THE LOGICO-LINGUISTIC BASES OF DISCOURSE GENERATION

Monica-Cezarina OBAGIU ILIE
Universitatea „Ovidius" Constanța
mnc_ilie@yahoo.com

Abstract:

The theory of enunciation has always made one consider three perspectives: a) that suggested by Benveniste, of enunciation as an individual speech act, with emphasis on the locutor producing the utterance; b) the postulation of an allocutor, the recipient of the utterance; c) the creation of enunciative signs which exist only *in* and *through* enunciation. Analyses have pragmatically shown the importance of subjectivity in language, as we have pointed out in the automatic analysis of the first-person pronouns. It is the subtle game of the form 'I' with the plural 'we', which constantly relates antagonistically to an antagonistic plural 'you', that the capture of the audience's goodwill lies in.

Bakhtin would consider enunciation as a purely social object. This trend would strongly influence the French intellectual Left. Not even M. Foucault could ignore the influence of the social or historical factor in the discourse.

Key words:

Discourse analysis, logic, linguistics, enunciation, discourse.

1. Landmarks of the theory of enunciation

First of all, it is necessary to make a distinction between two terms, sometimes competing in the specialised bibliography: *utterance* ('énoncé') and *enunciation* ('énonciation'). According to Maingueneau (1996), the term 'utterance' designates "the product of the act of enunciation". This term is polysemantic, with various meanings depending on the context. Thus, we are told, the utterance is syntactically opposed to the sentence, considered, in many cases, synonymous with the utterance. Maingueneau considers the utterance to be the elementary unit of communication, a sequence of words endowed with a global meaning and syntactically complete. In other words, the utterance is equivalent to the clause, we might say, as will be seen in the analytical model we follow. At a higher level, the utterance becomes equivalent to the text, i.e. with a verbal

BDD-A31910 © 2021 Editura Muzeul Literaturii Române
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.142 (2026-11-15 02:42:07 UTC)

sequence produced by the same enunciator, which forms a whole dependent on a certain type of discourse.

As in the case of the 'utterance', which is polysemantic, the definition of the term 'enunciation' also has several variations, depending on the meaning given by various authors. Here, we shall present three different points of view about enunciation. The first approach belongs to E. Benveniste, the second to M. Bakhtin and the third is that of Foucault and Pêcheux/Fuchs.

According to Benveniste (2000), enunciation is putting the language to work through an individual act of use. Understanding enunciation as a form of individual conversion of language into discourse is, of course, the key element of Benveniste's thinking. This interpretation entails two theoretical aspects: at the general level, of a theory of language, in which enunciation is defined as a condition for the constitution of the subject in and through the discourse they produce, and in terms of linguistics forms, which represent the markers of subjectivity in language.

Benveniste points out that man has established himself as a subject (similar, in our analytical model, to the knowing subject) in language and through language. Benveniste states that only by way of contrast, of opposition, can one acquire self-awareness. Therefore, "each enunciation is, explicitly or implicitly, an allocution, it postulates an allocutor", thus being an internal centre of reference for each instance of discourse by indicating the person of the "*I-You* relationship" (2000, p. 84), produced only by and through discourse. The term 'I' designates the individual uttering the enunciation, whereas "you" is his allocutor.

What most frequently characterises enunciation is the "accentuation of the discursive relation to the partner" (Benveniste, 2000, p. 87), regardless of whether the latter is real or imaginary, individual or collective. Thus, enunciation is constructed by means of a person who is the source of it and another person who receives it, therefore by the presence of partners that, in a dialogical structure, are the protagonists of enunciation. We should mention that a more in-depth study of these subjects of enunciation and reception is to be found in the semiolinguistic theory formulated by Patrick Charaudeau, as we shall see later. At this point, what we are interested in is the fact that enunciation presupposes an 'I' utterance, which presents itself as such only in relation to a 'you', its allocutor. When one speaks, he automatically becomes an 'I', who, in turn, approaches the first person as 'you'. This is how the structure of the dialogue, which Benveniste refers to, is constructed.

In addition to the fact that the locutor is one of the necessary conditions for the existence of the enunciation and, within the utterance, he establishes a discursive relation to a partner 'you', there are other classes of morphemes, such as

BDD-A31910 © 2021 Editura Muzeul Literaturii Române
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.142 (2026-11-15 02:42:07 UTC)

that of deictics describing the process by which the locutor refers to the situation of his discourse, which are indices of characterising enunciation. Occurring in various grammatical classes (demonstrative pronouns, adverbs, adjectives), deictics have the function of locating discursive occurrences in space and time, in relation to the reference point constituted by the subject of enunciation.

Thus characterised, enunciation is, according to Benveniste (2000, p. 86)[1], "directly responsible for certain classes of signs which it literally makes exist". As an example of these classes of signs, Benveniste mentions that 'I', 'that', 'tomorrow' in the grammatical description are nothing but the metalinguistic 'names' of the *I, that, tomorrow* produced in enunciation (2000, p. 86).

Another issue worth highlighting is that enunciation is presented by way of the category of "verb tenses, whose axial form, 'the present', coincides with the time of enunciation" (2000, p. 85), the present also being a linguistic marker of enunciation. Benveniste states that one might infer from here that temporality is an innate idea, as in Kant's apriorism, when, in fact, it is constructed only based on enunciation and through enunciation.

> "*From enunciation does the category of the present proceed and from the category of the present is the category of time born. The present is actually the source of time. It is this presence in the world that only the act of enunciation makes possible, because, one needs to well reflect on this, man has no other way of living this 'now' and of making it current than by inserting discourse into the world. By analysing the temporal systems in various languages, one may note the central position of the present. The formal present only explicates the present inherent to enunciation, which renews with each production of discourse, and, from this continuous present, coextensive with our own presence, does the feeling of a continuity we call 'time' ingrain in our consciousness; continuity and temporality are generated by the incessant present of enunciation, which is the present of the being itself which is delimited, by internal reference, between what will become present and what is no longer so* " (Benveniste, 2000, p. 87).

