Bulletin of the *Transilvania* University of Braşov • Vol. 3 (52) - 2010
Series IV: Philology and Cultural Studies

MEDIA NARRATIVES ABOUT CRIMINALITY

Cristina VÂLCEA*

Abstract: *This research aims at identifying the linguistic manner in which criminality is rendered for the Romanian newspaper reader. For this purpose, a comprehensive analysis system called 'linguistic criticism' will include various morphologic-syntactic, pragmatic, but mostly semantic and sociolinguistic concepts which will attempt at deciphering a pattern of talking about criminality. The comparative method is possibly a suitable choice since simultaneous representation is mostly profitable for a balanced attitude to interpreting both the agent and the object, be them the victim and the aggressors or the offenders and the policemen.*

Keywords: *criminality, ideology, media narratives.*

1. Introduction

Narratives are linguistic fabrications which presuppose the existence of a happening (story) that undergoes a reshaping process according to the producer's mind-style (Fowler, 1996, 220). Consequently, different mind-styles conceive of and transpose different narratives even when referring to the same happening as it is the case with media narratives. Moreover, narratives fail the linguistic originality criterion which accounts for a certain degree of prefabrication given the fact that recurring chunks of language are used to the point of stereotyping narratives whatever the subject. Furthermore, narratives are intentional products written to an end which becomes possible and which fulfils by readers' encounter with the narrative. In other words, narratives are linguistic productions that appear at the intersection of a personal mind-style (the writer's) and of a common medium 'the language'. Anne Freadman (quoted in Graddol & Boyd, 1994, 46): 'narratives are the product of an interaction of a variety of "languages" or semiotic systems, none necessarily homologous with any other … it is practically impossible to find a narrative that mobilises only one language … if we are to account for what it is to make a narrative, we are unlikely to find out a great deal from studying the properties of only one of its languages.'

If basically language is one and the same, the free element, the mind-style, influences the linguistic choices which thus illustrate the writer's ideology. Although the language is the same it is differently used depending on social factors such as family background, education, gender, political affiliation which all make language use so varied. The varied beholding of the language produces varied perspectives of reality that is linguistically created. It actually states that reality exists or that it exists in a

* Faculty of Letters, Department of Foreign Languages, *Transilvania* University of Brasov.

BDD-A20217 © 2010 Transilvania University Press
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.142 (2026-11-14 23:08:00 UTC)

certain way as long as the language is the means of its creation.

As far as the structure of narratives is concerned, it is said to have two main constituents: the story which is pre-artistic and the discourse which proves the mastery of the artist. For a very long time, the mastery was thought to be literary (focusing on the ideas of the writer and on the fortunate or less fortunate joining of these ideas). It was only later when Linguistic Criticism appeared that the literary supremacy was challenged on the assumption that it is language the one that creates literary visions emphasising in this way the primordiality of language to literature. 'Linguistic criticism is a form of social practice which tries to identify the relationship between signs (words, phrases) and the meanings they communicate. Connerton (quoted in Coulthard & Coulthard, 1996, 4) claims that 'critique denotes reflection on a system of constraints which are humanly produced: distorting pressures to which individuals, or a group of individuals, or the human race as a whole, succumb in their process of self-formation ….. Criticism is brought to bear on objects of experience whose objectivity is called into question; criticism supposes that there is a degree of inbuilt deformity which masquerades as reality. It seeks to remove this distortion and thereby to make possible the liberation of what has been distorted. Hence it entails a conception of emancipation.' What this quotation says is that generally the representation is mediated and influenced by the values of the system where it is produced. Connerton (quoted in Coulthard & Coulthard, 1996, 5) continues the clarification of the linguistic criticism by stating that: 'criticism renders transparent what had previously been hidden, and in doing so it initiates a process of self-reflection, in individuals or in groups, designed to achieve liberation from the domination of past constraints. Here a change in practice is therefore a constitutive element of a change in theory.' Thus, critical linguistics is a sort of 'instrumental' linguistics which disregards language as an abstract system and which refers to the practical interaction of language and context.

