

University Mohamed Kheider of Biskra

Master One

Faculty of Letters and Languages

Applied Language Studies

Department of English

Discourse Analysis

Course Tutor Dr Turki. B.

## **Mass-Media Discourse: Newspapers.**

### **1. Introduction**

Despite the existence of widespread information and communication technology, newspapers remain almost as important as food and clothes. Indeed, they still keep a large number of people in close touch with all happenings and latest news.

The chief function of newspapers is to provide news on all kinds of subjects. Now they also give comments and criticisms. A good newspaper contains news, comments, commercial and scientific information, special articles, short stories, criticism, opinions of great persons and editor's view on important events. Statesmen are anxious to know the latest political developments. Businessmen desire to be informed about the latest market rates, etc. The common man is keen to know news in general. They supply all sorts of news, local or foreign. Without newspapers some people may remain in total ignorance of the affairs of the world.

Newspapers also serve as a means of communication between the government and the governed. The rulers and the ruled publish their view points in papers and aim at mutual understanding. Newspapers voice popular grievances, advocate popular rights, suggest measures of reform and serve as a check on misgovernment. They organise relief procedures in time of famine or floods, earthquakes or epidemics. Sometimes they are the biggest source of advertisement.

The presentation of news in papers is a great art. News presentation is full of many difficulties. The best newspaper is one which presents the truth. But this work is not easy. Unfortunately, very few newspapers present a truthful account of events.

But the newspapers have their own drawbacks also. Sometimes they create misunderstanding between communities and nations, governments and population, by publishing false reports. Bad newspapers misguide the public. They create a bad taste and inflame public opinion. Communal papers may be very dangerous to the society and the nation. Generally, newspapers represent one political party or another. Such party-loyalties lead to undesirable rivalry among newspapers and disregard of truth.

Newspapers are necessary for both educated and layman, but they are not enough. Those who read only newspapers, have shallow knowledge of things. Newspapers can not take the place of other readings.

On the whole, the function of newspaper language is to inform and entertain people; to present them with a particular ideology and interpretation of events, even in articles that appear to be objective. Accordingly, many genres constitute the components of newspapers namely, news report, special topic news (politics, sports; etc.), comment, opinion, letter (to the editor), review, obituary, personal advertisements (classified), weather report, and commercial advert.

In sum, having considered the advantages and disadvantages of newspapers, we may say that the former exceeds the latter. Newspapers are really useful to mankind, but they should be allowed freedom of expression. The editors should be broadminded. Newspapers must contain honest comments. They should be interested in the greatest good of the greatest number.

## **2. Major National Dailies in Great Britain**

Newspapers differ according to geographical reach and readership. In UK there are generally 'quality/elite' (traditionally known as broadsheets), such as The Times and The Guardian, and 'popular' (tabloids), such as The Sun and Daily Mirror. Such a division does not truly exist in the US. The national dailies appear six mornings each week and these are the most important.

### *2.1. Daily Express*

Founded: 1900. Published by Beaverbrook Newspapers Ltd, who also publish the Sunday Express and the London Evening Standard. Political tendency: Independent. For all age and class groups, appeals particularly to middle age groups in the 'higher' social grades. Special features: 'Action Line', answers readers' questions and help with their problems, 'Career Guide', help for young people in choosing careers.

### *2.2. Daily Mail*

Founded: 1896. Published by Associated Newspapers Ltd, who also publish the Daily Sketch and the London Evening News. Political tendency: Independent Conservative. For all classes of reader; serious, readable, entertaining. Supplement on Tuesdays (Femail) and Thursdays (Moneymail). Major Awards: Newspaper of the Year; Newspaper Design; Sports Writer of the Year; Columnist of the Year and Critic of the Year.