Benveniste also emphasizes, as aspects of enunciation, the terms or forms which he calls 'of intimation'. These are the orders and appeals produced by categories through which one relates directly to the other, such as the imperative and vocative, which "imply a living and immediate relationship between the enunciator and the other, in a necessary reference to the time of the discourse". (2000, p. 86)

[1] Our references are made to the French version, which is available online. We have also mentioned the Romanian version in the final *Bibliography*.

BDD-A31910 © 2021 Editura Muzeul Literaturii Române
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.142 (2026-11-15 02:42:07 UTC)

In addition, the French linguist also presents the assertion, which, though less evident, belongs to "the same repertory". According to him, assertion is "the most common manifestation of the presence of the locutor in the enunciation, asserting a clause positively or negatively" (2000, p. 87). Therefore, this is another category promoted in and through enunciation.

Each enunciation is thus, according to Benveniste, "an act which serves the direct purpose of uniting the listener and the speaker through an affective, social or other kind of bond. Once again, in this function, language manifests itself not as an instrument of reflection, but as a mode of action" (2000, p. 90).

In this case, language does not function as a way of conveying thought or describing an act, but as a means of accomplishing the act itself. Thus, language is possible only because every speaker in the utterance presents himself as a subject of an 'I', referring to the other as being the correspondent of a 'you'. Therefore, we may say that enunciation is regarded as an essential dimension of language.

Therefore, Benveniste's approach to the issue of subjectivity in language tends to go beyond the presence of formal enunciation signs and to consider discourse, in its entirety, as a global index of subjectivity.

Consequently, one cannot lose sight of the fact that, in Benveniste's theory, in addition to other elements, such as the time of utterance, which should be related to enunciation, the locutor is an essential element, hence, one of the conditions required for the existence of enunciation, but it is not the only one responsible for such an act. Understood in this way, enunciation is, in Benveniste's opinion, an essential condition for language functioning.

However, there is no consensus among researchers with regard to defining enunciation in discourse, because, sometimes, it presents itself as a marker of the subject in the utterance or as a relationship between interlocutors or as an action of the locutor within the utterance.

Another perspective on enunciation might be its analysis as a social and historical process of manifestation of discourse. According to other authors, such as Bakhtin and Pêcheux, as we shall further see, enunciation depends on social and historical elements, which go beyond the formal condition of subjectivity, as formulated by Benveniste.

In Mikhail Bakhtin, for example, enunciation, beside being the product of interaction of two socially organised individuals, may be understood as a reality which invades the psyche and the ideological. Bakhtin views enunciation as an external semiotic expression, which may have two orientations, one towards the subject, the other towards ideology:

> "*In the first instance, the utterance aims at giving outer sign expression to inner signs, as such, and requires receiver of the utterance to refer them to an inner*

BDD-A31910 © 2021 Editura Muzeul Literaturii Române
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.142 (2026-11-15 02:42:07 UTC)

> *context, i.e., requires a purely psychological kind of understanding. In the second instance, a purely ideological, objective-referential understanding of the utterance is required. In this way, that delimitation between the psyche and ideology takes shape*" (Bahtin, 1977, p. 60).

According to Bakhtin (1977, p. 59), cognitive thought materialises in consciousness, in psyche, and is supported by the ideological system of knowledge that suits it. Therefore, from its very beginning, thought belongs to the ideological system and is governed by its laws. However, at the same time, each thought belongs to another unique system, which has its own specific laws, the system of thinking. Understanding means, therefore, to relate mental activity, i.e. of the inner sign, to other inner signs, but it also means to include an outer sign, with a purely ideological meaning, in the appropriate ideological context.

Viewed in this way, enunciation requires one to better understand what an ideological product is. As Bakhtin states, "an ideological product is not only itself a part of a reality (natural or social), just as is any physical body, any instrument of production, or any product for consumption, it also, in contradistinction to these other phenomena, reflects and refracts another reality outside itself. Everything ideological possesses meaning: it represents, depicts, or stands for something lying outside itself. In other words, it is a sign. Without signs, there is no ideology" (1977, p. 31). And more:

> "*Differently oriented accents intersect in every ideological sign. Sign becomes an arena of the class struggle. This social multiaccentuality of the ideological sign is a very crucial aspect. By and large, it is thanks to this intersecting of accents that a sign maintains its vitality and dynamism and the capacity for further development*." (Bahtin, 1977, p. 46).

Thus, the ideological chain extends from one individual consciousness to another individual consciousness, generating, in each moment and in each social group, its repertory of diversified discourse forms. Signs, according to Bakhtin, function as some kind of nurture for this individual consciousness and result from a consensus between socially organised individuals in the social interaction process. That is why, the aspect of "expression-utterance" should be considered for its "actual conditions of utterance", that is, for the immediate social situation.

> "*In fact, utterance is the product of interaction between two socially organised individuals and, although there is no real addressee, he can be replaced by the normal representative of the social group to which the speaker belongs. The immediate social situation and the broader social milieu wholly determine – and determine from within, so to speak – the structure of an utterance*" (Bahtin, 1977, pp. 112-113).

In Bakhtin, any utterance is a response to the utterances preceding it, hence, it is but a link in the chain of speech acts. Thus, "the organising centre of any

BDD-A31910 © 2021 Editura Muzeul Literaturii Române
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.142 (2026-11-15 02:42:07 UTC)

utterance, of all expressions, is not within, but outside: in the social milieu surrounding the individual being" (1977, p. 121). Therefore, "the structure of the utterance is a purely sociological structure. The utterance, as such, becomes efficient only between speakers" (1977, p. 127).