In concordance to this, Halliday (quoted in Fowler, 1996, 30) considers that language has three functions which it performs simultaneously and permanently: textual, interpersonal and ideational which Halliday defines as 'the embodiment in language of the speaker and writer's vision of the world'. The conclusion which naturally derives from here is that language is a social construct individualised by each of its users, but which suffers reduction to prototypes that facilitate humans' understanding of such a varied world. Although beneficial, the reduction to prototypes proves dangerous since a prototype may become a stereotype which inhibits understanding. The consequence of this process is the fact that thinking becomes uncritical and discourse becomes prejudicial when dealing with certain social categories as it will be the case here.

The reverse of the stereotyping process is linguistic criticism which by 'de-familiarisation' (refusal to accept stereotyped language) fights the 'habituation' process which consists of an uncritical acceptance of the social message. For a critical reading of a text it takes an attentive analysis from a multitude of perspectives since texts themselves are multilayered structures. The morpho-syntactic, the semantic, the pragmatic, the sociolinguistic functions as well as the choice of the vocabulary represent all stages in the critical analysis of a text.

All narratives are illustrative of an ideology which is not openly stated, but of

BDD-A20217 © 2010 Transilvania University Press
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.142 (2026-11-14 23:08:00 UTC)

which the text is impregnated. Without realising, the ideology is transmitted in the message by a variety of options and choices that the speaker/ writer makes which transmit information about the speaker/ writer's social and educational background, mind-set. The ideology is identified in the way the agent and the object are expressed, in how the reference cohesion is achieved, in if and how substitution functions and in other processes such as: reiteration, foregrounding, register, but also in the spatial-temporal deictics.

These processes are studied in the subsequent pages which stand for a case study whose main objective is that of identifying a way in which criminal incidents are reflected in a quality Romanian newspaper and a news agency – focusing on victim but mainly on the criminal. In other words, the purpose of this study is that of identifying a possible ideology of the newspaper/ agency on violence, victims and criminals. Since the study is based on two articles only, the findings could not be extrapolated to all the articles which deal with violence and criminals, namely to the ideology of one Romanian newspaper or of all Romanian newspapers. It is an instance of the ideology on criminals and violence of a Romanian newspaper and one news agency.

To begin with, Teun van Dijk (quoted in Graddol & Boyd-Barrett, 1994, 27) claimed that newspapers articles have a schemata which is actually based on a particular narrative structure which consists of: summary (headline and lead), main events, backgrounds (context and history), consequences (evaluation and prediction) and comment. Still, not all elements are compulsory with two exceptions: summary and main events. The principle of relevance governs the order of the information according to their degree of importance, thus what is thought to be more important is more likely to appear first. Relevance wins the competition with the chronology and the cause-effect relationship which explains why relevant issues come first whereas the principle of chronology becomes secondary in a news article. Actually, this aspect will check in the following analysis since spatial-temporal indicators are mostly indefinite or absent. The article focuses on the events hardly clarifying the spatial and temporals deictics, if any.

Toolan (1995, 5) mentions another feature of narratives which he calls 'displacement' which refers to the narratives' ability to refer to periods and places which are not there or which are hardly mentioned. Similar to Teun van Dijk, Labov (quoted in Toolan, 1995, 152) identified the following components of narratives: abstract which is an optional element, orientation which specifies the participants and the circumstances (place & time), evaluation that indicates the means used by the narrator to indicate the point of view of the narrative, and what it is that the narrator is getting at, and the last element is the coda, the sealing off of the narrative. It is to be noticed that there are some differences between the typologies of narratives of Teun van Dijk (quoted in Graddol & Boyd-Barrett, 1994, 27) and Labov (quoted in Toolan, 1995, 152) which can be accounted for by the fact that Teun van Dijk deals with media narratives, therefore it is more specialized, and Labov who deals with narratives in general is a fact which explains its more abstract content.