### *2.3. Daily Mirror*

Founded: 1903. Published by the International Publishing Corporation Newspapers Ltd, who also publish the Sunday Mirror, People, Sporting Life, and ten other, mainly regional, papers. Political tendency: Independent. For all types of reader. A serious, popular

newspaper. It is estimated by the National Readership Survey that the 14,910,000 readers of the Daily Mirror over 11 million are manual workers. The Mirror Magazine, a colour supplement, is offered free to Mirror readers on Wednesdays. There is a twice-weekly, four-page supplement: *Mirrorscope*, dealing in detail with important topics.

#### *2.4.The Guardian*

Founded; 1846. Published by Manchester Guardian and Manchester Evening News Ltd. Political tendency: Liberal, but no party ties. For the better educated, seriously interested; exceptional for its readability and variety. Occasional supplements on a particular country or industry. Recent awards: Journalist of the Year and Reporter of the Year.

#### *2.5.Morning Star*

Founded (as the Daily Worker): 1930. Published by People's Press Printing Society Ltd, which publishes no other newspaper. Political tendency: Progressive and Communist. For those who want left wing news and views; the only labour movement paper. Since the newspaper receives so little money from advertising, the yearly financial loss is made good by readers and supporters who contribute each month to the People's Press Fighting Fund.

#### *2.6.The Sun*

Founded: 1964 (successor to The Daily Herald). Published by the International Publishing Corporation Ltd, who still publish the Daily Mirror, the Sunday Mirror; The People; etc. Political tendency: Independent. Recent awards: Young Journalist of the Year. Publicity: varied, Motto: 'Forward with the People'.

#### *2.7.The Times*

Founded: 1785 (as The Daily Universal Register; became The Times in 1788). Published by Times Newspaper Ltd, who also publish The Sunday Times, The Times Literary Supplement and The Times Educational Supplement. Political tendency: Independent. For the 'intelligent reader'; news is clearly separated from comment and reported without political bias. Since 1967 a daily supplement: The Times Business News; a Saturday Review, containing book reviews and articles on leisure activities; weekly supplements on other subjects.

#### *2.8.The Sunday Times*

Founded; 1822. Published by Times Newspapers Ltd. Political tendency: Independent. For 'readers of average and above average intelligence'; tries to give as much information as possible, seriously and in detail. A magazine section called The Weekly Review, containing book reviews, theatre, cinema, art criticism, women's interest articles, sections on leisure activities (travel, gardening, etc.); a colour supplement, known as The Magazine. Recent awards: Newspaper Design Award, Journalist of the Year.

In sum, there are of course other important British national dailies (newspapers) which have been founded in the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> Centuries, namely: Evening News; Evening

Standard; News of the World and Sunday Express. Their political tendency is generally 'Independent', their readership is usually for 'all readers' and 'a family newspaper'.

### **3. Nature and Principles of National Newspapers in Great Britain**

#### **3.1.Nature**

As it has been indicated above, the national papers are conventionally divided into two distinct types. The quality papers cater for the better educated readers. The popular papers sell to a much larger readership. They contain far less print than the 'qualities' and far more pictures. They use larger headlines and write in a simpler style of English. While the qualities devote much time to politics and other 'serious' news, the popular papers concentrate on 'human interest' stories, which often means sex and scandal.

However, this method of classification has a hint of snobbery about it. It implies that a newspaper cannot be both high quality and popular at the same time. Perhaps this is why the two types have been known by other names: the broadsheets and the tabloids. This was because the quality newspapers were all printed on terribly large-sized paper known as broadsheet. The popular papers, on the other hand, were all tabloids; that is, they were printed on much smaller pages. But in 2004, a quality paper, The Guardian, broke with tradition by adopting the Berliner format, which is halfway between broadsheet and tabloid and often used in continental Europe but never before in Britain. In any case, the differences are in the treatments of the topics covered and in which topics are given the most prominence.