Thus, according to Bakhtin, utterance is the mutual contribution of speakers to shaping, even involuntarily, an idea:

> "*To understand another person's utterance means to orient oneself with respect to it, to find the proper place for it in the corresponding context. For each word of the utterance that we are in process of understanding, we, as it were, lay down a set of our own answering words. The greater their number and weight, the deeper and more substantial our understanding will be... Thus each of the distinguishable significative elements of an utterance and the entire utterance as a whole entity are translated in our minds into another, active and responsive, context. Any true understanding is dialogic in nature. Understanding is to utterance as one line of a dialogue is to the next. Understanding strives to match the speaker's word with a counter word*." (Bahtin, 1977, p. 131).

Considering this, we may say that, in M. Bakhtin, the utterance is the basic unit of language, an inner discourse (a dialogue with the self) or an outer one, a line of the social dialogue. The utterance emerges only in a social context and with a real or potential interlocutor, and is, therefore, of social nature. Thus, utterance may be characterised as a social discourse process.

Another possible evolution in trying to understand enunciation is its presentation in light of the construction of images between the locutor and the addressee, manifested in the process of discourse production. By "process of production", Michel Pêcheux (1969) designates the set of formal mechanisms which produce a discourse in certain given circumstances and states that one of the possible studies of discursive processes implies the examination of the conditions of discourse production. So, let us take a closer look at some of these conditions:

> "*… a discourse is always pronounced on the basis of given conditions of production. The deputy, for example, either belongs to a political party supporting the government, or to an opposition party; he is either a spokesman for one or another group representing one or another interest, or he is 'isolated'. He is, whether he knows it or not, situated within the balance of power that exists between the antagonistic elements of a given political field: what he says, announces, promises or denounces does not have the same status depending on the position he occupies; the same declaration may be a fearful weapon or a ridiculous comedy depending on the position of the speaker and on what he represents in relation to what he says: a discourse may be a direct political act or an empty gesture designed to 'trade something', which is another form of political action.*" (Michel Pêcheux, 1969, p. 17).

BDD-A31910 © 2021 Editura Muzeul Literaturii Române
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.142 (2026-11-15 02:42:07 UTC)

Discourse relies on this relationship of forces existing between what is uttered and the place from which it is uttered, so it is necessary to assess the conditions of enunciation in order to better understand the relationship between discourses.

There are two schemata of structural elements which are included in the conditions of production. One is the 'reaction' schema, involving a stimulus-response behaviour, and the other is the 'information' schema, which has the communicative function based on the 'sender-message-receiver' triad. Instead of 'message', Pêcheux prefers the term 'discourse'.

Unlike the 'reaction' schema, the 'information' schema has the "advantage of introducing both the protagonists and the referent of discourse". Therefore, based on this information schema, Michel Pêcheux structures his hypothesis according to which the positions designated by subject "A" (in our case, *addresser* or *locutor*) and subject "B" (in our case, *addressee* or *allocutor*) are representative elements within the process of production of discourse and, hence, influence the conditions of this production.

Pêcheux refers to subjects A and B (1969, p. 62) as protagonists of the process of enunciation in the structure of the conditions of discourse production. In addition to these imaginary formations, the protagonists' perspective regarding the referent, context, situation intervenes as a condition of production of discourse.

Thus, each discursive process presupposes that the sender (locutor) "anticipates the receiver's representations, upon which the strategy of discourse is based" (Pêcheux, 1969, p. 64). This anticipation depends on the distance that the subject imagines there to be between himself and the receiver. The locutor assumes a perception based on previous discursive processes, which leads to new positions built on what has already been heard and said.

According to Pêcheux (1969, p. 22), if the production of discourse occurs through a series of imaginary formations, this is due to the fact that "within the mechanisms of any social formation, there are rules for projection, which establish relationships between situations (defined objectively) and positions (representations of these situations)". The elements which form the condition of production of discourse are not juxtaposed but maintain relations that depend on the nature of elements involved. Thus, some of these become dominant in a given situation. The study of variations of dominance should be dealt with by the sociology of discourse that has the function of examining the relationship between the power relations outside the situation of discourse and the meaning relations manifesting in this particular situation. The sociology of discourse is set to deepen the situation and position of protagonists within a given social structure, to ponder on the relationship between the power relations and the meaning relations specific

BDD-A31910 © 2021 Editura Muzeul Literaturii Române
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.142 (2026-11-15 02:42:07 UTC)

to a given social structure. Thus, "anything the subject says must be related to the conditions under which he says it" (Pêcheux, 1969, p. 90).

If, on the one hand, the study "between the power relations and meaning relations specific to a given social structure", which influences the production of utterance, is to be investigated, on the other hand, the starting point of the analysis of the position from which the subject emits the utterance or of the conditions of this enunciation is already a landmark in the history of discourse analysis.

We understand that an analysis which aims to describe the power relations and the meaning relations of a given discourse, within a given social structure, cannot fail to examine the interdiscursive relations involving the enunciation of that discourse, since enunciation, according to Pêcheux and Fuchs (1975), is a process constantly dealing with interdependence, not only an individual or deliberate process, but a historical and social one.

Viewed as such, enunciation, as a process connected with interdependence and with historical and social aspects, takes an extensive form. Therefore, it needs a panoramic level of examination, involving the investigation of the relationship of discursive formations surrounding a particular utterance, which we intend to do in the next section of this chapter.

2. The discursive formation

We shall now deal with the concepts of discursive formation, ideological formation and the configurations specific to the interdiscursive level: *discursive universe*, *discursive field* and *discursive space*.