At a closer analysis, similarities between the two typologies can be identified. Thus, van Dijk's summary is similar to Labov's abstract in the sense that they are the first components of the narrative. Still, if

BDD-A20217 © 2010 Transilvania University Press
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.142 (2026-11-14 23:08:00 UTC)

Labov's abstract is an optional element, van Dijk's summary is obligatory since the norm for this register is to have a headline and a lead. A similarity (they refer to the same thing) and a dissimilarity (van Dijk has two categories to cover Labov's) at the same time are to be found at the next stage where one of Labov's elements is equated to two in van Dijk's classification. Labov's orientation which specifies the participants and the circumstances but also the time and place is equated in van Dijk's classification by main events and background.

The next element is Labov's evaluation and van Dijk's consequences and the last element Labov's coda and van Dijk's comment. Labov goes beyond the simple categorisation and identifies the possible language features that might appear and that are expected to appear in the orientation. Transitive verbs are more likely to appear since it is here where the story is created and details are provided, so transitivity is required. At the same time intensive verbs are preferred, 'be, become' because they show transformation. He also emphasizes the extensive use of proximity deictic elements (this, these, now) because these elements take the reader back to the point at which he entered the narrative.

For my analysis, I opt for van Dijk's classification for the fact that it deals precisely with media narratives which represent a sub-register in the greater area of narratives.

When applying van Dijk's news schemata it is easily noticeable that all elements appear in the order that he pointed out. There is only one element which might seem to break the rule. The main events are interrupted by the background; thus, the first event consists of the fact that both the victim and the aggressors were in the disco and they started disputing which is not followed by the second event but by the background and only then the second main event is mentioned. One possible explanation for the interposition of background between the two events is that the fight which eventually started between the victim and the aggressors had to be justified. Unless the background appeared there, the fight couldn't have been a logical continuation of the initial dispute. The news displays a top-down schemata depending mostly on the relevance criterion. The conclusion to this part would be that 'news rhetoric has to do with features that help to make stories more noticeable, hence more memorable and effective.' (Boyd-Barrett, 1994, 27)

To continue with, narratives contain two kinds of actants: the agent (the doer) and the object (the one that bears the action). In this particular case, the agent has an intriguing trajectory since the article begins with 'agresorii' (the aggressors) that are further replaced by 'cinci tineri' (five young men), 'cei cinci bărbati' (the five men) ending with 'celor cinci suspecți' (to the five suspects). Thus, the writer of the article drastically categorizes the five men as aggressors from the beginning of the article which does not offer the reader the possibility of judging for oneself the aggressivity of the five men. After the first mention, the aggressors are named 'bărbați' (men) so that at the end they are called 'suspecți' (suspects) which is softer in comparison to the initial 'aggressors' and which is lawfully correct. Anyway, the distance between 'aggressors' and 'men' and farther to 'suspects' is indicative of the writer's inconsistency when dealing with offenders, his fast-paced judgement of the 'offenders' as 'aggressors' followed by a softening of his harsh judgement. On the other hand, the object (the one that bears the action) is first introduced as 'tânăr' (young men) then 'un

BDD-A20217 © 2010 Transilvania University Press
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.142 (2026-11-14 23:08:00 UTC)