#### **3.2.Principles**

The news reports are determined by the goals, values, and interests of the journalist and newspaper (producer); however, they principally depend on earlier events and according to the priorities of the current situation. Generally, the extent and development of some genres in newspapers obey to some norms that can be summarized as follows:

- (a) The genres can be studied as interconnected chains, which consist of networks of texts or genre chains, which are regularly bound together, e.g. government (or other official) statements, press conferences, news reports and news analyses (Fairclough, 2003).
- (b) 'Newsworthiness' is determined by a number of different factors, which include: reference to the power elite; celebrity; entertainment; surprise; bad news; good news; magnitude or impact; relevance to the intended audience; follow-up (i.e. whatever is already in the news is more likely to be reported again); individual newspaper's agenda (Harcup & O'Neil, 2001).
- (c) News reporting reduces a complex series of events into a story, imposing a narrative order upon them. While news stories are generally based on speech acts, journalists have to decide what to include or exclude.

(d) The media according to Fairclough (1995: 49) “is a predominantly established view of the world” and what discourse analysis aims to do is “to show how language is instrumental in constructing this view and to challenge it through deconstruction (Mautner, 2008: 33).

#### **4. The Characteristics of the National Press**

##### **4.1. Politics**

The way politics is presented in the national newspapers is an example of the fact that British political parties are essentially parliamentary organizations, not countrywide ones. Although different papers have differing political outlooks, none of the large newspapers is an organ of a political party. Many are often obviously in favour of the policies of this or that party (or against the policies of another party) but all of them would jealously defend their ‘independence’.

Business is what really counts for the newspaper publishers. All of them want first and foremost to make money. Their primary concern is to sell as many copies as possible and to attract as much advertising as possible. The British press is mostly controlled by a rather small number of extremely large multinational companies. This fact helps to explain two notable features. One of these is its freedom from interference from government influence, which is virtually absolute. The press is so powerful in this respect that it is sometimes referred to as ‘the fourth estate’ (the other three being the Commons, the Lords and the Monarch). This freedom is assisted by a general feeling in the country that ‘freedom of speech’ is a basic constitutional right.

##### **4.2. Sex and Scandal**

The other feature of the national press which is partially the result of its power and commercial orientation is its shallowness. Few other European countries have a popular press which is so ‘low’. Some of the popular papers have almost given up even the pretence of dealing with serious matters. Apart from sport, their pages are full of little except the private lives of famous people with a view of the desire to attract more readers at all costs. However, in behaving this way, the popular press has found itself in conflict with another British principle which is as strongly felt as that of freedom of press- the right to privacy. Complaints regarding invasions of privacy are dealt with by the Press Complaints Commission (PPC). This organization is made up of newspaper editors and journalists. In other words, the press is supposed to regulate itself. Many people are not happy with this arrangement and various governments have tried to formulate laws on the matter. However, at the time of writing, no such law has been passed. Against the right to privacy, the press has successfully been able to oppose the concept of the public’s ‘right to know’.

#### **5. Form and Content of News Reports**

The structure of News Reports (articles) is related to “the way in which news not only reports disturbances of normality, but also their rectification” (Fairclough, 2003). In addition, News Reports are characterized by the following features:

- (a) They can be considered the prototypical genre of newspaper text.
- (b) They generally present a relatively short, factual account of hard news (crimes, accidents, disasters, wars, political and diplomatic events) or, less often, soft news (issues and events which are not as time-bound as hard news).
- (c) They are usually presented as narratives: interconnected sequences of actions or happenings that the newspaper considers to be important.
- (d) The generic and typical structure of News Reports is predictable and consists of the following elements:
  - Headline (and often accompanied with) Sub-headlines.
  - Lead sentence or paragraph.
  - Main body or Satellites.
  - Wrap-up sentence or paragraph.

Generally, the headline and lead summarize the story, the main body or satellites add details and their order is flexible and, lastly, the wrap-up gives the outcome of the events reported. One may observe that each of the components of News Reports display particular characteristics in terms of its form and it is assigned some functions in connection with its content.

