Bulletin of the *Transilvania* University of Braşov • Vol. 4 (53) No.2. - 2011 • Series IV
Series IV: Philology and Cultural Studies

EVALUATION IN THE NEWSPAPER ARTICLE ENTITLED REBELS IN LIBYA GAIN POWER AND DEFECTORS

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Abstract: *The paper analyses an article published in The New York Times on the 28th of February 2011 entitled Rebels in Libya Gain Power and Defectors with the aim of identifying ways in which the authors express evaluation at lexical, syntactic and discourse levels.*

Key words: *evaluation, lexis, syntax, discourses.*

1. Introduction

Starting from an article about Libya published in the 28th February issue of the New York Times the paper aims to identify various lexical ways in which evaluation is expressed in this newspaper article.

2. Evaluation: a theoretical background

Evaluation according to Linde (1997:152) is an extremely powerful feature of the language, indicating the author's/speaker's beliefs in terms of social order and moral values: "*evaluation is an extremely pervasive phenomenon in language*". The author identifies two dimensions of evaluation: the former is reference to reportability, which relates to uncommon events, as these are the ones that are usually narrated, while the latter is reference to social norms, therefore connecting to normative judgment, since a story is always told with a moral purpose: *moral comments or demonstrations of the way the world is, the way the world ought to be, what proper behaviour is* (Linde, 1997:153).

The latter type of evaluation can also be connected to Richardson's definition of ideologies (2007:116), interpreted as *matrices of beliefs, attitudes and practices that represent a way of looking at the world and a way of acting in the world*; therefore ideology is closely related to evaluation.

Thus, an article indicates both the author's position, which is also the newspaper's position and the readers' position; the purpose of any article is not only to inform the readers of events but also to persuade them to adopt the journalist's position.

Linde also quotes Labov (1997:152) in order to emphasise the significant part evaluation plays in narratives, which she defines as … *the means used by the narrator to indicate the point of the narrative, its raison d' être; why it was told and what the narrator is getting at*.

Starting from Labov's theory on personal narratives, Bell (1999) extends it to news stories. Bell claims that evaluation aims to persuade the readers that the events described are important and thus hold the

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right to make claims on the readers' attention: *evaluation is the means by which the significance of a story is established… its function is to establish the significance of what is being told, to focus the events, and to justify claiming the audience's attention* (1999: 240). Unlike in personal narratives, where evaluation devices are usually present towards the end, in news stories they are spread throughout the entire article: the headline, the lead as well as the rest of the articles, forming the lens through which the remainder of the story is viewed; it represents the newsworthiness of the story (Bell 1999: 241).

This paper analyses the article entitled Rebels in Libya Gain Power and Defectors in order to identify ways of expressing evaluation at lexical, syntactic and discourse levels.

3. Linguistic means of expressing evaluation

The journalists' position is indicated by their choice of words, namely nouns, adjectives and adverbials, as well as the register to which they belong (formal, informal, literary). At verb level, the choice of transitive or intransitive verbs as well as the use of active or passive constructions indicates whether the people described in the article are presented as initiating or merely witnessing events and actions (Reah, 1998), while nominalizations can strengthen or reduce the effects of the actions themselves.

The use of modal verbs points to the way in which the actions are presented – desirable, possible, probable, etc.

The way in which people presented in the article are called as well as the way in which they are quoted also indicates the journalist's position; Richardson (2007) and Fairclough (1995) state that quotations and the way in which they are given are important, as they provide the perspective from which the readers will understand the story. According to Fairclough (1995:17) both the reporting verbs are important (e.g. declared, acknowledged, admitted, etc.) and the way in which people's words are rendered: direct quotation, summaries of the quotation (presenting the gist of the speaker's words) and formulations of it (which actually interpret what the speaker said).

At sentence level the way in which the information is structured indicates once more the journalist's position: the use of topicalization, which moves to front position the element to be emphasised, (e.g. Music, he loved), or various mitigation devices (such as adverbials for instance), which soften the propositional content (e.g. He merely wanted to help).

In sentences (clause complexes), main clauses generally foreground information, whereas subordinate clauses generally background it. This is especially so when the main clause precedes a subordinate clause (Fairclough 1995:119), which indicated that foregrounding and backgrounding are strategies to which journalists resort in order to emphasise or de-emphasise information.

At text level the images used to describe the situation also have an evaluative value – a well-known example being battle – related images frequently used in marketing campaigns.

The overall text organization is also linked to evaluation – for example repetitions, parallel structures, paragraph sequence. In newspapers articles the lead, which is the summary of the article which answers the questions who, what, where, when, how, is defined by Bell (1999) as fulfilling a double function – it summarizes the events and focuses them in a particular direction; it is a focus of evaluation as it indicates the author's position.

