000 – with G. Lochard and J. C. Soulages's *La communication télévisuelle* edited in 1998<sup>2</sup>.

Research on journalistic discourse is represented in the 1990s by: E. U. Grosse and E. Seibold's *Panorama de la presse parisienne* (1996), J. Mouriquand's *L'écriture journalistique* (1997), A. Dubied and M. Lits's *Le fait divers* (1999). Last but not least, two books that could each be considered as an introduction to the media genre studies: *Analyser les textes de communication*, published by D. Maingueneau in 1998, and *Linguistique textuelle. Des genres de discours aux textes*, published by J. -M. Adam in 1999. The genres of journalistic discourse are also described in the 94<sup>th</sup>/1997 issue of *Pratiques*, edited by J.-M. Adam. The eight articles that he gathers here concern both general theoretical issues (classification, narrative and journalistic description) and specific issues related to certain genres (the editorial, the column, the speech acts report, the legal report). The *Réseaux* journal publishes in 1996 its 76<sup>th</sup> issue which includes G. Lochard's and P. Riutort's articles on the journalistic genres, and, in 1997, a special issue (81) edited by F. Jost and entirely dedicated to the television genres.

The beginning of the third millennium brings, so to speak, the recognition of this research field. New studies are published and, nowadays, they are so numerous that it would be impossible for us to quote them all. However, we will mention some journal issues dedicated, entirely or partly, to the analysis of media corpuses. The list of studies is opened by the 13<sup>th</sup> issue of *Semen*, published in 2001 under the generic title "Genres of the written press and discourse analysis". Edited by J. -M. Adam, this issue extends the discussion initiated in *Pratiques* in 1997, providing for the topic of journalistic genres some linguistic, but also historic and cultural insights. Many of the collaborators for the 94<sup>th</sup> issue of *Pratiques* are to be counted among the eleven authors of *Semen*.

Two other journals approach the linguistic analysis of media in relationship with the "enunciative texture" and the compositional structure of a text. The 156<sup>th</sup> issue of the journal *Langages* (2004), entitled "Enunciative effacement in reported speech" and edited by A. Rabatel, includes three articles centered on media corpus (magazines, daily newspapers, press forums); the 45<sup>th</sup> issue of *Cahiers de pragmatique* (2005), focused on "Enunciative heterogeneity and types of textual sequences" and edited by B. Verine, gathers around four articles that exploit a corpus made up mainly of French national newspapers.

In 2006, *Semen* publishes its 22<sup>nd</sup> issue where the relationships between "Enunciation and responsibility in the media" are discussed; edited by A. Rabatel

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<sup>2</sup> Part of these references was provided by Catherine Kerbrat-Orecchioni, whom we thank for her suggestions.

and A. Chauvin-Vileno, this issue includes eleven articles that provide three approaches to the notion of responsibility: a global view of its role in the media institution, its impact on the enunciative choices and the argumentative strategies, and the specific aspects of the notion in accordance with each genre. The same year, in May, the Lausanne University organizes an international colloquium with the following theme: “Linguistic analysis of media discourses: theories, methodologies, issues”; the event gathers several communications describing the diversified orientations: linguistics and discourse analysis, media sociology and communication sciences. Certain speakers, such as M. Burger and P. Charaudeau, clearly focused their speech on the theoretical and methodological links between the linguistic analysis of discourses and the communication sciences.

The analysis of media corpuses contributes, on the one hand, to the expansion of the theoretical approaches to texts and discourses, and, on the other hand, to the diffusion of new issues. Thus, the 22<sup>nd</sup> issue of *Semen* begins the discussion on the notion of responsibility in the media with a linguistic approach to the term, highlighting the notion of the speaking subject and the complex notions of commitment/non-commitment, agreement/disagreement, detachment and enunciative effacement. In their studies on the new methods of journalistic organization of information, J.-M. Adam and G. Lugrin attempt to redefine the concept of text and its “peritextual limits” using the relations of co-textuality that exist between texts and iconotexts gathered in one single scriptural area (page, newspaper double page, editorial ensemble). According to the two authors, “the opening up of the concept of text to the peritext or to the co-texts organizing the hyperstructure in written press is one aspect of *the necessary transformations in the linguistic approaches to discourse*”<sup>3</sup> (our translation).

Researches on media discourse and corpus tend to include progressively interdisciplinary practices. More and more journals deal with divers perspectives in the media approach: for instance, *Mots* and *Langage et société*, which used to be linguistic journals, associate today, in thematic issues, studies written by linguists, communication experts, sociologists and political scientists. A similar trend can be noticed in the case of journals dedicated to the information and communication sciences, such as *Questions de communication* and *Communications*. Therefore, the juxtaposition of analyses from various disciplines implies an intersection of different points of view, tools and methodologies, and, thus, an expansion of the knowledge of the observed data. Nevertheless, in most cases we deal with pluridisciplinarity rather than with interdisciplinarity: the articles are not the result of a true cooperation between disciplines which remain mainly centered on their own subjects and objects of reflection. It is the discovery of common topics and issues

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<sup>3</sup> “l’ouverture du concept de texte au péritexte et aux co-textes organisant l’hyperstructure de presse écrite est un aspect des *transformations nécessaires des approches linguistiques du discours*” (Adam & Lugrin 2006, p. 142: emphasis added).

and the intermingling of data, conceptual tools and analysis methods that could pave the way for the interdisciplinary practices<sup>4</sup>.