The concept of 'discursive formation' appears, as a conceptual formulation, mainly in Foucault and Pêcheux. In his *Archaeology of Knowledge*, Michel Foucault states:

> "*If one can describe such a system of dispersion between a number of utterances, if one can define a regularity (an order, correlations, positions, functionings and transformations) between objects, types of enunciations, concepts and thematic options, we shall say, by convention, that we are dealing with a discursive formation, thus avoiding the use of words that are overladen with conditions and consequences and, in any case, inadequate to the task of designating such a dispersion, such as 'science', 'ideology', 'theory' or ''domain of objectivity'*." (Foucault, 1999, p. 48)

Thus, conceived by Foucault for situations in which historical and discursive conditions, in which knowledge systems are constituted, are questioned and later elaborated by Michel Pêcheux, the notion of 'discursive formation', in discourse analysis, "represents a central place in the articulation between language and discourse". Discursive formation is the one that makes it possible to consider

BDD-A31910 © 2021 Editura Muzeul Literaturii Române
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.142 (2026-11-15 02:42:07 UTC)

the fact that speaking subjects, located in a certain historical context, may or may not agree on the meaning given to words, speaking differently, although they use the same language. According to Pêcheux, under the influence of Marxism, discursive formation is "that which in a given ideological formation, i.e., from a given position in a given conjuncture determined by the state of the class struggle, determines what can and should be said" (1975, p. 60).

According to Foucault, one cannot say anything in any age and one cannot always say new things. "These relations are established between institutions, economic and social processes, patterns of behaviour, systems of norms, techniques, types of classification, modes of characterisation" (1999, p. 56), which impose, on the speaker, whatever there is to be said and where to say it.

Such relations, which Foucault calls discursive relations, are not internal to discourse, "they do not connect concepts or words with one another; they do not establish a deductive or rhetorical architecture between sentences and clauses" (1999, p. 57). On the other hand, they are not external to discourse either, forcing certain forms or circumstances to state certain things. These relations are at the limit of discourse, offering it objects it can deal with, name, analyse, classify, explain etc. thus, these objects may be connected within a given discourse, establishing recurrent elements that re-emerge in new logical structures, acquire semantic content and build new social organisations with one another.

Let us compare the two approaches. Foucault points out that discursive formation presupposes a complex bundle of relations functioning as a rule and determining what can be said by the speaking subject in a certain discursive formation, regulated by interdiscursive contours. To Pêcheux, discursive formation refers to a terminal stage of the discourse, being an intradiscourse or a discursive sequence existing within the complex bundle of relations and systematically manifesting itself in the discourse.

Courtine states that discursive sequences should be analysed in a discursive process of reproducing and transforming utterances, which considers the intra-discursive level but fails to associate such discursive sequences with the interdiscourse.

In this way, discourse consists of a set of utterances relying on a system of formations, which assign regularity to each utterance in a certain discursive practice. Thus, discourse is a place of ideological contradictions between what becomes explicit and what is hidden. Such an ideological contradiction, "far from being an accident of discourse", is "the law of its existence", functioning throughout discourse as "the principle of its historicity" (Foucault, p. 186).

According to Pêcheux, the interdiscursive relation of discursive formations is complex in ideological formations. The meaning of words, phrases or sentences etc. "does not exist in itself, but is determined by the ideological positions which

BDD-A31910 © 2021 Editura Muzeul Literaturii Române
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.142 (2026-11-15 02:42:07 UTC)

are in play in the socio-historical process" of a determined discursive formation (Pêcheux, 1969, p. 160). Hence, the need to take into account the importance of ideological formations in the creation of discursive formations.

An ideological formation should be understood as a view of the world of a given social class, i.e. a set of representations, of ideas revealing the understanding that a certain social class has about the world. Since there are no ideas outside the linguistic framework, understood in its broadest sense as a tool of verbal or nonverbal communication, this view of the world does not exist outside language. Therefore, each ideological formation corresponds to a discursive formation. Thus, while a discursive formation determines what should be said, an ideological formation imposes what should be thought.

Consequently, the words, expressions and formulations of a political order are elaborated depending on a given conjuncture or a determined discursive formation, with a certain level of political autonomy it has in relation to any approached subject, at a certain moment of the class or ideological formation struggle. Therefore, one may say that discursive formations, which maintain asymmetrical relations of determination, are the place of a constant work of (re)configuration of discourse.

The ideological formation intervenes as a force confronting other forces in the ideological conjuncture specific to each social formation at a certain historical moment. Within the ideological formation, there may be one or several discursive formations which are interconnected, because a discursive formation adjacent to various other discursive formations and the boundaries between them move according to ideological clashes. In view of this, one may state that any discursive formation is defined in its interdependence.

Thus, discursive formation may be regarded as specific configurations of discourses in their intra-discursive relations crossed by interdiscourse. According to Courtine (1981), interdiscourse may be represented as "a vertical axis, along which everything one has said – and what one has forgotten – would be located, in a stratification of utterances, which, as a whole, represent what has been said". On the other hand, intradiscourse may serve to represent the horizontal axis, a place where one might find what one says at that moment, under the given circumstances.

As D. Maingueneau (1984, p. 27) points out, interdiction may be broken down into three cases: the discursive universe, the discursive field and the discursive space. The author conceptualises the discursive universe as a "set of discursive formations of all types, which interact at a certain moment". He defines the discursive field as a "set of discursive formations which compete and are mutually delimited in a given region of the discursive universe". As regards discursive spaces, they are "parts of discursive fields which the analyst isolates in a discursive

BDD-A31910 © 2021 Editura Muzeul Literaturii Române
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.142 (2026-11-15 02:42:07 UTC)

field for specific purposes of analysis". Therefore, we may say that discursive spaces are subsets of the discursive field connecting at least two discursive formations in crucial relations in order to allow discourses to be understood.