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4. Analysis of the article Rebels in Libya Gain Power and Defectors

The article entitled Rebels in Libya Gain Power and Defectors was written by David D. Kirkpatrick and Kareem Fahim and appeared in the on-line edition of New York Times, the 28th of February issue (http://www.nytimes.com/2011/02/28/world/africa/28unrest.html?_r=1) ; it reports on the situation in Libya at the beginning of the revolt against the country's current leader, Colonel Muammar el-Qaddafi, namely the victories obtained by the rebels and the support they have from the population, army, government officials and foreign countries.

The article is a feature as it brings additional information about the situation in Libya in order to present to the readers a more detailed image.

From the very beginning the headline catches the readers' attention because of the unexpected coordination between the two nouns - *power and defectors*: *rebels… gain power and defectors.*

The emphasis in the lead is on the rebels, presented as highly successful in their fight – they have *increasing military coordination and firepower, better* leadership and *more* guns to fight with. The defectors who joined the rebels are presented in a positive light – they support the rebels and try to improve the rebels' military strategy (*defecting officers in the east took steps to establish a unified command)*

The enumeration of weapons held by rebels indicate their strength - *…their followers in this rebel-held city, just outside the leader's stronghold in the capital, displayed tanks, Kalashnikovs and antiaircraft guns.* The use of the emphasiser *just* indicates the rebels' close victory (*just outside the leader's stronghold in the capital*):

Zawiyah, Libya – The Libyan rebels challenging Col. Muammar-el-Qaddafi demonstrated their increasing military coordination and firepower on Sunday, as defecting officers in the east took steps to establish a unified command while their followers in this rebel-held city, just outside the leader's stronghold in the capital, displayed tanks, Kalashnikovs and antiaircraft guns.

4.1. Selections of nouns, adjectives and adverbials

The adjectives and adverbials chosen by the reporters indicate that their approve of the rebels' actions: the rebels' military coordination is *increasing*, the command is *unified*, they give *further sign of their strength*, they have *growing power*, they make a *global effort* to bring down Colonel Qaddafi, they *hold the town firmly*, they *become more confident in their power and provide the most striking display of strength.* The state of mind is of confidence, based on the victories obtained so far and the residents of the city are gleeful: *Gleeful residents invited newcomers to clamber aboard one of several army tanks now in rebel hands.* The rebel army, ready to support the revolt in other Libyan cities is called *our national army.*

The adjectives used for Colonel Qaddafi's forces indicate oppression and violence: his forces *mounted a deadly assault*, he orders *repeated attacks …to retake the city.*

Therefore, while the adjectives used to describe the protesters carry positive connotations (good management and firm control, thoughtful support of population, strong hope in the result of the uprising), the ones used to describe the officials indicate negative connotation (violence and death).

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The signs of the battle fought by these forces are holes in the city's building and *ammunition that littered the central square*, litter suggesting dirt. The violence of their attacks is also suggested by the verb *blast – Several said that on Thursday the Qaddafi forces blasted peaceful protesters gathered in the square with machine guns and artillery, pointing to holes in the sides of pillars and even a mosque*.

As far as nouns are concerned, there is an enumeration of professions used to describe the rebels – they are *doctors, lawyers, judges, engineers and the like* – therefore respectful and reliable professions, relating to the civil society; the enumeration describing the official forces relates to the military – *Colonel's Qaddafi's militias, plainclothes police and other paramilitary forces,* suggesting repression and violence. Later in the article these forces and called *gangsters* (*Qaddafi and his gangsters will not have a hand on them* [revenues from the national oil company*]* and Colonel Qaddafi is called *an autocrat*, as illustrated by the following passage: *he has shed far more of his citizens' blood than any of the regions' other autocrats.*

In conclusion there is a powerful lexical contrast between the two parties, as indicated by the choice of nouns, adjectives and adverbs used to describe them.

4. 2. Selection of verbs

Reah (1998:78) classifies verbs as actional (transactive and non-transactive), which are dynamic and indicate control of the subject and relational, which are the copulative ones that indicate qualities or states.

The majority of verbs used to describe the rebels are actional, a choice that reflects once more the journalists' position – the rebels are in full control of their actions: they *demonstrate their increasing military coordination*, they *have repulsed repeated attempts* by Colonel Qaddafi's forces to retake the rebel-held cities, they *are organizing public services and continued defence*, they *mock Colonel Qaddafi's allegations.*

Kirpatrick and Fahim use a different approach to describe Colonel Qaddafi's actions: although no passive constructions appear, the journalists avoid describing Colonel Qaddafi as an agent: it is not him that orders the position of his troops, but they are presented as having a will of their own, as if having no ruler: *his forces were massing again on its* [Zawiyah's] *outskirts.* The nominalization illustrated in the example below presents the Libyan rules as playing a less active part: *Colonel Qaddafi has shown a willingness to shed far more of his citizens' blood…*

The battle between the two parties acquires a symbolic dimension because of the use of verbs belonging to the literary field – for example *gird*, thus bringing to mind the eternal fight between good and evil: *The maneuverings by both sides suggested they were girding for a confrontation that could influence the shape of other protest movements and the responses of other rulers who feel threatened by insurrections.*

The verbs used for the rebels are very many in number and most of them actional, while the ones used for the official forces can be described as pseudo-passives, conveying the current leader's lack of control.