### **5.1.Headlines**

Headlines have commonly three main functions, but in a limited amount of space which justifies their particular characteristics:

- To attract potential readers.
- To indicate the topic of the story or event.
- To provide the approach that will be taken to the relative event reported, in terms of tone, evaluation, and ideological slant.

The principal characteristics of headlines are summarized as follows:

- Graphology which is larger (often displayed in a different font and bolded).
- Grammatical simplifications as in other forms of ‘block language’ such as notices, titles, adverts, slogans, which can create a ‘telegraphic’ effect. This structure essentially requires the use of grammatical items like articles, copula/auxiliary verbs, connective and possessive.
- Lexis is relatively short and dramatic, which combine brevity with effectiveness.
- Stylistic and Rhetorical devices are used to attract and intrigue readers. These devices can be in the form of elements such as:

Puns and word play;

Alliteration, rhyme or other play on sound;

Metaphor;

Proverbs;

Intertextuality;

Loaded language (e.g. ‘butchered’);

Grammatical class shift (e.g. from verb to noun).

## **5.2. Lead**

Generally, the Lead provides the ‘micro-story’ (Bell, 1991: 170), which is the gist of the issues or events. This may include the 5 Ws (Who, What, Where, When, Why) and How. Like the Headline, the Lead is often written in a different font or in bold (or in italics) especially if it is in the form of only one sentence in the popular press.

## **5.3. Main Body**

The construction of the Main Body (of the article) which is constituted of a number of satellites is called Inverted-Pyramid Structure. In fact, the most important items of information in any newspaper report are presented first, at the top of the ‘pyramid’, in the various headlines, lead and in the opening sentences of the text. This structure has implications on the Theme/Rheme structure of the journalistic text. Rather than referring back to the previous sentence, clauses in the text refer back directly to the headline and lead, thus creating a Hypertheme.

### **5.3.1. Features of the Main Body**

Some essential linguistic means, which are important in the presentation of people and events, are put forward, evaluated and, in some cases, obscured. The main features are summed up in the following:

- Use of noun phrases or labelling of news actors to refer to people and groups: e.g. rebels vs. resistance fighters.
- Use of lexis with a strong evaluative meaning.
- Use of different types of verbs to refer to actions and events: e.g. protesting vs. rioting.
- Use of nominalization (i.e. using a noun instead of a verb to refer to actions and events), which allows the omission of the main agent: e.g. the killing of a Palestinian child.
- Transitivity (how events are described): who does what to whom and what happens without intervention from actors.
- Use of passive voice, which also allows for the omission of the agent: e.g. a Palestinian child was killed.
- Use of modality or the way language shows degrees of certainty and commitment and/or vagueness: e.g. modal verbs (can, might, must), modal adverbs (perhaps, certainly).

- Use of metaphorical expressions to describe one thing in terms of another: e.g. A flood of immigrants.
- Use of figures to back up claims.
- Use of vagueness and exaggerated expressions.
- Presentation of speech in various ways: narrator, narrator's presentation of speech acts, indirect speech, direct speech, rhetorical questions.
- Use of strategies to avoid identifying with precision the person or people whose words are being presented: passive voice (is said to be); nominalization (allegations that); metaphorical (source); metonymy (the use of a single characteristic or name of an object to identify an entire object or related object for example: 'Britain' for some unspecified members of the British government).