It appears that some more recent issues of *Semen* help research progress in this direction, namely: the 25<sup>th</sup> issue from 2008, entitled “The journalistic discourse in the 19<sup>th</sup> century: emerging soci-discursive practices”, edited by V. Lethier and J. M. Viprey, and the 26<sup>th</sup> issue (same year) centered on “Mediaculture and mediacriticism” and edited by D. Bertelli and A. Chauvin-Vileno. Much more recently, the issues published in 2011 seem to reinforce this trend through their themes and analysis perspectives: the 30<sup>th</sup> issue, edited by C. Lambert and P. Schepens, proposes “interdisciplinary studies” on the “Languages of ideology”, while the 31<sup>st</sup> issue, edited by R. Amossy and M. Burger, aims to give an account of the “Media and journalistic polemical discourses” considered from a functional perspective based on different media practices.

2. The journal *Dacoromania* tries to place itself in this domain of influence through the current issue dedicated to the theoretical and/or methodological contributions that the analysis of media corpuses provides to the language sciences. The four contributions gathered here offer some case studies (three presidential debates, a newspaper section, a talk-show excerpt, two news reports) and exploit a corpus formed of French national daily newspapers and TV shows.

**Catherine Kerbrat-Orecchioni** discusses the difficulties and the issues raised by the interpretation of media discourses for linguists and discourse analysts. One of the main difficulties is the complex and heterogeneous nature of the audience whose interpretation must be reconstructed. Her analysis focuses on several excerpts from the debates taking place between the first and the second ballot of the French presidential elections from 1974, 1988 and 2007. Assuming that the viewers are to be included among the actively involved participants, as ultimate and key audience for the political discourse, the problem is, claims the author, the assignment of a position to this particular audience. The semantic and pragmatic analysis of three, now famous, debate excerpts highlights meaning effects embedded in the text which were not seized by the direct participants: an argumentative sophism, for instance, or a pragmatic ambiguity. Conversely, the text can sometimes produce certain effects without undergoing such an interpretation. All these remarks led the author argue for an intermediary position between that of a “king-analyst” (who imposes his/her own interpretations) and that of a conversational analyst strictly speaking (who pretends to base his/her interpretation exclusively on the interlocutor’s noticeable reactions): the analyst’s work always implies a scrupulous observance of the data as well as a certain risk-taking for its interpretation.

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<sup>4</sup> Many thanks to Alain Rabatel for allowing us to mention here some of his remarks on the interdisciplinary dimension of research on media discourses.

**Alain Rabatel's** study describes the contributions brought by the media corpuses analysis with reference to a case study, namely the articles of the section "Désintox" created by the newspaper *Libération* in 2008. The first part explains this innovative practice of fact-checking with a view to establishing the objectively verifiable truth, practice that is associated with critical judgments taken in charge, in a spectacular style, by the primary speaker. In the second part, the article examines certain explicit writing strategies adopted in the newspaper's criticism, namely figures and puns that offer to the titles a ludic element, and the conclusions of the articles, which are endorsed through the journalist's primary discourse. The author rightly wonders what are the implicit effects that the reading of this section can provoke to the readers: to go from denouncing a speech to denouncing an entire profession, to fuel a certain suspicion regarding the politicians in general, to overestimate the role of fact-checking, to give credit to a simplistic image of the political life. A third part demonstrates how the linguistic description of this type of corpus feeds into theoretical and epistemological reflections concerning the relations between subjectivity and objectivity and draws attention to the social issues of criticism and to the role that criticism can have in the "descriptive analyses", including the media corpuses analyses.

**Alina Gabriela Oprea** has chosen to approach this issue's theme through the analysis of a television corpus as TV shows are currently one of the favorite study objects in media discourse analysis. Adhering to the interactional and conversational models, this study examines the relationship between television and entertainment, on the one hand, and the notion of impoliteness, on the other hand, through the linguistic analysis of an extract from the French TV talk-show *On n'est pas couché* broadcasted on France 2 in 2010. The phenomenon that is highlighted here is that of impoliteness as entertainment, or of entertaining-impoliteness, which illustrates one of the major tendencies in certain French talk-shows broadcasted today: the exploitation of impoliteness and/or verbal violence for the sake of a good show. The analysis of an extract of mediacriticism (literary criticism) describes the manner in which impoliteness (staged here in the form of a moralizing story) provides entertainment, thus fulfilling the public's expectations. The author outlines in the end some of the contributions that the study of this type of media corpus has brought both for the development of (im)politeness theories and for the progress of media genre research.

**Ligia Stela Florea** situates her approach to media corpuses within the framework of discourse genre analysis as envisaged by the general poetics (Rastier) and by the socio-communicational models (Charaudeau, Lochard). The article focuses on the report, as a genre of the general press, and aims at examining the enunciative instance's places and modes of linguistic inscription in relationship with the operations of theme construction and textual organization of information. In order to describe more clearly these operations, the author analyzes three journalistic texts: a report published by *Libération* in 2010, a press report and a reportage

published in *Le Monde* in 2011. The analysis, which addresses successively the theme construction, the textual organization and the setting of secondary speakers, leads to the conclusion that the degree of implication of the journalistic enunciative instance depends, in the press discourse, on several defining choices. These choices concern: the hypergenus and discourse genus, the thematic section, the information turned into discourse object, the angle of approach projected on the discourse object, the textual organization, the enunciative setting, the presence of markers belonging to an evaluative judgment, the editorial line and the ideological position of the newspaper.

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March 2013

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