4.3. Reporting

As Fairclough emphasises (1995) not only who is quoted is important but also how the quotation is provided.

In the article the rebels are associated with comments made by highly reliable

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people/governments/institutions: Italy's foreign minister, the UNO Security Council and NATO allies, Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton, Senator John McCain, presented by means of an appositive constructions as the *ranking Republican on the Armed Services Committee*, *Libya's former justice minister*, Mustafa Mohamed Abd al-Jalil, Gen. Ahmed el-Gatrani, a *former senior commander*, Hassan Bulfa, *member of the management committee of the Arabian Gulf Oil Company*. All of them represent trustworthy, high-profile people whose support lent to the rebels contribute to the readers' conclusion that the rebels acquire an almost official position.

Common people are also quoted, such as *Ahmed el-Hadi Remej, an engineer, Tariq Mohamed, a resident*, which increases the readers' confidence in their words. Sometimes high number of people are quoted, without any specific name, thus lending the impression that the whole country is fighting Colonel Qaddafi:

"Army, army, army!" excited residents shouted or *residents chanted Free, free, Libya.*

The fight for freedom and democracy is characteristic not only of Libyan people, but of all Arab countries: *And on Sunday, scores of residents armed with machine guns and rifles joined in a chant that has become the slogan of pro-democracy uprising in Tunisia, Egypt, Bahrain, Yemen and across the Arab world: "The people want to bring down the regime"*.

It seems that the rebellion in Libya is but an extension of the democratic fight that has taken over the entire Arab world.

The rebels' words are often fully quoted, the most frequently employed reporting verb being *said*, therefore a neutral one. Ahmed el-Hadi Remeh, an engineer explains how the rebellion started and developed: *"We are a very patient people… We kept silent for 42 years, and when we do start to speak, he (Colonel Qaddafi) shoots us with a 24.5 millimeter"*.

No comments are made by the journalists, the rebel's words thus becoming the explanation of the rebellion.

The rebels fight with courage and determination, as indicated by their own words: *Some said that in the fights against Italian occupation and other battles in Libya's pre-Qaddafi history, their city of 300,000 had earned the nickname "the silent lion" , and was living up to it again. "When Qaddfi killed people, Zawiyah became like a volcano" said Tariq Mohamed, a resident.*

In order to present the rebels' state of mind and the strong support they offer one another, General Ahmed el-Gatrani's words are quoted in full: *"Our brothers in Tripoli say" "We are fine so far, we do not need help." If they ask for help we are ready to move"*.

It is interesting to notice that two quotations are provided in this paragraph, the words uttered by the general and the ones of the rebel forces in Tripoli; they convey a strong impression of first hand knowledge.

Ideas supporting the journalists' attitude are quoted in full: *Italy's foreign minister suspended a nonaggression treaty with Libya on the grounds that the Libyan state "no longer exists",* this quotation conveying the legality of the rebels. Senator Clinton said *the United States was reaching out to rebels, to"offer any kind of assistance"* thus suggesting unconditional American support.

In order to persuade the readers that Colonel Qaddafi should be overthrown, the words of a Libyan official are quoted; Hassan Bulifa, one of the managers of the Arabian Gulf Company, indicates that the company continues to make the agreed deliveries but that the money will go to the rebels. At this moment, it seems that the

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financial aspect is irrelevant: *And he insisted the proceeds would ultimately flow to the rebels, not Colonel Qaddafi. "Qaddafi and his gangsters will not have a hand on the money," he said".. We are not worried about the revenues."*

As far as the foreign countries and officials supporting the Libyan rebels are concerned, the reporting verb is *urged*, indicating the dramatic character of the situation: *Senator John McCain…urged the Obama administration to consider military action and recognize a rebel government*.

From Libya's official side only two people are quoted, namely Colonel Qaddafi's two sons – Saadi el-Qaddafi and Seif al-Islam el-Qaddafi. Their words indicate denial of reality – one of them does not admit that there are fights in the country, while the other one states the opposite, there is unrest in the country, this being caused not by the political situation but by the people's desire of having more. He also warns that if the rebels were to win, the country would enter in a state of chaos. Unlike for the rebels' words for which the journalists make no comments, for these two officials they insert their own comments, indicating denial of reality and deceit of public opinion. The comments are softened by the verb *appear*: *In interviews with ABC news, two of Colonel Qaddafi's sons appeared to mix defiance and denial. "The people – everybody wants more", said Saadi el-Qaddafi, apparently dismissing the public outcry for a more accountable government. " there is no limit. You give this, then you get asked for that, you know?"*

He described the uprisings around the region as an "earthquake" and predicted, "Chaos will be everywhere." If his father left, he said, Libya would face a civil war "one hour later".