## **6. Characteristics of Newspaper Discourse**

### **6.1. Lexical Characteristics**

- Coinage: a word or a phrase that has been recently invented. Media advertisements are full of coined words to be lively and eye-catching. For instance, 'Timex', being a coined noun, is formed originally from the two words 'time' and 'excellent'. The new word is short and easy to remember.
- Comparative and Superlative Adjectives are frequently and commonly used in order to convince the readers or audiences about the journalist's product.
- Compound Words: they are colloquial in form which will give the readers or the audience a sense of closeness, moreover, they allow more possibilities to create humorous effect.
- The use of Slangs and Idiomatic Expressions in order to grab the attention of the reader.
- No Technical Terms, words must be specific, vivid and understood very quickly. They are usually simple, objective, concise and direct, because they should inform rapidly and primarily to give the information.
- Media discourse may include Satire, Sarcasm, Hyperbole, or Metaphors to attract the reader's attention.
- Vague Language: it is basically unclear and not giving a full picture. For example: 'I walked across the road.' This is vague, precise would be: 'I sprinted/trotted/trudged/jogged/ across the road.'
- Response Tokens: they are usually used to describe the feelings and emotions of people. For instance, the interjections that an addressee makes in response to the speaker. Expressions such as: mm, umhmm, yeah, oh really, wow, that's right, absolutely.
- The used language must interest a large group of audience with different educational background. It is usually written at 10<sup>th</sup> grade level and it often contains only facts, events, situations or ideas gathered by reporters.

## **6.2.Syntactic Characteristics**

- Simple Sentences: in general, simple sentences are quick and direct in conveying information, while complex sentences will create some suspense dragging the reader's understanding behind.
- Imperative Sentences: imperative sentences, beginning with the verbs, are forceful and tempting, which coincide with the purpose of the advertisements or any other type of Media.
- Hedges: hedges are used to soften what we say or write, they represent an important part of polite communication. Hedges make what we say or write less direct. This involves tense and aspect, modal expressions, modal verbs and adverbs.
- The use of Discourse Markers: the use of connectives, coordinating and subordinating, in order to produce a coherent text (e.g. but, or, because, however, etc.).
- The use of Pragmatic Markers: they can be described as those constructions, such as: you know, I mean, you see, well, yeah, now, then, etc. Pragmatic markers are present in speech to support interaction but they do not generally add any specific semantic meaning to the message. In discursive media (TV) they are widely used to explain certain points.

## **7. Newspapers in the Classroom**

For some times official Britain reports on education have been recommending a wider use of newspapers as teaching aids for a variety of subjects. In practice, however, little has been done about it. According to teachers, the reason is that newspapers, although they carry much useful information, are not properly designed for children. It is not simply that the language used is on too high a level for children to understand, but also the fact that newspapers treat items on a daily happening basis- a subject is news one day and vanishes from the newspapers the next. Articles and reports, however interesting and well-written, tend to lack the background and continuity needed if teachers are going to be able to use them as teaching material. Two years ago a local newspaper in the North of England set out to overcome these obstacles to the use of newspapers in classroom work; in cooperation with local school teachers, it started to publish a weekly supplement especially designed for children.

What is the children's newspaper like? It is a four- page tabloid which, at first glance, looks like a newspaper for adults. There is an important difference, though. The subject matter is carefully chosen in a way that any child can understand. Items currently in the news are highlighted and explained in detail. For instance, one issue concentrated on the discovery of natural gas under the North Sea. Another issue featured a serious case of vandalism on the railway, and the danger of such behaviour was clearly described for the children's benefit. The workings of government, town planning, economic matters, sport, cultural events, all find their way into the newspaper's pages and in a form that makes them ideal for instruction purposes in the classroom. Teachers feel that this special children's

newspaper has an advantage over textbooks in that it is more topical and often more capable of arousing a class' interest.

### **Conclusion**

In summary, newspapers language is writing and reporting using the means and conventions of journalism about aspects of language along with the kind of readership of those papers. When language journalism is highly elaborated, it should stress 'language' as much as 'journalism'. Ideally, it uses linguistics to open avenues in a topic, even when it is not ostensibly about language. In case it is, it should have a depth that can yield the true treasure of human insight if the reporter digs with the appropriate and effective linguistic tools.