The concept of 'discursive formation', viewed as a configuration of discourse in its intra-discursive relation crossed by interdiscourse, entails an issue of great importance to us in this paper: *the idea of subject decentralisation*.

Configured in a discursive field, the subject loses his spontaneous existence and integrates into the functioning of utterances. Although in his discursive practices he presents himself, as Pêcheux (1969) states, as subject of discourse, because there is no discourse without a subject and there is no subject without ideology, he is also governed by discursive formations which are configured when they relate to one another, interdiscursively, through the influence of corresponding ideological formations.

Thus, according to this perspective of discourse analysis, the subject presupposes, in his nature, a paradoxical ambiguity between a subjective being, free to take initiatives and responsible for its actions, and a being subjected to constraints, conditions of production, hence intimidated by ideology and regulated by a discursive formation.

Given this, there is not only the subject of discourse, but there are also different positions of the subject in relation to what he says. Discourse is constituted in its meanings, because what the subject says falls under a particular discursive formation and not another in order to have one meaning and not another. Therefore, discursive formations entail what can and should be said, in given circumstances.

In order to better understand the place of the discursive subject mentioned above, we should approach the semiolinguistic theory.

3. The semiolinguistic perspective

Launched by Patrick Charaudeau (1983), this theoretical trend of semiolinguistics deals, among other things, with the place of the subject, given the uniqueness and reason of his existence. From this perspective, the subject is seen not only in terms of a certain discursive formation or as an individual subject, but also as the subject of a certain social community.

In terms of the semiolinguistic theory, which emphasises the social so much, one may wonder whether the subject is the one that builds the discourse or the discourse is that which builds the subject. According to the abovementioned author, the answer is simple: a balance between the two sides should be found. In line with the theory under discussion, but nuanced by Bakhtin's generous view, the subject is constructed in collaboration with 'the Other'. Such a collaboration may be

BDD-A31910 © 2021 Editura Muzeul Literaturii Române
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.142 (2026-11-15 02:42:07 UTC)

nevertheless hindered by social forces, which implies an influence of the social life in the cooperation between partners to perform the speech act.

According to P. Charaudeau (1984), a speech act appears as a phenomenon which combines *to say* and *to do*. *To do* is the place of situational instance, which defines itself through the space occupied by those in charge of this act: 'I' (communicating subject) and 'you' (interpreting subject). *To say* is the place of discursive instance which is defined as a staging in which the beings that speak participate: 'I' (enunciative subject) and 'you' (addressee). Thus, the speech act involves the entire staging of language with its two circuits: external – of the contractual relationship between partners, and internal – of the staging of 'to say', with its two protagonists.

In the communicative framework, the communicating subject (who produces the discourse) and the interpreting subject (who interprets the discourse) recognise each other in the play proposed to them by a contractual relationship. On the other hand, the enunciative subject (who enunciates the utterance) and the addressee (recipient subject, to whom the utterance is addressed) are called protagonists, because they are considered the speaking beings of the staging of the *saying*, which changes depending on the roles attributed by the partners acting in accordance with the contractual relationship.

In other words, reaffirming what has already been said before, we may say that the speech act means the staging with its communicational subjects, the communicating subject and the interpreting subject, real beings that are part of the situational context of *to do*. These subjects promote interdiscourse and project two other subjects from the world of words, in the situation of *to say*: the enunciative subject and the recipient subject, protagonists of communication. Thus, when the communicating subject promotes his discourse, he does it according to the image he builds to the virtual recipient subject he projects. In order to deliver the message, he establishes an enunciative subject and an imaginary recipient subject. The enunciative subject is the one that, based on his illocutionary performance, will emit the recipient subject, so as to reach the interpreting subject, to be real, presupposing the same identity as the interpreting subject and the recipient subject, an image of that who has promoted the discourse: the communicating subject, also a real being. Thus, out of the images created by the subjects of the real world will communication be established in the world of words.

According to P. Charaudeau (1984, p. 35), the interactional situation of communication partners is configured by a certain contractual relationship. "This does not rely on the social status of partners, but on the dependence of 'challenge' incorporated into and through the linguistic act; that particular challenge presupposes an expectation (will the speech act be successful or not?)".

BDD-A31910 © 2021 Editura Muzeul Literaturii Române
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.142 (2026-11-15 02:42:07 UTC)

The contractual relationship is, therefore, dependent on three specific components of the speech act, namely: the situational level, the communicational level and the *discursive* level (Charaudeau, 1995).

The *situational level* is part of the external space of the speech act, constituting the space of the limitations of this act. It is where the purpose of the linguistic act forms ("why say so or do so?"), where the identity of partners is revealed ("who speaks to whom?"), pointing to the recognition that communication partners have of each other, such as age, hierarchical position etc., the space in which the exchange device also appears ("in what physical spatio-temporal framework?").

The *communicational level* refers to "the place where the manners of speaking (writing) are determined based on situation data, answering the question: how to say it?". This indicates what roles should be assumed by the communicating and interpreting subjects in order to have the right to speak.

The *discursive level* refers to the internal space of discursive strategies. It is the place of action of the communicating subject as an enunciative subject who puts the project of his discourse into discourse, satisfying the conditions of credibility and captation. It is the level that relies on the *a priori* knowledge each partner has of one another (or builds for himself), in an imaginary way, using supposedly shared knowledge.

Thus, the communicative contractual relationship includes the communication situation which involves both the physical and mental framework of partners during the exchange of words. This is the communication level, i.e. of the enunciation roles presented above. Such partners have a psychological or social identity, that is, they are inserted, at the situational level, into the contract. Moreover, such partners are motivated by an intentional component, i.e. they are represented, at the discursive level, with their strategies oriented according to a specific communication contract.