bărbat de 31 de ani' (a 31-aged man) followed by 'victimă' (victim) and 'individ' (individual). The semantic choices for the identification of the murdered victim is gradual beginning with age categorisation (young, 31 years old) immediately followed by the judicial categorisation of 'victim' and eventually rounded up by sending the victim in the mass of 'individuals' which equates to a sheer identity, unworthy of any attention. An important factor is that both aggressors and victim are not identified by their names, the referential in the real world, which transforms the incident into a hypothesis, a possible happening. A dominant semantic element is the cataphora which comes natural for this kind of narrative whose comprehension is based on the existence of the data in the text which is later on referred to. Besides the referring function which includes the agent and the object, there is also the predicating function which outlines the temporal frame of the narrative. The narrative is temporally placed in the past that is clarified by the use of deictic temporal adverbials 'duminică' (Sunday) and 'a doua zi dimineata' (the following day). In terms of voice, the predominant voice is active and not passive as it might have been believed in the case of physical aggression. The active verbs are predominant which actually stands for the fact that the victim was an active participant to the fight whose victim he was to be. The article has only two passive verbs of which one refers to the victim of whom the doctors say that he had been beaten and the other one refers to the aggressors who were arrested. Thus, the narrative seems to contain parallel passive structures which refer to the victim on the one hand and to the aggressors on the other hand. The parallel structure might illustrate similar treatment or similar standard for the writer. Of the active verbs, predominant are the action verbs followed by verbs which indicate states. The fact that the action verbs predominate shows that the participants, the victim and the aggressors, take part in the conflict. Moreover, the majority of verbs belong to the indicative mood which indicates real, sure actions. There is just one verb which belongs to the subjunctive mood as it is illustrative of something unreal or only supposed. This is the case of the verb 'ar fi bătut' (may have beaten) which the writer uses to refer to the cause of the conflict that is actually nothing but a presupposition for which somebody dies. It is the only verb that suggests unreality and it is the more ironical that it is precisely something that is only supposed to be true to cause somebody to die. If the truthfulness of the victim's deeds is never doubted, the aggressors being guilty is questioned in a conditional construction where, the writer, despite the aggressors' admitting of having killed, states that if they are found guilty, then they will go to prison.

A second important aspect is given by the analysis of the tenses used when presenting the facts as they actually happened, in other words the effect, and the reason that triggered the facts as such, namely, the cause. Since the effect is something visible which can be noticed and accounted for, bearing concrete features, then, the verbs belong to the indicative mood. On the other hand, the reason of the incident, that the victim might have beaten once one of the aggressors' father, which is only a presupposition or a justification, is expressed by the subjunctive mood. Thus, the cause – effect relationship is linguistically inscribed in the judicial pattern of the innocence presumption.

BDD-A20217 © 2010 Transilvania University Press
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.142 (2026-11-14 23:08:00 UTC)

If traditionally, newspapers articles are written using present as if the events were simultaneous to the reading of the article, this article shapes up as a report about a past incident and in this way the sequential character of the event and of its being written and read is clearly signalled by the use of past tense. A second element which emphasizes the breaking of the relation of simultaneity is the reporting verb that appears at the end of the first sentence 'informeaza, luni, Pro TV' (Pro TV informs on Monday). 'Informs' establishes a sequential order which divides the article into two stages: the first is the reporting in itself and the other is the event. 'Pro TV informs' indicates actually the point of view from which the event is interpreted. A questionable issue refers to the point of view of the rest of the article. It is quite evident that the first sentence is a reporting of the piece of news initially released by Pro TV and then reported by the newspaper. Starting with the second sentence the perspective is unclear since no indices is given as to whether the point of view continues to be that of Pro TV or the initial text has suffered any influence on the part of the newspaper's writer.

Although the writer avoids making judgements as to whether the aggressors are really guilty or not, he uses evaluative adjectives and adverbs which show that the writer evaluates the degree or the intensity of their deeds. 'Îngrozitor' 'terribly' illustrates the degree of violence to which the victim was submitted. At the same time, it is clear that the point of view is that of the writer since the victim was not able to offer any details about the violence. Later on in the article, there is another mention of the 'terrible' aggressivity to which the victim was submitted in an indirect quotation of the doctors' statements. Therefore, it is possible that 'terribly' is not the writer's judgement, but it is due to the writer's a-priori knowledge of the doctors' statement.