## Workshop Session

**Task One:** Analyse the following headlines in terms of Content and Style.

1. Jackpot Bro Keeps The Dough
2. City Despair And Decay
3. U N Chief Slams Climate Treaty Delay
4. Chinese Leader Gets More Sway On The Economy And Security
5. Law Signed, Sealed And Send to Parliament
6. 'My Twisted Life As Osama's Wife: Married To A Monster'
7. Man Jailed For Allowing Girl, 3, To Smoke
8. Lout of Order: Fury as Teen Urinates On War Memorial
9. Poland's Economy Falls From Pedestal
10. Eurobonds Plan Sparks E U Storm
11. Government Takes A Step Back
12. 'Lobbyists' Fight Efforts To Save On Health Care

**Task Two:** Choose the correct answer.

1. Which of these is regarded as a 'quality' newspaper?
  - A. The Daily Express
  - B. The Daily Mirror
  - C. The Daily Telegraph
2. Which of these is not regarded as a 'quality' newspaper?
  - A. The Guardian
  - B. The Sun
  - C. The Times
3. Which newspaper is famous for its 'page three girls'? What is the paper's objective?
  - A. The Daily Express
  - B. The Sun
  - C. The Daily Mirror
4. Where do English newspapers mostly get their money from?
  - A. Advertising
  - B. The Government
  - C. Readership

**Task Three:** Here are some 'extracts' from English newspapers; indicate and explain the main linguistic characteristic that distinguishes them.

1. 'My mind is full of ideas.'
2. 'Do you grasp this concept.'

3. 'This is a thorny problem.'
4. 'What a hairy theory.'
5. 'The plan slipped through my fingers.'
6. 'She inoculated her sister's mind with her venom.'

**Task Four:** Match the following expressions with the appropriate words in the newspapers jargon.

1. The number of copies of a newspaper that are sold.
2. An informal word for a man which emphasizes male interests.
3. A part-time job, typically done by young teenagers, delivering newspapers to houses.
4. A name often used to describe popular daily newspapers.
5. Publications which consist of picture stories.
  - Paper round
  - Comics
  - Circulation
  - Tabloids
  - Bloke

**Task Five:** Make a comparative analysis (grammar, lexis and style) of the following articles (reporting the same news). What are the types of newspaper to which they respectively belong? Why?

**Article 1.**

A confidence trickster was jailed for a year by Birmingham Crown Court for the theft of a string of pearls valued at £8,000.

Frederick Walton, 46, was arrested during a dinner-dance at the Regent Hotel in Birmingham after asking the woman he had robbed two years earlier to dance, apparently not recognizing her.

Mrs Joanna Potter met Walton two years ago, and she entrusted him with the string of pearls after he had told her he was a jeweller and could restring them. He disappeared immediately afterwards.

He failed to recognize Mrs Potter at the Regent Hotel and invited her to dance. She later called the police. In his summing up, the judge called Walton "a stupid and unpleasant man".

**Article 2.**

Buick-stepping con-man Frederick Walton walked into the arms of the law after robbing his glamorous partner of a pearl necklace worth £8,000.

Smooth talker Freddy swept blonde Joanna Potter off her feet at a dance in a plush night spot two years ago, and shortly after the two began to tango, the 46-years-old Romeo danced off with the stones.

But Mrs Potter had the last laugh when he bumped into her at the same spot two years later.

Amazingly, the daft Juan didn't recognize the lover he had cheated, and asked her to dance. She agreed and then called the police, who arrested Walton in the middle of the fox-trot.

Walton, of Church Street Birmingham was jailed for a year.

**Task Six:** Write an argumentative essay discussing one of the following topics:

**Topic 1.**

In what ways do British national newspapers differ from each other? Are these similar distinctions which can be made between types of newspapers in our country?

**Topic 2.**

It is often felt that newspapers' invasion of privacy goes too far. Legislation to control it has sometimes been drafted, but has never become law in Great Britain. Why not? How is the press controlled in our country?

**Good Luck and God Bless.**

**Dr Turki. B.**

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