A more detailed account of the communication contract may be found in the article "Le contract de communication de l'information médiatique", in which Charaudeau (1994) introduces the theme. Each discourse (considering the various contractual forms and the numerous discursive genres) occurs in a communication situation, which, in turn, consists of a certain number of fixed rules influencing partners within the communication act.

In order to explain the contract of communication, Charaudeau (1994, p. 9) relies on communication situations with media information, more precisely on the journalistic production.

This contract implies a relationship between the three levels we have previously enumerated and hence is composed of two parts: the first, a space (which is external) of situational constraints, which condition the identity of partners, the purpose of the communication act and the material circumstances or means used to

BDD-A31910 © 2021 Editura Muzeul Literaturii Române
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.142 (2026-11-15 02:42:07 UTC)

transmit information; the second, a space (which is internal) of discursive strategies. As aforementioned, these strategies entail a discursive behaviour and are of two types: credibility and captation. Credibility aims to produce the effects of truth of the subject, prompting him to be concerned with the ways in which he can be taken seriously, remaining in a neutral position, based on his choices of arguments and words. Captation reaches the universes of beliefs and emotional states. The fundraising strategy, for examples, is based on actions which use the effects of dramatization, persuasion, play, analogies, comparisons and metaphors.

Addressing the particularities of the external space components of the language act, we should make a few clarifications regarding the identity of partners, the purpose of the communication act and the material circumstances.

As regards the issue of the identity of partners within the contract of media communication, Charaudeau states that it is not related to the identification of two persons, but to the interaction of two instances, which he refers to as 'instance of production' and 'instance of reception'. By exemplifying the instance of production, the author uses the figure of a journalist who has to exert his two-folded role of being the provider of information and the investigator of that particular information. For such an effort, an investigative journalist encounters three types of difficulties: the quantitative type, which, due to space and time constraints, forces him to select what should appear in his article; the qualitative type of difficulty, which, given the impossibility of an omnipresent reporting of the facts, requires the journalist to employ various sources in order to write his article, making sure to check their reliability; and a third type, also qualitative, which, due to economic competition, forces him to mark his own field of action, in contrast to others and considering his own public.

These conditions are inherent in the fulfilment of the contract. Thus, it will be established that any activity of production is related to what is produced, the nature of production and to what is to be obtained in relation to competition.

As regards the instance of reception, Charaudeau presents some difficulties still hovering over this territory (such as the instance of production not knowing the instance of reception, because the competence of reception is not necessarily as essential as the production). Despite this, he states that "l'instance de production et l'instance de réception se trouvent engagées dans un processus de transaction, dans lequel la première instance joue un role d'interpellateur vis-à-vis de seconde et celle-ci un rôle de miroir vis-à-vis de la première, par «imaginaires» interposés" (Charaudeau, *op. cit*., p. 11).

Thus, according to Charaudeau, although the instance of reception is still a debatable ground, the communicative action depends on the mutual effort of these two instances, of production and of reception, to perform the language act, even

BDD-A31910 © 2021 Editura Muzeul Literaturii Române
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.142 (2026-11-15 02:42:07 UTC)

though this is viewed as an expectation, an implicit bet and a challenge launched to the other, through images.

This comment makes one understand that the identity of partners refers to the identification, though presumed, of these partners. One thus tries to answer such questions as: who communicates with whom, what roles should they have in the discourse, in what environment, with what means, by what channel the broadcast is made (Charaudeau, 1994, p. 9).

In addition to identity, the (external) space of constraints conditions the purpose and material circumstances of the communication act. The purpose is the goal that should be achieved through the communication act and which leads one to the question: for what purpose is the subject present in the act of communication? (Charaudeau, 1994, p. 9).

We have left material circumstances to the end. They regard the means (time, space and transmission channel) used in the communication act. To consider the material circumstances means to wonder about the environment, the means and the communication channel (*Ibidem,* p. 9). These questions, which have to do with identity, purpose or material circumstances, are related to the external space of the communication act. Therefore, it is in this space that the structure of the communication act manifests itself.

The configuration of a certain discourse is done by adjusting the staging of 'to say' ("place of the discursive instance which is defined as a staging in which only the speaking beings participate") and the contractual relationship of 'to do' ("the location of the situational instance which is defined by the space occupied by those responsible in the language act") (Charaudeau, 1984, p. 28).

For all these reasons, the notion of 'contract' is very important, because it allows one to consider the issue of "not understanding", given that the communication act always involves the risk of not being understood or of being denied. As Charaudeau points out (1995, p. 24), "one of the minimum conditions for such a contract to exist is for the two exchange partners to know each other in their role as interlocutors". This mutual recognition of partners is not a starting point, but a socially constructed relationship.

That is why the condition of being a constrained subject, which we mentioned earlier, is built within a social relationship that is naturally governed by the constraints of social forces.

As we have seen, the communicating subject, though not completely free or completely constrained by social rules, is presented, within the semiolinguistic theory, as a psychosocial subject. This subject is animated by a contract of word which positions him as a proclaimer of restrictions, manoeuvres and discursive

BDD-A31910 © 2021 Editura Muzeul Literaturii Române
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.142 (2026-11-15 02:42:07 UTC)

strategies, when he produces statements based not only on his own *ethos*, but also on the discursive and social universe.

In the next section, we shall comment upon some aspects of the speech act theory in order to form a theoretical basis for the analysis of the speech acts of 'promise' and 'criticism', which we shall encounter in our working corpus.