If evaluative adjectives and adverbs represent an evaluation where the subjective element is dominant and appears as a result of a deliberate action, foregrounding is also deliberate as long as the writer's intention is that of making a certain structure salient, casting no doubt on the hazardous character of his choice. Thus, Fowler (1996, 103) claims that foregrounding is the technique of emphasising one linguistic structure by repetition which attracts reader's attention by excessive regularity. As far as foregrounding is concerned in this article, I need to point out that paradigmatically the foregrounding is represented by the repetition of the structure S + L + V (subject + pronoun + verb) as in 'barbatul de 31 de ani l-ar fi batut' (the 31 age old man might have beaten him), 'Cei cinci barbati l-au batut' (the five men beat him), 'l-au urcat' (they lifted him), 'l-au abandonat' (they abandoned him), 'fratele lui l-a gasit', 'l-a recunoscut' (he recognized him). Clearly, foregrounding emphasizes the agentive status of the doer and the passive role of the victim irrespective of whom the latter might be. The use of 'l-' (him) is linguistically and factually motivated due to the passive role of the victim who is perceived as not being worthy of being given a name or of being referred to by using a full nominal form. The victim is not shown compassion, pity which might speak about the representation of victims in Romanian mass-media or about the Romanian journalistic ideology of criminals and victims.

The concrete and specific character of the vocabulary that is used is another element which circumscribes this piece of writing to the journalistic news style. It is not only that news is about something real,

BDD-A20217 © 2010 Transilvania University Press
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.142 (2026-11-14 23:08:00 UTC)

thus concrete, or that the vocabulary is adapted to the situation, but news suffers progressive transformation into a pattern which is easily comprehensible and readable. Though abstract or general, article topics are brought into the mundane area thought of as common to the audience. Despite these general considerations of newspapers articles, the one taken into discussion, although concrete and specific (speaking of a specific incident) stays into an area of indefiniteness with deictic and spatial-temporal markers failing to stabilize the content for the reader. Besides the aforementioned lack of names for both victim and aggressors, the newspaper article places the action 'intr-o discoteca' (in a disco) somewhere in Iasi County as if the precise location is of no importance at least for journalistic accuracy. A possible explanation for this might be that the journalist focuses on the story and not on where it took place.

A further proof of the liquid character of time and place is the mention at the beginning of the article when the writer indicates the source of the news stating at the same time the day when the news was released which is 'luni' (on Monday). A deictic 'this' might have been enough for identifying which Monday it is about or the indication of the day. The temporal markers continue to be as indefinite as this one in 'in urma cu cativa ani' (some years before). In 'după ore de agonie în spital' (after some agonizing hours in hospital) the switch of emphasis from the temporal aspect to the agonizing status diminishes the 'how long' aspect in favour of 'what happened' aspect. The dilemma which is justifiably brought into discussion is that of the purpose of writing news articles and that of focalisation on certain elements to the detriment of others.

Still, news is not all about what, but also when, where, why and to what end. Nevertheless, two temporal markers 'a doua zi dimineata' (the following morning) and 'duminica seara' (on Sunday evening) are specific, but given the uncertain time frame the establishment of the following day should be done in relation to another previous temporal marker which, given their absence, gives rise to a motivated question 'the day following what day?' Unlike the temporal markers, the spatial markers outline the trajectory of the incidents which started from 'a disco' followed by 'the trunk of the car', 'a river', and 'hospital'. Although the disco, the river and the hospital lack names, the spatial markers clearly represent the most important places of the incident.

One aspect that is certainly worth paying attention to is the representation of authority which is represented by two public institutions: the hospital and the police. The hospital is embodied by the neural-surgery doctors who 'l-au ingrijit' (took care of him) and who reported that he had been savagely beaten. The efforts of the doctors are fore-grounded by the use of the verb's-au luptat' (they fought) which acquits them of the rightful care they should take of their every patient. It is also true that there is a limit in what the doctors can do and that is admitted in the use of the adverb 'in zadar' (vainly). The other authority is the police whose contribution to the solving of the case was immediate and effective since the five suspects were 'rapid' (rapidly) caught. The use of the adverb 'rapidly' is not hazardous since it emphasizes the professional character of the police and the rapid reaction which led to the suspects' being caught.