The journalists do not overtly interpret his words, but they use verbs and adverbials indicating possibility, such as *appeared, apparently* and conditional *would* to make his statement less credible. Colonel's Qaddafi's son presents the rebels as children, who want more and are not aware of the gravity of their action.

In opposition to his brother, Seif al-Islam el-Qaddafi denies the existence of any unrest, claiming that the situation is normal. [he]… *seemed to challenge journalists to look for signs of unrest. "Please, take your cameras tomorrow morning, even tonight," he said. "Everything is calm. Everything is peaceful"*.

Towards the end of the article his lies are exposed, the journalists interpreting his words, not quoting them: *The Qaddafi government implicitly acknowledged for the first time on Sunday that it feared elements of its military falling into rebel hands, as Colonel Qaddafi's son Seif said in the television interview that the Libyan government had bombed its own ammunition depots in the east.*

The presentation of the official position is characterized by words indicating possibility, not an actual state of things as well as verbs such as *suggest* or conditional *would: the tour appeared to do more to discredit than bolster the government's line, the minder appeared to mingle easily with people, some suggested, the journalists would discover.*

The allegations made by the officials that the rebels are actually influenced by drugs provided by Osama bin Laden is a statement that indicates once more the current leaders' absurd position.

In conclusion, there are many quotations of the rebels, given either fully or partly, the verbs used being said, stated, etc, while for the official side there are only two people that are quoted or interpreted, with sentence including words related to modality. In this way the two parties are opposed – the rebels seem to be telling the truth while the officials lie.

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4.4. Topicalization

Topicalization is a linguistic strategy used to emphasise information considered relevant, which is moved from its usual position to the beginning of the sentence. An example of topicalization is provided below, namely a description of the residents, which indicated the support they obtained from the army and the people's joy in welcoming it: *'Army, army, army!" excited residents shouted, pointing to a defected soldier standing watch to Zawiyah' entrance.*

4.5. Imagery

The article presents two opposing parties - Qaddafi's armed forces and the rebels. The images associated with them are conflicting: while the officials are presented as deadly, violent, deceitful and lifeless, the rebels are presented as full of life, hope and determination to win the battle.

In order to convey these ideas, the choice of words is related to death, dirt and lifelessness when describing the officials: they *mounted a deadly assault*, the streets are *deserted*, ammunition is *littering t*he central square, the ruler wants to *shed far more of his citizen's blood*, *Colonel Qaddafi's militias, plainclothes police and other paramilitary forces have kept the deserted streets of Tripoli under a lockdown.*

As far as the rebels are concerned the selected words indicate hope – *gleeful residents*, determination - *increasing military coordination*, unified command, good management and civic responsibility:

they are organizing public services, they had formed a national council *to manage the "day-to-day living" of the liberated territories"*, thus proving that they care about the common people's existence.

There is permanent tension between the rebels' and the officials' position.

4.6. Text level

The paragraphs are not balanced, since far more are devoted to describing the rebels' position as well as the support they are offered by the defected army and foreign governments and organizations.

In order to defend the rebels against Colonel Qaddafi's allegations, the journalists begin a sentence with *but*, a less common coordinator used in sentence initial position. Its presence has the aim of cancelling official allegations, according to which the protesters are drugged and no longer behave normally. The journalists' position is indicated by the use of *but* and the adjective *little* interest, both indicating irony: *Some (officials) suggested that the Qaddafi government might in fact believe its own propaganda; that the journalists would discover in Zaweiyah radical Islamists, young people crazed by drugs supplied by Osama bin Laden.*

But the residents showed little interest in Islamist politics ort hallucinogenic drugs. They mocked Colonel Qaddafi's allegation, painted the tricolored pre-Qaddafi flag that has become the banner of the revolt on the side of a burned-out government building and chanted Free, free, Libya.

The rebels are presented as people fighting for freedom and democracy, not for religious or other reasons.

The high number of paragraphs devoted to the description of the rebel's position is indicative of the journalists' position itself.

Conclusions

The article presents the onset of the civil war in Libya. The topic makes the article newsworthy and from the very beginning (headline and lead) the article indicates

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that Kirkpatrick and Fahim support values such as democracy, the citizens' right of having a say in the political situation, the right to better living, values which the journalists share with their readers.

Their evaluation of the situation presented is reflected in the choices made in terms of lexis, sentences (types of verbs, voice, structuring the information), imagery and text level.

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