4. The impact of speech acts

The first definitions of 'speech acts' were elaborated by J. L. Austin. Later, these concepts were re-discussed by other authors, such as Searle and Vanderveken. The study of speech acts is even to this day insufficiently explored, which makes one want to better understand this theory.

The concept of 'speech act' may be explained by the need to show how certain language forms are part of the structure of actions which enter our social life. Simplifying things a lot, we say that they emerge when one wants certain deeds to be done in the future, when orders are given, promises or requests are made etc. We often refer to things that have already happened, but we use language evoking protagonists and details of actions that occurred in the past.

Searle had shown that the speech act goes through the listener's acknowledging the illocutionary purpose the speaker intends. "*We have, therefore, distinguished three kinds of acts – the locutionary, the illocutionary and the perlocutionary.*" (Austin, 2005, p. 102).

> "*We first distinguished a group of things we do in saying something, which together we summed up by saying we perform a **locutionary act**, which is roughly equivalent to uttering a certain sentence with a certain sense and reference, which again is roughly equivalent to 'meaning' in the traditional sense. Second, we said that we also perform **illocutionary acts** such as informing, ordering, warning, undertaking, etc., i.e. utterances which have a certain (conventional) force. Thirdly, we may also perform **perlocutionary acts**: what we bring about or achieve by saying something, such as convincing, persuading, deterring, and even, say, surprising or misleading*." (Austin, 2005, p. 107).

The discourses delivered by presidential candidates are not just locutionary speech acts, because, according to Austin's definitions above, they include at least some information, if not warnings, commitments etc., just as they may include insidious means of persuasion as well.

The analysis of promise and criticism proposed here aims at something more than the mere observation of a certain meaning and reference of sentences.

> "*Thus we distinguished the locutionary act (and within it the phonetic, the phatic, and the rhetic acts) which has a **meaning**; the illocutionary act which has a certain **force** in saying something; the perlocutionary act which is the **achieving** of certain effects by saying something*." (Austin, 2005, p. 116)

BDD-A31910 © 2021 Editura Muzeul Literaturii Române
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.142 (2026-11-15 02:42:07 UTC)

Furthermore, one may say that action is the precondition for the rational use of language, but one cannot consider only an organic act, one should take into account the linguistic relation of sentences which, when uttered, produce actions (illocutionary act) as well as the interactive relationship between meaning and referent, i.e. considering the unpredictable effects resulted from the enunciation of sentences (perlocutionary act). By emphasising the illocutionary and perlocutionary act, we shall try to point out the actions and effects of speech acts of presidential candidates.

The classification of speech acts, as we have seen before, is only the starting point of studies on speech act theory. Later, Searle (1984) justifies the theory by the diversity of acts regarding the concept of "direction of fit". The direction of fit is the way of designing the orientation between language and action. It helps one understand how verbal manifestations relate to the world. There are four directions of fit: the word-to-world direction, the world-to-word direction, the double direction and the null direction. The world-to-word direction of fit includes speech acts produced with illocutionary assertive force. The word-to-world direction of fit comprises speech acts that act with directive and commissive force. The double direction of fit includes declarative acts, whereas the null direction contains speech acts with illocutionary expressive force. The word-to-world direction of fit aims to engage the locutor's responsibility for a state of affairs existing in the world. In this direction, language adjusts to actions, because they already exist as an independent state. The world-to-word direction, with illocutionary directive force and illocutionary commissive force, aims to make the locutor or the allocutor achieve something, in that a psychological state of will or desire is uttered. The double direction of fit aims to produce changes in the world, by making statements. In this direction, words are adjusted to the world and the world is adjusted to words. The null direction aims to indicate the speaker's attitudes and express the psychological state.

In our analysis, we shall limit ourselves to the word-to-world direction of fit and the world-to-word direction of fit, because they are directions equivalent to the illocutionary assertive point and the illocutionary commissive (promising) point, acts we have selected for this research.

Daniel Vanderveken (1985) completes the theory, stating that most illocutionary acts which appear in conversations are elementary illocutionary acts of the form F (P), where F is an illocutionary force and P is a propositional content. According to Vanderveken (1985), each illocutionary force is divided into seven components: an illocutionary point, a mode of achieving that point, a propositional content, preparatory conditions, sincerity conditions and two degrees of strength, one illocutionary, the other related to the conditions of sincerity.

Vanderveken (1985, p. 173) points out that "two illocutionary forces will be identical if and only if they are identical in relation to these components". An

BDD-A31910 © 2021 Editura Muzeul Literaturii Române
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.142 (2026-11-15 02:42:07 UTC)

apparently simple change of the point may completely change the mode of achievement of an act. According to him, speech act theory presents five illocutionary points, i.e. five ways in which the propositional content can be articulated with the world. These are:

> "*The assertive illocutionary point (the representation of a state of affairs as real), the commissive illocutionary point (the speaker's commitment to perform a future action), the directive illocutionary point (the attempt to make the listener do something), the declarative illocutionary point (producing a state of fact by virtue of the enunciation) and the expressive illocutionary point (the expression of the speaker's psychological state regarding a state of affairs)*". (Vanderveken, 1985, p. 173)

One should note the more important aspects characterising these speech acts. Thus, the illocutionary point is the mode of adapting and/or adjusting the propositional content to the world.

The mode of achievement is the manner in which the point of achieving an illocutionary force ensures the satisfaction of a speech act. The propositional content conditions entail general restrictions which should be imposed on the nature of the propositional content of a certain linguistic expression. The preparatory conditions refer to the nature of presupposed conventions governing a possible speaker-listener interaction, in terms of the commitments to be made and the roles to be fulfilled. And, finally, the conditions of sincerity are required. They refer to the intention of participants in the dialogue to be effectively involved in the execution of actions produced by enunciating certain speech acts, so that the performance of the act should be an expression of a specific psychological/mental state of the speaker, by which he assumes responsibility.