To conclude, this article embeds an ideology about the roles that the individuals are allotted in this conflict. The victim role, the aggressor role, the police

BDD-A20217 © 2010 Transilvania University Press
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.142 (2026-11-14 23:08:00 UTC)

role (justice), the medical role illustrate a certain manner of representing the aforementioned role and which is contained in the language the roles are described with. On the one hand, the victim role is poorly represented (no name indication, only age indication), and he does not seem to be given the necessary attention or no sympathy is shown towards the injustice he had become victim of. On the other hand, the aggressors' role is far better represented; although their names are not given, their reason for acting is provided, they are politically correctly named 'aggressors', 'suspects' and not 'murderers'. Their rights are respected and only if their guilt is proven will they go to prison for that.

To conclude the analysis of the first two roles, there seems to be an unbalanced treatment of the two roles, with the victim being disfavoured and the aggressors being fairly treated in accordance with the judicial decisions. As for the other two roles, they are both institutional roles and the attitude can be easily explained and understood by the logical intention of the authorities of creating positive images, professional ones, thus justifying the ideology that the institutions create for themselves and about them. If the police are very fast they succeed in their missions and if the doctors fight they are most likely to succeed in saving their patients' lives.

If the first newspaper article was taken from a quality newspaper, the second article is taken from a news agency Front News. News agencies are known for the fact that they create news, since they are in contact with the world's greatest media groups, and then they sell them to newspapers. This contrastive analysis is meant to see what the ideological representation of offenders is, whether there are common representations with the other article, but also the manner in which authority is built up.

As far as the referring function is concerned, both the agent and the object undergo an enriching and diversifying semantisation process: synonymy, metonymy, etc. When comparing the two articles one first difference that is immediately noticed is that the offenders are objects and not agents. The perspective of the article is posterior to the catching of the offenders which changes the focus from the offenders as agents while operating to the offenders as objects when being submitted to judicial investigation. If, in the first article the offenders were held by the police, but still they were not thought of as of some murderers, although they had admitted having killed the victim, in this article the offenders are already considered guilty although the court has not taken any decision yet. The article does not provide any information about the offenders' having admitted their guilt or not, nor any statement of the offenders. Still, the article contains one quotation given by the police spokes person and the function of the quotation is that of strengthening the idea of justice, of competence, and of authority. As objects, the offenders vary in the naming which begins with 'grup de infractori' (group of offenders), 'doi minori' (two minors), 'zece plasatori' (ten ushers), 'intermediari' (wanglers). The naming policy is an interesting one which initially avoids giving any information about the identity of the offenders, but in the end (in the case of two offenders only) the initial of their first name and their surname is provided V. Vasile and F. Dumitru. The absence or the intended avoidance of the offenders' names might get a twofold explanation: either, the authorities attempt at protecting the offenders' identity or they consider that the identity would not make any

BDD-A20217 © 2010 Transilvania University Press
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.142 (2026-11-14 23:08:00 UTC)

difference. By denying naming, the individuals, even if offenders are denied their social existence, their individuality. It is a process of de-personalisation which is more evident if analysed in contract with the full naming of the police officer. The two offenders who are named, though partly (V. Vasile and F. Dumitru), happen to have their names provided because they were the organisers of the criminal group.

On the other hand, the reference chain for the authorities is rather rigid since the selection is restricted to a limited area of choices. Poliţiştii (the policemen), purtător de cuvânt (spokes person), instanță (court) doubled by the full name of the spokes person Camelia Tuduce. The unbalanced naming strategy is obvious in this respect since offenders are not named at all in some cases, half-named in others, whereas the authority should be fully recognisable.

Similarly, the predicating function illustrates the role division between agent and object. Thus, in the past when the present objects were agents they used to sell 'a plasa', to use 'a folosi', to buy 'a cumpara'). But presently, since the offenders turned from agents into objects they are referred to in passive structures: 'a fost anihilat' (were annihilated), 'au fost identificați' (were identified), 'era formată' (was made of), 'a fost depistată' (was discovered), and 'au mai fost puse sub acuzare' were charged.

The authoritarian and the power status are evident in the rank of the verbs that the police activity is associated with. Thus, the police force 'states' by its spokes person, 'establishes' showing its investigatory function, organises the catching of the offenders. On the other hand, the judicial power has the power of 'issuing' the mandate for the offenders' arresting.

If in the case of the first article, the predicating elements which give the spatial-temporal coordinates were numerous, tough unspecific, in the second article the spatial-temporal indices inscribe the action into a sphere of habitual past (foloseau 'they would use', cumparau 'they would buy'), but not by adverbs or adverbial phrases, but by the habitual use of past tense. If the space coordinates are numerous: Arad county, Timis county, Bihor county or less specific spatial indicators such as: in towns, bars, and shops, the temporal coordinates are totally absent.

One major lexical difference between the two texts lies in the register to which the articles seem to be circumscribed to. The first article focuses more on the social implications of the offenders' deeds barely mentioning the possible judicial implications which, as a consequence, justify the reduced use of specialised judicial vocabulary. The second article seems to indicate an orientation towards a judicial register due to an extended use of specialized judicial vocabulary: 'prindere în flagrant' (catching in the act), 'descinderi' (raids), 'percheziții' (searches), 'mandate de arestare' (warrants).

One essential factor that emerges from the text is the simple grammatical structure which is counterbalanced by the dense lexical content. According to Chafe (quoted in Graddol & Boyd-Barrett, 1994, 61) 'writing is marked by more nominalisations, more genitive subjects and objects, more participles, more attributive adjectives, more conjoined, serial and sequenced phrases, more complement clauses, and more relative clauses; written language tends to have an "integrated" quality which contrasts with the fragmented quality of spoken language.'

Moreover, Halliday (quoted in Graddol & Boyd-Barrett, 1994, 65) claims that the written language represents phenomena as

BDD-A20217 © 2010 Transilvania University Press
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.142 (2026-11-14 23:08:00 UTC)

if they were products. There is no trace of process in the offenders' actions; both the offenders and the policemen's actions are finished in order to be written about. As Chafe (quoted in Fowler, 1996, 105) stated, nominalisation is a major feature of written texts. 'Prindere în flagrant' (catching in the act) is a nominalisation which contributes to what Halliday called 'grammatical metaphor'. Romanian language seems to have the necessary flexibility for the creation of grammatical metaphor which could be equivalent to the process of backgrounding which at its turn creates the context. In other words, nominalisations are grammatical means by which the context of situation is created. Bell (quoted in Graddol & Boyd-Barrett, 1996, 37) identifies over-statement in headlines and leads which he explains by the writers' desire of annulling all possible ambiguities and the over emphasis of negativity. As far as the over-statement is concerned, the headline of the first article is particularly over-stated since the reading is all in the headline: 'Tânăr omorât în bătaie de cinci indivizi în urma unei încăierări dintr-o discotecă' (Young man killed in a brawl in a disco) and 'Falsificatori de bani, prinşi de poliţiştii arădeni', (Money forgerers caught by the Arad policemen). The abundance of information in the headline is essential and strategic and should serve two principles: brevity and effectiveness. Equally important is the order in which the words are organized since that might illustrate the importance or lack of importance that certain elements might be given. Thus, in the case of the first article the headline begins with 'the young man who was killed' (the object) stressing the tragedy that happened to that young man. The object is immediately followed by the agent so that the relationship between the victim and aggressors is immediately visible to the reader. In the second article the object takes the same first position followed shortly by the agent. The pattern that seems to emerge by the analysis of these two articles is object + agent which might unconsciously lie in an ideology which is concerned most with what happens to somebody, what is done to him/her, what sufferance s/he is put through. Who does the action, irrespective of his status of a saviour or a scoundrel, comes second.