We do not make an analysis of all illocutionary points in our research. We limit ourselves to analysing the commissive illocutionary point and the assertive illocutionary point, necessary for our research. Moreover, of the seven components which make up the speech act proposed by Vanderveken (1985, p. 173), we shall not retain the two degrees of strength of acts: of the illocutionary point and the sincerity conditions, just as we do not deem it necessary to measure the degree of achievement of acts, because identifying these degrees coincides, almost always, with the categories resulting from them.

The limitation of our analysis to the commissive illocutionary point and the assertive illocutionary point is due to the fact that we have chosen promise and criticism as objects of our study. This selection, however, was not accidental. The commissive act, in the form of promise, and the assertive act, in the form of criticism, may be said to function as complementary illocutionary forces within the electoral discourse, insofar as it is impossible to conceive, to the limit, the activity of criticism without leading to a commitment to promise and vice versa. Thus, as

BDD-A31910 © 2021 Editura Muzeul Literaturii Române
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.142 (2026-11-15 02:42:07 UTC)

discursive strategies, these two procedures act complementarily, so that each criticism presupposes a promise (which is implicit) and each promise implies (implicit) criticism.

In this particular case of using language in political activity, it is possible for one to isolate, as a target of appreciation, the promises which usually make up the list of intentions of a candidate's platform or, additionally, the criticisms which form his ideological partisan strategy.

Promises seem to become an essential condition of the electoral discourse, i.e. candidates may state what they can do, if elected, only by means of a promise (which is explicit or implicit). Thus, candidates, regardless of their positions or options, cannot avoid the promise. However, aware that explicitly stated promises cannot always rely on the effort of cooperation of voters, they build a discourse based on other discursive strategies, such as the game of explicit and implicit promises, in order to elicit effects they think they can control according to their desire.

Other strategies employed aim at criticising the counter-candidates who make promises without any logico-factual grounds – not even in terms of the future – and at presenting their own proposals, projects and programmes, as a way of materialising a counter-promise. Still, such strategies do not guarantee the neutralisation of the promise. The discourse is thus constructed in two directions: one, represented by the candidate's need to assume, according to his own words, the explicit refusal of any references to promises; the other, aiming at criticising those who have missed a certain form of promise.

This procedure may seem efficient in immediately criticising the opponents and in the attempt to re-elaborate the discourse through statements that seek to neutralise the promise, but both are inefficient in controlling the discourse itself, because the refusal to use the performative *to promise* does not directly imply the refusal of the necessary conditions of the existence of a promise.

Conclusions

Therefore, considering the importance of promise and criticisms within the politico-electoral discourse, we have chosen, from the speech act theory, the discursive orientations related to promise and criticism, as basic aspects of our analysis.

But first of all, we should understand which are the enunciative conditions to realise these promises and criticisms and how they interact in the context of the various discursive formations of each political party in the general universe of all discourses.

Bibliography

AUSTIN, John L., 2005, *Cum să faci lucruri cu vorbe.* Traducere de Sorana Corneanu. Prefață de Vlad Alexandrescu, Pitești: Paralela 45.

BDD-A31910 © 2021 Editura Muzeul Literaturii Române
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.142 (2026-11-15 02:42:07 UTC)

BAKHTINE, Mikhaïl Mikhaïlovitch (Voloșniov, N.V.), 1977, *Le Marxisme et la philosophie du langage.* Paris: Les Editions de Minuit.

BENVENISTE, Émile, 1970, „L'appareil formel de l'énonciation", in: *Langages*, anul V, nr. 17, pp. 12-18.

BENVENISTE, Émile, 2000, *Probleme de lingvistică generală* I, II. Bucureşti: Editura Teora (ediții în franceză, 1966 și 1974).

CHARAUDEAU, Patrick, 1983, *Langage et discours. Éléments de sémiolinguistique (théorie et pratique).* Paris: Hachette.

CHARAUDEAU, Patrick, 1984, „Une théorie des sujets du langage", in : *Langage et Société,* Maison des Sciences de l'Homme, nr. 28, juin.

CHARAUDEAU, Patrick, 1992, *Grammaire du sens et de l'expression.* Paris: Hachette.

CHARAUDEAU, Patrick, 1994, „Le contrat de communication de l'information médiatique", in : *Le Français dans le monde,* număr special, iulie, pp. 8-19.

CHARAUDEAU, Patrick; Ghiglione, Rodolphe, 2005, *Talk show-ul. Despre libertatea cuvântului ca mit.* Iași: Editura Polirom.

COURTINE, Jean-Jacques, 1981, „Quelques problèmes théoriques et méthodologiques en analyse du discours. À propos du discours communiste adressé aux chrétiens", in : *Langage,* anul XV, nr. 62, pp. 9-128.

FOUCAULT, Michel, 1999, *Arheologia cunoașterii.* București: Editura Univers.

PÊCHEUX, Michel, 1969, *Analyse automatique du discours*. Paris: Dunod.

PÊCHEUX, Michel, 1975, *Les vérités de la Palice: linguistique, sémantique, philosophie.* Paris: François Maspéro.

PÊCHEUX, Michel; Fuchs, Catherine, 1975, „Mises au point et perspectives à propos de l'analyse automatique du discours", in : *Langage*, anul IX, nr. 37, pp. 7-80.

VANDERVEKEN, Daniel, 1985, „What is an illocutionary force?", in: M. Dascal (ed.). Dialogue − An Interdisciplinary Approach. Amsterdam, Philadelphia: John Benjamins.

BDD-A31910 © 2021 Editura Muzeul Literaturii Române
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.142 (2026-11-15 02:42:07 UTC)