After the analysis of these two articles, it seems that the media representation of criminality is symptomatic since it apparently has different valences, points of view, interpretations depending mostly on the writer's mind-set.

References

1. Fowler, R. *Linguistic Criticism*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996.
2. Coulthard, C.R. & Coulthard, M. *Texts and Practices*. London: Routledge, 1996.
3. Graddol, D. & Boyd-Barret, O. *Media Texts: Authors and Readers*. Clevedon: The Open University, 1994.
4. Toolan, M. *Narrative – A critical Linguistic Introduction*. London: Routledge, 1995.
5. www.ziarulziua.ro
6. www.frontnews.ro

BDD-A20217 © 2010 Transilvania University Press
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.142 (2026-11-14 23:08:00 UTC)

APPENDIX I

***Un barbat de 31 de ani din judetul Iasi a fost omorat in bataie de cinci tineri, informeaza, luni, Pro TV*.**

Victima si agresorii erau intr-o discoteca si s-au luat la cearta pentru ca, *in urma cu cativa ani, barbatul de 31 de ani l-ar fi batut pe tatal unuia dintre tineri*. Cei cinci barbati l-au batut ingrozitor pe individ, dupa care l-au urcat in portbagajul masinii si l-au abandonat langa un parau.

Barbatul avea fata zdrobita si mainile rupte. Fratele lui l-a gasit abia a doua zi dimineata si l-a recunoscut dupa haine. Dupa ore de agonie in spital, victima s-a stins duminica seara. Medicii de la neurochirurgie care l-au ingrijit au spus ca individul fusese batut ingrozitor si s-au luptat in zadar sa il salveze.

Politistii au dat rapid de urma celor cinci suspecti, iar trei dintre ei si-au recunoscut fapta si au fost arestati. Ceilalti doi sunt cercetati in stare de libertate, desi martorii au povestit ca in timpul incaierarii nu au stat cu mainile in san. Daca vor fi gasiti vinovati pentru omor, cei cinci tineri risca ani grei de inchisoare.

APPENDIX II

Falsificatori de bani, prinsi de politistii aradeni

Un grup de infractori, care plasau bancnote false in judetele Arad, Timis si Bihor, a fost anihilat de politistii aradeni, printre membrii retelei fiind si doi minori.

Politistii au stabilit ca infractorii au reusit sa puna in circulatie 15.000 de lei noi. Foloseau bancnote false de 100 in special in mediul rural, dar si in orase, in localuri, baruri si magazine. Cumparau produse a caror valoare nu depasea 5 - 10 lei, de regula tigari si dulciuri.

Purtatorul de cuvant al Politiei Arad, inspector principal Camelia Tuduce, a declarat ca gruparea era formata din 20 de persoane.

"In urma activitatilor intreprinse, s-a realizat prima actiune de prindere in

BDD-A20217 © 2010 Transilvania University Press
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.142 (2026-11-14 23:08:00 UTC)

flagrant, in urma careia au fost identificati zece plasatori. Printre cei zece se afla si doi minori, cu varste de 16 si 18 ani", a declarat inspector principal Camelia Tuduce.

In cadrul actiunilor intreprinse, politistii au organizat mai multe descinderi si o perchezitie domiciliara, in urma carora a fost depistata si persoana care fabrica aceste bancnote.

Instanta a emis pe numele lui M. Vasile, din Arad si F. Dumitru mandate de arestare pentru 29 de zile, pentru constituire a unui grup de criminalitate organizata, inselaciune si fals de moneda. In urma cercetarilor efectuate, au mai fost puse sub acuzare peste 20 persoane, plasatori finali si intermediari in aceasta retea.

BDD-A20217 © 2010 Transilvania University Press
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.142 (2026-11-14 23:08:00 UTC)